



# Career Pathways for graduates

into the  
**voluntary/  
community sector**

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## Introduction

### What is the aim of this publication?

This publication was borne out of a HECSU-funded practitioner research project that has been conducted nationally in 2007. The aim of the project was:

“To build a picture of the nature and range of opportunities for graduates in the voluntary and community sector with a particular focus on management and administration roles (including fundraising, marketing and communications, HR, finance, IT, volunteer management, policy, campaigning and research).”

### Who is this publication for?

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, then it is for you.

Are you considering a career working for a charity?

Are you struggling to get a sense of all the jobs that might be on offer?

Are you looking for a more ethical career pathway or to work for a cause you are passionate about?

I have written it for students and graduates at universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who want to find out more about the sector as well as the people that advise them. It offers labour market insights and information which will be of use to graduates seeking to go into the voluntary sector. It aims to distil information from a variety of sources to create a meaningful picture of careers for graduates in the sector that cannot be found elsewhere. I hope that it will provide evidence for how careers for graduates in the voluntary/community sector are developing.

### Why I have written this publication? Biographical note from writer

I have been working with a specialist responsibility for the voluntary sector for eight years now at Manchester University. This has involved interviewing many students and graduates interested in the sector, doing regular talks on the subject as well as strategic planning of our Kaleidoscope careers Fair (for public and voluntary sector careers).

In all this time I have been aware of a “missing link” between the aspirations of graduates and opportunities apparently available. I have always been impressed by the commitment of the many students I have met who would like to work in the sector. They are often a group who are well aware that financial remuneration in the field lags behind both the public and private sector. Invariably however, the advice I offer reflects the fact that the voluntary sector does not offer clear and accessible pathways into employment. The number of opportunities that are specifically targeted at students and graduates are tiny. This is particularly the case in management and administration roles, whereas for students who may have a clearer vocational objective, e.g. social work, counselling, youth or community work - things may be more straightforward as they can gain professional qualifications before entering the sector. This applies across the board from super-charities to very small ones. The careers literature for the sector is limited compared with other sectors and industries and reflects the patchy and varied ways into the sector.

Volunteering and networking as well as getting some experience first in the public or private sector appear to be the mantras of getting into management and administration roles in the voluntary sector. e.g.:

*“Having voluntary experience is a huge advantage as it illustrates to a potential employer that you are committed, can use your own initiative, have an understanding of the sector and how such organisations operate, that you are already on your way to developing the relevant skill set and, most importantly perhaps, that you are not solely motivated by money.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/charityofficer> – 7/7/2007

*“Evidence confirms the importance of the skills and experience gained through volunteer activities in successfully gaining employment.”<sup>2</sup>*

*“Evidence suggests that the most significant pathway is career moves from the public and private sectors”<sup>2</sup>*

It is my view that the sector may be missing out on graduates who would like to start their career in the sector, partly because they are finding it hard to get information about the sector. My publication aims to help plug that gap. And to answer the complaint that we sometimes hear from students.

*“I think that university careers services should include a lot more information about working for charities within their more general booklets for students. I find a lot of books actually encouraging graduates to work for big corporations and I struggle to get information about charities.” Student*

We as advisers can also be frustrated:

*“I find clients can be very frustrated by the lack of transparent schemes and entry points for graduates in comparison with the commercial world. They hold that against us in the careers centre, thinking we don't choose to promote the voluntary sector. We spend a lot of energy trying to redress that balance.” Manager of Careers Education and Guidance*

### **What research has led to this publication?**

In doing this research I wanted to test out some of the ideas I already had and build stronger evidence for the ways graduates get into the sector. My questions especially of the graduates and HR staff aimed to test out some of the common assumptions made about entry into the sector e.g., around volunteering and moves from other sectors. I was also influenced in terms of questions I asked by some of the issues that came up in doing my literature review around career progression, pay and skills shortages. The results of the survey of HE careers consultants can be found elsewhere<sup>3</sup> but also informed my approach in producing this particular publication.

My methods included:

- A survey of all HE careers consultants who have specialist interest in this sector
- 12 interviews with HR staff in charities
- 30+ case studies and interviews with graduates working in the sector
- Miscellaneous gathering of information from various websites, journals, publications, conferences.

My planned approach in writing this publication is to give voice to the individuals I have spoken to. I am constantly aware of the plea for case studies of real people in the sector and questions as to what recruiters actually want. I hope to answer this need and have opted for a qualitative approach in recording the views of graduates and HR staff in this research.

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<sup>2</sup> Lacey (2006), *Pathways into employment in the voluntary and community sector – an evidence review* (UK Voluntary Sector Workforce hub)

<sup>3</sup> Christie (2007), *Graduate career pathways into the voluntary/community sector - the Higher Education careers consultants' view* (HECSU)

## Executive summary

### General information

- The voluntary/community sector continues to expand and there has been a significant growth in terms of roles and responsibilities. In 1991 (the year the first benchmark of general charities was established) there were 98,000 active general charities, compared to 169,000 in 2004.<sup>4</sup> This has been a sector that has grown considerably. In principle, this is good news for anyone wanting to enter the sector.
- There is no doubt that for graduates considering going into the sector, the current policy context is favourable, if sometimes controversial. The sector currently has a very high profile. Inter-related examples of this include: the existence of a government department, the Office of the Third Sector; considerable political consensus with regard to voluntary sector delivery of public services; the growth of public sector/voluntary sector partnerships; changes in the legislative framework e.g., Charities Act 2006. This is good news for job-seekers as it means this is a dynamic sector with a growing profile.

### Graduates working for charities

- The 35 graduates I interviewed were randomly selected and came from a wide cross-section of universities, although those from more traditional academic disciplines tended to have come from the pre-1992 university sector and those with more vocational degrees from the post-1992 sector. The majority did come from Humanities disciplines.
- There is a considerable diversity of roles within charities. Some of these reflect the kinds of jobs available elsewhere such as HR or marketing, others are more unique to charities e.g., volunteer management, fundraising and campaigning.
- One of the most common themes that did come through was the high level of motivation individuals felt and the pride they had in working for a charity. For some of the individuals I spoke to I would say they expressed an exceptional level of sincere commitment to their employer – one that is rare in the workplace generally.
- In general, charities do not really use designated graduate programmes as a pathway into the sector. This is for a range of reasons and largely because charities will generally recruit for specific jobs rather than take on new staff with a view to train and develop them. This is something that is developing though and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is currently planning a new scheme across the sector.<sup>5</sup>
- There are a handful of charities that do have graduate programmes which are very competitive. These seem to focus on general management roles. Housing charities appear to favour this as an approach more than any other sub-sector of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).
- There are also some internship opportunities that could be suitable for graduates. But they aren't always paid although will offer subsistence and great training are offered. Volunteer internship roles may give you a foot in the door into some charities, but even these can be sometimes competitive to get onto.
- Certain sub-sectors of the voluntary and community sector are particularly tough for graduates to get into. International development work and environment work are two of the most competitive. It is normal for individuals to have done voluntary work before getting into one of these sub-sectors and successful candidates may also have relevant postgraduate qualifications.

### Graduate views

#### The role of volunteering

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<sup>4</sup> Wilding et al (2006), *The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2006* (NCVO)

<sup>5</sup> *Third sector: First Choice – Exploring the viability of a new scheme to attract graduates to the voluntary and community sector as the first stage in building their career* (UK Voluntary sector Workforce hub)

- Two-thirds of the graduates working in charities that I interviewed/questioned had been volunteers before getting a job with a charity. Sometimes it is necessary to have volunteered even to get a volunteer internship. The sub-sector where the expectation of having done voluntary work was highest was in international development.
- For some individuals the experience of voluntary work had contributed to their choosing to work for a charity. It appears that the kind of people who want to volunteer (without really thinking about how this may be good for their CV) may be more likely to want to work for a charity later on. For those who had volunteered this very much featured as integral to their career pathway and life motivations. Voluntary work can be highly desirable and many of the participants who had done voluntary work had gained exceptional evidence of skills and commitment. Some individuals continue to volunteer even when they have got a job with a charity to develop their skills.
- A third of those I surveyed had not done significant voluntary work but all of them often brought skills relevant to the role they were doing from other experiences. Interestingly, some participants felt that the emphasis in having voluntary work before getting in to the sector was misleading and could put people off and that it was possible to get in to the sector without this.

### **Competition for jobs**

- Most individuals surveyed felt they had beaten off stiff competition to get the job they were in so were currently very satisfied. There was universal consensus that it was tough to get a job with a charity and that in order to succeed it was necessary to be very persistent. Many of these successful individuals had generally showed a clear focus in taking steps to improve their chances of getting a job and had been very proactive.

### **Pay**

- There were mixed views on the subject of pay. Some individuals felt their pay level was good or comparable to jobs in the public sector and in graduate entry level jobs more widely. Some explicitly said they didn't mind earning less as they felt highly motivated at work.
- There were others who observed the contrasting salaries within the voluntary/community sector and some were very conscious that they could be earning more elsewhere even in another charity and were looking for other jobs.
- Graduates doing volunteer internships were fairly positive that this was a manageable option and would pay off in the longer term. A creative approach from interns and subsistence offered by the employing charity seemed to be critical.

### **Career progression**

- All individuals had already given thought to the future and where they would like to head – most were positive and optimistic, though some had reservations about what might be possible. Those who were very early in their careers were generally happy in their jobs and weren't really thinking about career progression and didn't see this as an issue currently.
- Some individuals appear to have progressed rapidly in their career so far – an indicator of the meritocratic nature of the sector. Some of these individuals had or were completing professional training or qualifications and generally tended to have proactively organised this themselves rather than it being offered as part of an employer package.
- Some individuals were contemplating a move into more frontline delivery work that charities do as they felt limited by being “behind the scenes”. Potentially they also thought there could be more opportunities in frontline roles as these roles tend to be higher in number, e.g., social work.
- Some individuals thought that they would probably have to move employer or location in order to progress their career. This could be because they were in a niche role in a relatively small organisation.
- There was clear evidence that some individuals had made a direct progression from being a volunteer intern to being a paid member of staff.

### **HR views**

### **Recruitment/advertising of jobs**

- There was some variety amongst the charities in terms of how they approach recruitment and advertising of opportunities. In general the limited budgets of charities meant they had to be very focused on how they approached advertising which means that job-seekers do need to consider numerous ways to find out about potential jobs.
- Many charities will use their own website to advertise positions. This is free for them and demonstrates that candidates are actually interested in that specific charity as they will have had to go to that charity's website to find the job ad.
- They tend to use recruitment agencies for harder to fill positions – IT, finance, fundraising and marketing were quoted as examples.
- Many charities will advertise in their local press and job centres and in the national press for senior or harder to fill positions.
- Some charities will advertise all jobs internally first, hence the value of getting any job, just to get a foot in the door.

### **Applications and interviews**

- Application and interview methods are fairly standardised and transparent. All charities selected used person specifications which they sent to candidates to inform them what competencies were required.
- Panel interviews to ensure fairness are commonplace. Complex assessment centre activities are rare, though tasks/presentations may be set of specific relevance to job being applied for.
- Charities see themselves as highly professional and fair in their approach to recruitment and applicants should take the process very seriously.

### **Role of volunteering**

- Charities varied in relation to their view of progression from volunteer to paid member of staff in their organisation. Some favoured this method of progression, others were very wary of hopes being falsely raised that becoming a volunteer was a “good bet” in terms of getting a eventual job.
- Having voluntary experience on a CV from any organisation is good evidence of understanding the volunteering ethos which all charities rely upon. Especially in smaller charities and in competitive fields, volunteering experience can be an essential pre-requisite to selection.

### **General advice**

- A universal theme was that charities expect candidates to have a high level of knowledge of their organisation and to be committed to the cause the charity is working for. Ideally candidates may be able to demonstrate evidence of commitment to this cause but this is not compulsory.
- Taking a lower level job as a foot in the door to a specific charity is commonplace, but candidates should be willing to commit to whatever job they apply for, for a reasonable length of time.
- Some charities have part-time jobs on offer that they find hard to fill (especially in housing and social care). This is a good way to get your foot in the door and get an understanding of how a charity operates.
- If you are interested in a charity or a specific job, be pro-active and contact the charity for more information before you make an application.

### **Competition/hard-to-fill vacancies**

- Competition can vary from job to job and from charity to charity. Jobs such as campaigning are very tough to get into, but other jobs such as fundraising are sometimes hard for charities to fill. Some of the hard-to fill positions tend to be a senior level but also those at entry level which may seem less attractive perhaps demanding unsocial hours etc. Such hard to fill positions could offer a foot in the door to individuals trying to break into the sector.

### **Public/private sector career moves**

- There has been a received wisdom that people move from other sectors to charities and my research did bear this out as many of the HR staff I surveyed were keen on individuals moving to them from private sector backgrounds as they welcome the commercial awareness such individuals bring. Similarly, public sector workers with a service delivery role will commonly move into the charity sector.

- Lots of individuals with management skills such as HR, IT, finance will go to the charity sector from either the public or private sector. This means that they can hit the ground running. This may represent a cut in pay but not always.

### **Career progression**

- Career progression is limited as many charities have flat structures, don't pay bonuses and there are a lot of *niche* areas in charities where there is not a lot of turnover of staff. Career progression for those who have a clear professional role – e.g., in finance, marketing, HR and definitely service delivery roles (e.g., social work) can be good. The path can be less clear for those in more one-off roles – e.g., as a volunteer manager, campaigner or fundraiser. Such individuals may have to move charity to get their next job.
- Where you live geographically can affect opportunities – probably the most opportunities in HQ management functions are in London and the South-East.
- Generally, there is a fair amount of turnover of staff in charities – people using the skills they have gained to get their next job elsewhere. This may be to get a job in another sector or for another charity.
- Charities often have the approach of trying to fill jobs internally first which is good for staff career progression.
- Your career in the charity sector will be very much influenced by your own ambition and drive – a clear path is unlikely to be presented to you in this sector. Individuals need to be astute and think laterally about what their next move might be.
- Many respondents were conscious that the lack of career progression in their organisation could be a stumbling block for some staff. However, many were taking steps to address this issue with a view to coming up with a solution.

### **Pay**

- Charities are conscious that pay levels may not be as competitive as elsewhere. Many offer staff the potential to participate in training and professional development and believe they generally offer staff favourable work-life balance.
- Choosing to work for a charity may mean you earn less than in a similar job elsewhere but the rewards and conditions may make this the right choice for certain individuals.

### **Careers adviser views**

The careers advisers/consultants came up with numerous themes which they felt from their experience individuals looking at jobs in the charity sector needed to address.

- **Financial issues – affording to do voluntary work**

Again and again volunteering is mentioned as a useful way into the sector. Careers advisers felt this may be a barrier to some. Individuals do have choices though. Gaining relevant skills and experience elsewhere may mean you can get a job in a charity without volunteering experience. Another option is to make sure you get involved in volunteering early at university so you already have a strong CV when you leave. Individuals should scrutinise volunteering opportunities with a view to work out what they can afford to do. In some sub sectors e.g., international development and in some roles e.g., policy and research, the extra competition for jobs may mean the need for voluntary experience is insurmountable.

- **The need for relevant experience – meeting the challenge of getting this**

Careers advisers observe that sometimes individuals coming out of university who want to go into management and administration roles in charities are faced with the challenge that charities expect people to come with experience already. This does present a challenge for graduates and does mean they need to plan to get relevant experience knowing they will not be able to go straight into a job that will train them. Individuals would be wise to plan ahead and think laterally about how to get relevant experience. There are many examples: volunteering; helping to run events while at university; being an active supporter of a charity; gaining specific vocational skills in areas such as IT, communications and accounting; or through part-time work. With regard to the last example,

around half of the charities in the UK are involved in social care. This could be an avenue for part-time work which would give students evidence of community engagement which could be useful for a wider group of charities.

- **Popularity of the sector – thinking beyond the big names**

Careers advisers commented that many students would like to work for the more famous charities. Clearly there are job opportunities with these and these tend to be the charities that are more likely to have graduate or internship positions. Advisers suggest that individuals should widen their net of potential employers. It may be that individuals could gain experience in a smaller organisation and then move onto a big name if that remained their main aspiration. This advice was borne out in what the graduates surveyed said about getting a job too.

- **Getting information about jobs available**

There is no doubt that it is sometimes harder to get information about careers in the voluntary and community sectors than other sectors. The view from consultants was that students and graduates need to persevere in seeking information and need to realize that information may be more scattered and hard to come by. There was an understanding that there were numerous ways that individuals could find out about jobs via the internet, trade publications and bespoke careers literature such as the Voluntary Sector Workforce hub's "Working for a better world" ([www.ukworkforcehub.org.uk](http://www.ukworkforcehub.org.uk)). The NCVO itself is planning on having more careers information on its own website soon (<http://www.ncvo-jobshop.org.uk>). Students and graduates can also take advantage of the specific information provision that may be available from their own university.

- **Proactivity/flexibility needed by jobseekers**

There were lots of comments suggesting that careers consultants thought that individuals interested in management and administration jobs in the sector need to be flexible and proactive. It may be the case that this is not a career path for someone who wants to see a clear career path ahead of them. Individuals who want to plan a career in this sector would benefit from having numerous qualities such as being realistic, being flexible, being open-minded and being willing to pro-actively develop their own skills base. A willingness to volunteer and to also network can also be critical in getting your career started.

## **Where to look for jobs in charities?**

Charities both large and small don't tend to have large budgets for recruitment advertising so you do have to know the right places to look for jobs. Charities recruit in a variety of ways so you need to make sure you are looking at a number of places when trying to find advertised opportunities in the sector. Charities will advertise in all of the following: their own publications/website; national press; local press and job centres; "trade" journals; charity recruitment agencies and websites. Students and graduates are also advised to target sectors that they are specifically interested in.

University Careers Services across the UK vary enormously in terms of what events they can offer to students/graduates interested in the voluntary/community sector. This may be affected by the size of the institution and the nature of the students studying there. If your university doesn't offer relevant events, careers staff will still be able to point you in the right direction of where you can get information. There is no one definitive list of specialist charity events – you do need to do your homework. There are annual events in Manchester, London, Newcastle, Birmingham, Oxford, Glasgow and Bristol.

## **Professional development**

The possibilities for professional development in terms of education and training are growing in the sector. In choosing what to do it really helps to know what you want to do for your career; for example, the education/training you might do could be very different if you want to be a human rights campaigner or a volunteer manager. You may perhaps have qualifications in social work, law, finance or communications before going into the sector. There are numerous training and education routes that you could look at to help you get into the sector and also progress while you are in the sector.



## Chapter 1 -

## Facts and figures about the sector/background information<sup>6</sup>

The voluntary/community sector continues to expand and there has been a significant growth in terms of roles and responsibilities. In 1991 (the year the first benchmark of general charities was established) there were 98,000 active general charities, compared with 169,000 in 2004.<sup>7</sup> This has been a sector that has grown considerably. In principle, this is good news for anyone wanting to enter the sector.

### 1.1 Key facts about the paid workforce<sup>8</sup>

- The sector has a paid workforce of at least 611,000: an increase of 128,000 between 1996 and 2005; this equates to an estimated 486,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) paid staff.
- The sector now employs approximately 2.2% of the overall paid workforce in the UK.
- Part-time employees account for nearly two-fifths (39%) of the sector's workforce compared to 29% (public) and 23% (private).
- Over two-thirds (69%) of the voluntary sector workforce are women.
- Over one-third (36%) of voluntary sector employees work in London and the South-East.
- Voluntary sector has highest proportion of degree holders at 33% compared to 32.7% in the public sector and 15.5% in the private sector.
- High proportion of voluntary sector workers in higher occupational categories - 43% are either managers and senior officials or associate professional and technical staff.
- Nearly one in five of voluntary sector staff has a disability (18%).
- There are a high number of temporary and fixed-term contracts (9%) though use of agency workers has fallen.

There is no doubt that the role of the voluntary/community sector as an employer continues to grow and staff in the sector are relatively well-educated and motivated. However, many commentators consider that skills deficiencies continue to limit the effectiveness of the sector, while anecdotal evidence suggests there is a lack of training culture. There does appear to be a strong appetite for continued professionalism which could lead to the development of a greater variety of career options for graduates in the sector, but the main threat to workforce development may be competition from other sectors for highly skilled employees which graduates tend to be.

### 1.2 Regional issues

Interestingly, although London and the South East have a high percentage of voluntary sector employees, between 1996 and 2005 the proportion has fallen – from 36% to 32%. This shows that the growth of the voluntary sector has been higher outside London and the South East. The high number of voluntary sector employees in the South East and London is likely to be due to the large number of national and international organisations establishing headquarters in these regions.

### 1.3 What kind of charities do people work for?

The period 1996-2005 saw a huge increase in the number of voluntary sector workers employed in 'social work activities' – from 149,000 employees in 1996 to 277,000 in 2005 – an increase of 86%. The transfer of social care

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<sup>6</sup> Acknowledgements in this chapter are given to the *Voluntary Sector Almanacs for 2006 and 2007 as well as to Voluntary Sector Skills survey 2007* which combined to give most of the information quoted in this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Wilding et al (2006), *The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2006* (NCVO)

<sup>8</sup> Reichardt et al (2007), *The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007* (NCVO)

activities from the public sector may in part explain this substantial increase. More than half (54%) of all voluntary sector employees – 332,000 employees – are employed in social work activities. There are also 54,000 voluntary sector employees (9%) working in development/ selling of real estate (for example housing) in the voluntary sector, while 45,000 (7%) work in education.

One-third of voluntary sector workers (32%) are employed in workplaces with less than ten employees. This is vastly different to both the private sector (25%) and the public sector (8%). Due to this it makes the task of providing support such as training and development much more difficult for voluntary sector employers.

#### **1.4 Pay**

The sector does have the image of being poorly paid, lagging behind other sectors largely due to the fact that the sector doesn't have the capacity for greater pay levels. However there is evidence that salaries maintain a steady rise.

- Average salaries and earnings in the voluntary sector each increased by 4.9% over the year, a similar rate to the Average Earnings Index (AEI) (5.0%) but a higher rate than inflation as measured by the Retail Price Index (RPI) (3.3%).<sup>9</sup>

#### **1.5 Retention**

The voluntary /community sector does seem to be one where there is quite a lot of movement of staff moving on into different jobs rather than staying in one role for one organisation. The highest level of turnover is amongst lower grade staff. Below are some findings which relate to this.

- The median length of service of leavers was 2.9 years compared to 4.1 years for all organisations.<sup>10</sup>
- Common reasons for retention problems were lack of opportunity for career progression (47%) and salary levels (42%).<sup>11</sup>

#### **1.6 Recruitment**

There is a lot of recruitment activity in the sector, despite the fact that graduates report finding it hard to find appropriate entry level opportunities to apply for. Below are some findings which relate to this.<sup>12</sup>

- Recruitment activity is high in the voluntary sector with respondents recruiting, on average, 25% of their staff each year.
- On average, respondents undertook recruitment internally first for 17% of jobs.
- The two most common causes of recruitment difficulties were a lack of specialist skills and a lack of experience.

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<sup>9</sup> *Remuneration Economics (2006), The 18th annual voluntary sector salary survey, The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007 (NCVO)*

<sup>10</sup> *DLA (2005) Agenda Consulting (2006) PeopleCount voluntary sector 2006, The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007 (NCVO)*

<sup>11</sup> *Remuneration Economics (2006), The 18th annual voluntary sector salary survey, The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007 (NCVO)*

<sup>12</sup> *Agenda Consulting (2006) PeopleCount voluntary sector 2006, The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007 (NCVO)*

## 1.7 Skills shortages

A report in 2003 called *Future Skills*<sup>13</sup> started work in identifying both skills gaps and shortages in the sector. Many of its key findings were around the lack of management skills and it suggested that voluntary organisations priority skill needs for the future included management skills such as planning and organising, project management and strategic planning. Other skills in high demand included team working and partnership working skills, leadership, and fundraising skills.

This topic has again been reported in greater depth in the 2007 Voluntary Sector Skills Survey.<sup>14</sup> This has a number of findings which relate to the sector's ability to recruit, train and retain suitably qualified and skilled staff. For individuals interested in going into the sector it is advisable to identify what skills are sought and work to gain these skills as this will inevitably put them in a good position when job-hunting in the sector.

- Employers most frequently identified hard to fill vacancies in youth work, social care and health care.
- Over one-third of employers with hard to fill vacancies reported skills shortage in applicants.
- Employers were most likely to identify under-skilled staff within functions of marketing and fundraising. Other areas with skills gaps include strategic use of IT, legal knowledge and leadership.

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<sup>13</sup> Wilding et al (2003) *Future Skills 2003*, Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation

<sup>14</sup> Clark, J. (2007) *Voluntary Sector Skills Survey 2007*, UK Workforce Hub

## **Chapter 2 - The policy context for the voluntary/community sector**

There is no doubt that for graduates considering going into the sector, the current policy context is favourable, if sometimes controversial. The sector currently has a very high profile. Inter-related examples of this include: the existence of a government department, the Office of the Third Sector; considerable political consensus with regard to voluntary sector delivery of public services; the growth of public sector/voluntary sector partnerships; changes in the legislative framework e.g., Charities Act 2006. This is good news for job-seekers as it means this is a dynamic sector with a growing profile.

### **2.1 Office of the Third Sector/political consensus**

The Office of the Third Sector (OFTS) was created in May 2006, incorporating the responsibilities of the Active Communities Directorate in the Home Office, and the Social Enterprise Unit in the Department for Trade and Industry. The decision to place the Office of the Third Sector at the centre of government in the Cabinet Office was taken in recognition of the increasingly important role the Third Sector plays in both society and the economy.

Government defines the Third Sector to include non-governmental organisations which are driven by their values and which principally reinvest any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It encompasses voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals both large and small.

In July 2007 the OFTS published a review report of the sector called, 'The future role of the Third Sector in social and economic regeneration'. It sets out a strategy to promote the partnership between the Government and the Third Sector over the next ten years.<sup>15</sup>

The main aims outlined in the report are to help give Third Sector organisations a greater voice and to work with the sector to strengthen communities, transform public services, encourage social enterprise and support the conditions for the sector to thrive. The Government's final report of its review of the Third Sector sets out a strategy to work with Third Sector organisations over the next ten years to promote social and economic regeneration.

The review was carried out by the Office of the Third Sector and HM Treasury's Charity and Third Sector Finance Unit. It followed the Government's largest ever consultation with the Third Sector and built on previous investments in Third Sector organisations.

The report sets out plans to promote the partnership between the Government and the Third Sector. Most of the measures will be led by the Office of the Third Sector, which will invest more than £515 million in Third Sector programmes to support thousands of community organisations across the country.

The Conservative Party Social Justice Policy Group, led by Ian Duncan Smith has echoed the current government's approach by advocating greater use of Third Sector organisations in the delivery of public services. The Conservative rationale is that voluntary and community sector organisations have greater flexibility in terms of how they work and are closer to the real problems within society and therefore have a greater chance to make changes to society than statutory organisations do.

### **2.2 Public sector/voluntary sector partnerships**

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<sup>15</sup> Office for the Third Sector (2007), [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third\\_sector/third\\_sector\\_review.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/third_sector_review.aspx) - 7/11/2007

These partnerships which have already had such an impact on social care charities in particular are not uncontroversial. Some commentators are concerned that the impartiality of charities will be compromised, and that really it is only the larger charities that may benefit from partnerships. There is also the danger that the government is merely getting public services delivered “on the cheap” by charities. Dame Suzi Leather launched the findings based on a survey of 4000 charities commissioned by the Charity Commission at an NCVO conference in February 2007 which said that charities needed a wake up call. There was concern that charities were being under funded for public sector contracts, were losing independence and in danger of becoming another arm of the statutory sector.<sup>16</sup>

It does seem that partnership working does offer great opportunity but that there are also unresolved issues associated with this.

### **2.3 The legislative framework**

The Charities Act 2006 offers a stronger and more supportive legal and regulatory framework – e.g., with regard to role of trustees and definitions of a charity. It has been largely welcomed within the sector. The Act has been long-awaited. It offers a more flexible definition of a charity, and allows for more charities to be involved in campaigning. The Advisory Group on Campaigning in the Voluntary Sector, led by Helena Kennedy, would like to see the right of charities to campaign and to be a strong voice in public debate, asserted even more strongly. They would like to see a clear end to the restricted access the Third sector have in running any kind of political campaigning activity in the broadcast media. One example of this was Make Poverty History which could not by law do any TV advertising.<sup>17</sup> These developments all point to the fact that the sector is experiencing change and for graduates who may want to work for a charity in order to influence social change through campaigning, the future looks interesting.

### **2.4 Infrastructure support for the sector**

The Third sector review contains specific commitments which are all about increasing the capacity of Third Sector organisations. Examples of this include the Futurebuilders Fund, which provides loans and grants to organisations looking to deliver public services, training for public sector commissioners and work to build the evidence on opportunities for the Third Sector. Government will also invest new resources in developing Third Sector infrastructure through the Capacitybuilders agency.

One key report that has been published that relates to graduates is the “Third sector: first choice” publication.<sup>18</sup> This recommended the introduction of a career entry scheme relevant for graduates and others wanting to enter the sector in order to address skill deficiencies especially around management and administration. This proposal in the document is currently in the planning stages: *“NCVO aims to develop a strategic initiative across the sector which will offer structured career entry opportunities at different stages of people's careers: one strand will be to encourage university and college graduates;”* writes Elaine Smethurst, Manager of Working For A Charity, NCVO

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<sup>16</sup> Benjamin (21<sup>st</sup> February 2007) State of dependence, *Guardian newspaper*

<sup>17</sup> Kennedy (14<sup>th</sup> March 2007) Second thoughts, *Guardian newspaper*

<sup>18</sup> *Third sector: First Choice – Exploring the viability of a new scheme to attract graduates to the voluntary and community sector as the first stage in building their career.* (NCVO 2006)

## **Chapter 3**

### **What jobs do people do in charities?**

In doing this research I wanted to include lots of case studies of what people actually do in charities as I am constantly asked this question by my clients. This is something that careers advisers I surveyed on the subject also asked for. So in this chapter I am giving voice to my research participants to tell us what they actually do in their jobs. I also asked them about what their motivation was to work in a charity which they talk about. There is an assumption that working for a charity is associated with a high level of commitment to doing a “worthwhile and rewarding” job. I wanted to check this out.

One of the most common themes that did come through was the high level of motivation individuals felt and the pride they had in working for a charity. For some of the individuals I spoke to I would say they expressed an exceptional level of sincere commitment to their employer – one that is rare in the workplace generally.

Inevitably, this section represents only a selection of the jobs that are out there. You will notice too that some of the boundaries between roles are blurred e.g., between marketing and fundraising roles. Most of the participants included in the research were in paid jobs, but I have included some individuals in unpaid internship roles as this does represent a common way into the sector.

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### 3.1 Volunteer manager

#### Findings

- Working as a volunteer organiser or manager is a growing area.
- This is a field of work which has been greatly influenced by a growing professionalism in terms of how volunteers are valued in organisations and demands that there are good standards in the recruitment and management of volunteers.
- People doing this job tend to have been volunteers in the past themselves.
- This is often a one-off job in an organisation, meaning people may have to move employer in order to progress.
- Commonly either a part-time or full-time job depending on the charity.
- This role can sometimes lead individuals into other roles within charities, e.g., HR, education, general management, counselling.

#### 3.1.1 Fatima – graduated in Geography in 2005 - Programme Officer (international development charity)

*I co-ordinate an international volunteer program that is fairly new and aims to send at least 30 volunteers to developing countries every year. I work to implement the strategy of our organisation in terms of suitable volunteer recruitment. I produce publicity such as brochures and flyers and develop the relevant sections of our website. I go out and about marketing the programme, working hard to attract and recruit suitable volunteers. I interview and train successful applicants, preparing them for departure. I also monitor and evaluate the success of placements and organise events back in the UK getting former volunteers to contribute at home. I work in a very small organisation which means I have a real sense of ownership of what the charity does and am connected at all levels to what we do. I have a lot of responsibility and the interactions with people here in the UK and overseas are very strong. It is great to see the volunteers grow and also to witness the positive impact of their work. Working in a small charity means that there is always loads to do. I have to work with scarce resources which is tough. We are continually chasing funding which is normal in this sector which means I have to be creative in solving problems and negotiating.*

#### 3.1.2 Susan – graduated with an MA in Philosophy in 2007 (Volunteer and recruitment manager for youth mentoring charity)

*I have worked 20 hours part-time as a volunteer and recruitment manager, whilst doing my MA in Philosophy on a part-time basis. I also work as a project manager for one of the youth projects my charity works with. This combination of work and study has worked really well for me. My work falls into an annual cycle as my role is specifically to recruit students to our charity. There is a lot of work in the autumn recruiting students – this involves everything from preparing and attending Freshers Fairs to organising CRB checks. It involves a fair bit of writing for publicity etc. From the 600 people who will show initial interest I aim to have 120 active volunteers recruited every autumn.*

*The frustrations of the job do lie in being let down by volunteers but being the enabler of excellent work done by volunteers is the pay off. I have been supported to complete a **Level 3 Award in Managing Volunteers** which has been good for my professional development. I was lucky enough to land this job as I was a volunteer for the charity and that's how I found out there was a position. I did have some relevant volunteering experience – in particular the peer mentoring role I had as an undergraduate was very relevant to the nature of the charity's work.*

#### 3.1.3 Kate – Volunteer co-ordinator for a national youth charity – graduated in Music in 2001

*I had been working for 2 years as a learning mentor in a Sixth Form college when I saw this job advertised. The location of the job and the fact that it was part-time really suited me as I was doing a Masters course in Counselling at the time. The fact that I had done a lot of volunteering with young people in addition to my paid job as a learning mentor made me a good candidate for the position. My role has a number of aspects to it. I work to identify and design potential volunteering roles we want to fill in the charity, e.g., mentoring young people who are*

*moving out of residential accommodation was a recent role I designed. I also find sources of potential volunteers and recruit and train them. I have to keep on top of an array of administrative systems, e.g., CRB checks as our volunteers work with young people. Another part of my work is actually finding volunteering placements for some of our youth service users. This can involve local opportunities as well as placements further afield as our charity is affiliated to the European Union European Voluntary Service so some service users may go to Europe to volunteer. The job involves lots of liaising with different people across the charity regionally and nationally. This means I am well-connected locally and have a great overview of the charity's work. It's also important that I work well with other people doing the same job as me across the country. As a group of volunteer co-ordinators for the charity we participate in deciding on the strategy/policy on volunteering. Prior to getting this job I had completed mentoring training and also had some basic youth work qualifications. My plan is to move into professional counselling as I have just completed my Masters and working as a volunteer co-ordinator has given me valuable experience.*

### **3.1.4 Jim - Recruitment and marketing co-ordinator – international development charity - graduated in History in 2005**

*I'd actually volunteered for the charity I work for now during my gap year after college so knew a lot about it and the work it does when I applied for the job, which I have been doing for a year now. I had a strong commitment to international development issues and had spent two years working overseas in total. I had worked on a community education HIV/AIDS project in Tanzania and in a more organisational/fundraising role in Ethiopia.*

*My role is to make sure the charity markets itself to a diverse group of potential volunteers right across the UK. We aim to recruit student volunteers into international development roles. I represent the charity across the country. I produce publicity and maintain our website content and interview/recruit all our prospective volunteers. I design and deliver our selection processes and also assist in the training of volunteers. I also work to develop strong partnerships with other similar organisations nationally and internationally. My job is a varied one as I work at a strategic level on policy but am also involved in hands-on day-to-day recruitment. It is great to work with volunteers who have so much enthusiasm for what they will be doing in developing countries. On the downside, working for a small charity means I have to do lots of routine administration which can be frustrating.*

#### **For more information**

<http://www.volunteermanagers.org.uk/>

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) – go to explore types of jobs – volunteer work organiser

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## 3.2 Charity Fundraising

### Findings

- All charities need to raise funds and there is a great need for enthusiastic and able fundraisers.
- It is a role that pulls together commercial savvy with a commitment to the cause of the charity you are working for.
- It is a field that is fairly unique to the voluntary and community sector and it is one which reports that it is hard to fill its vacancies.
- Depending on the size of the charity you work for, it may be necessary to move employer in order to progress career.
- A strong professional network is evident via the Institute of Fundraising. It is important for new fundraisers to access support and training via this.

#### **3.2.1 Rosie – Community fundraiser for an international development (faith-linked) charity – graduated in Social policy in 2003 and MA in International development in 2006**

*I went to a Faith school and so had a connection with the charity I now work for from early in my life. I also undertook volunteer work for some time for the charity before I got this job which gave me a real insight into its work and made me really keen to work for them as they are involved in international aid but also in campaigning, e.g., Drop the Debt campaign. I focus on local communities and my role involves evaluation of current involvement with fundraising, researching potential sources of income, developing fundraising initiatives, working on materials and resources and working closely with other departments and local offices, particularly those in the East of the UK, to ensure that the above happens. I started my job a few months ago so there are still a lot of new processes that I am learning that therefore the only 'down' is an impatience with myself, wanting to run before I can walk! Ups would be the organisation itself and what it stands for. I have wanted to work in this sector for a number of years and I feel very lucky to be working for an international development charity. Also, the people I work with are great, hardworking and fun! I think having the Masters in International Development has been valuable in giving me a deeper insight into development. This has been vital in giving me a greater understanding of what I want out of the organisation in terms of how we work with partners and the importance of issues such as emphasising the dignity of those we aim to support in correspondence to supporters. This is a very complex sector and the fundraising we do has to reflect this.*

#### **3.2.2 Jane - Regional fundraiser (youth charity) – graduated in 2004 in Modern Languages**

*My move to my current position was influenced by a desire to re-locate and also to work for a smaller charity where I would have more responsibility. I had already had fundraising experience for a larger organisation. I have been in my role for over a year and I am working alone for my charity across a large region. The fundraising I do is a broad range including trying to secure corporate support, as well as community fundraising. Both need to be supported by press and PR work. I have a target to fundraise £2 million this year. It is great to organise successful fundraising events and to then visit projects to see what the funds I have raised are allowing to happen. Its fun to run lot of events large and small such as running gig nights, pub quizzes etc. It is a competitive marketplace though working as a fundraiser. Inevitably there are more rejections than generous donations. There are so many charities effectively in competition with each other so you need to be fairly tough in taking the knockbacks to be a successful fundraiser! There is a lot of support out there professionally which helps in managing this. We have a strong professional network amongst fundraisers. I am a member of the of Institute of Fundraising, which puts on short courses and through which it is possible to do the certificate of fundraising management*

#### **3.2.3 Delia - Community fundraiser – disability charity – graduated in 2004 in Business and Anthropology**

*While I was at university I applied for lots of internships for the summer between second and third year with some of the really big corporate organisations. At the time I was chairing the Charities Committee for my college and thoroughly enjoying it; I decided that I wanted to do a job that I enjoyed, that didn't involve sitting at a desk all day. I wanted to work for an organisation that I could be passionate about, somewhere where I could feel that I was*

*really making a difference. This led me to re-direct my applications when I graduated to charitable organisations. Every day is different in my job; I am working to raise money and awareness in a variety of ways. I'm responsible for recruiting people to take part in marathons, bike rides, parachute jumps and so on. I organise a number of smaller community events such as Halloween Walks, Climbing events and Carol Concerts. I am also responsible for organising collections and recruiting volunteers for these, liaising with groups such as RAG and Student Volunteering organisations. I also support people who are organising their own events on our behalf, give talks to various community groups such as rotaries and women's groups and give assemblies to schools and other organisations in order to try and gain their support. I love the variety and the fact that I'm never just sat at my desk. It is great seeing firsthand the difference that our hard work makes to people's lives and meeting so many different people! On the downside, I often work evenings and weekends which can be hard. It can also be demoralising when people say 'no' but you just have to learn to bounce back, there's always a 'yes' just around the corner!*

### **3.2.4 Janet - Recruitment manager – Charity fundraising company – graduated in Psychology and Philosophy in 2005**

*I actually work for a company that works to fundraise on behalf of charities so we are not actually a charity ourselves. I chose to work for this company as I am committed to working for the charity sector, and was impressed by the charity clients the company had and the great atmosphere and attitude amongst the people who worked here.*

*As a recruitment manager I advertise for fundraisers, conduct telephone and face-to-face interviews, devise new recruitment strategies, manage a budget and manage a team of 6 employees in the department.*

*The rewards are amazing. Jobs in the charity sector have very high job satisfaction as you are getting paid, and making the world a better place! The people who work here are inspiring to me, and so I really enjoy going to work and have fun while I'm there, which is a dream! I get to meet lots of people which I love, and I get to travel, which makes my job varied and interesting. There really aren't many downs! I guess it is easy to get caught up in how important the work is, which leads to over working sometimes, or thinking about work after I have gone home. It is fairly demanding work and I have to give 110%, which some people may find off-putting, but I like the satisfaction of working hard.*

#### **For more information**

<http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/>

<http://www.wfac.org.uk/>

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) – go to explore types of jobs – charity fundraiser

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### 3.3 Working in the Voluntary sector infrastructure

#### Findings

- There is a considerable infrastructure that supports and regulates the voluntary sector.
- It is a field that would be easy to overlook, but at this time when the government is keen to support the development of the infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector this is a good area of work to consider entering.
- Typical employers may include the Civil Service (Office for third Sector), Charity Commission and regional councils for voluntary organisations, Volunteer Bureaus.
- It is possible to work in this field and not actually be working for a charity. Could be working for the national or local government.
- Individuals working in this field appear to have done lots of on-the-job learning.

#### 3.3.1 Vicky – Charity review visitor – Charity Regulation body - graduated in Politics and Social policy in 1996

*When I graduated I wanted to work in the charitable sector although I didn't really know exactly what I wanted to do or how to go about finding out more about the opportunities available. I heard about admin posts being advertised at the Charity Commission and thought that this would be a good opportunity to gain experience, both of working in an office environment and also of the charitable sector. I started work as an admin assistant in the Commission in 1997 and did not intend to stay long-term. I saw it as a way of improving my knowledge, skills and experience so that I could then apply for jobs within the sector itself. However, my career has not panned out as I originally intended! Instead of moving into the sector, I have built up my knowledge of charitable law and practice over the last 10 years, working in many operational divisions within the Commission, in both case working and management/training roles, and gaining a number of promotions. I now work as a Review Visits leader.*

*The Review Visits team visits charities across the sector, usually in connection with specific projects. My role involves leading visits to charities reviewing their operation and governance, identifying good practice and highlighting any legal requirements and good practice recommendations. On visits connected to specific projects, I also use this opportunity to obtain information from charities which is then fed into projects within Review Visits and allows us to identify key themes and trends within certain areas of the sector. This can then feed into the Commission's policies, guidance and publications.*

*I conduct thorough research before each visit and produce an individual report for each charity visited, highlighting good practice and setting out our recommendations for improvement if applicable.*

*There are many "ups" to the job. I have visited many interesting and varied charities and this is such a good opportunity to learn about what's happening in the sector and the issues that charities have to manage in order to operate successfully.*

*The main "downs" of the job are probably the travelling and pay! We cover a large proportion of the country and travelling can often be tiring, although we are usually out of the office no more than once a week. Pay is the other negative. Civil Service pay isn't great!*

#### 3.3.2 Patrick now working as a project manager for a regional Centre for Voluntary Organisations – graduated in European Politics and French in 2005

*I was attracted by the fact that the Centre for Voluntary Organisations works strategically to influence policy, conduct research and promote and improve the work of voluntary organisations. I saw this as a worthwhile cause, something to believe in rather than just a job. I wanted to get involved in this kind of work as opposed to delivering services 'on the frontline' because in the long-term I would like to pursue a career in policy analysis / research at a national level, either for the government or a charitable organisation.*

*I am running an 18 month Lottery-funded project to build the capacity of health and social care and supported housing voluntary organisations to engage their service users and enable them to have more of a say over issues that affect them. This has involved organising events, workshops and training sessions in service user involvement and campaigning. I regularly send out news and information to groups of organisations to keep them informed of policy developments that may affect them. I also try to co-ordinate a voluntary sector response to relevant policy consultations. Finally, I have worked with statutory partners in my region on a review of health inequalities. I attended meetings as a voluntary sector representative to oversee the development of the review and co-coordinated voluntary sector participation in it, including a consultation workshop on commissioning.*

*I enjoy organising successful events and workshops and getting positive feedback for them. I also find some of the policy work (particularly health policy) interesting and I am developing a strong knowledge and strategic understanding of how services are planned and delivered. I enjoy responding to policy proposals, particularly when this is done in partnership with other organisations.*

*On the downside, it can be quite difficult to engage small, under-funded organisations in abstract policy work because they understandably have more important priorities, such as bidding for funding and meeting the needs of their client groups. Also, the work that my employer does is inevitably somewhat vague and woolly. We try to encourage partnerships, provide information and build the capacity of the voluntary sector – all of which are quite difficult to quantify.*

### **3.3.3 Michael – graduated in History in 1999 and currently studying part-time for an MSc in Computing - Project co-ordinator for a Centre for Voluntary Organisations**

*I co-ordinate and service a consortium of organisations that provide support and develop frontline voluntary and community groups. The Consortium is funded by the Office of the Third Sector, Department for Communities and Local Government. The government wishes to improve the services and support available to frontline groups so are investing in support organisations across England.*

*My job involves project planning, monitoring and reporting on the joint work of the member organisations. I also work on building partnerships between organisations and managing the dissemination of information (electronically and in hard copy).*

*The role is so varied that it keeps me on my toes and often pushes me outside of my comfort zone. If I were to go into the public sector or back to the private sector, I'd go with far more skills than when I arrived in the voluntary sector.*

*Much of the learning I have done has been on the job. However, I have attended numerous training sessions/courses for personal development.*

#### **For more information**

<http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/>

National Council for Voluntary Organisations - <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/>

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations <http://www.scvo.org.uk>

### 3.4 Charity management and administration

#### Findings

- There are lots of jobs in charities which are all about organising the management of certain projects or activities.
- There aren't any typical job titles but these roles are critical in the enabling of charity activities.
- Considerable diversity of roles on offer but all tend to require people who are very good at multi-tasking.
- This kind of role could suit you if you don't really want to get involved in the service delivery that charities do but would rather have a management role.
- Management skills are an area of skills shortage in the sector, so if this is an area that you are talented in then it could be a good one to get into.
- It is very likely that individuals may transfer administration and management skills gained elsewhere – possibly in the public or private sector.
- Part-time work is common – especially in smaller charities.
- This often seems to be a field that people stumble into and then are surprised at how interesting the work is.
- Individuals who proactively seek out training in this field really value what they have gained from this.

#### 3.4.1 Maria – graduated in Development Studies and Sociology in 2001 – now a Development worker for a youth charity)

*My role involves supporting the development of voluntary youth groups in the city – there are 200 in the city currently. I provide support to existing groups and those that are setting up. I advise groups on suitable procedures for setting up as well as how to get funding. I also represent voluntary youth groups at a strategic level within the city.*

*I maintain contact with 200 groups by distributing news via email bulletins, and participating in steering groups in the voluntary youth sector. I am also an active member of the Youth Matters Board which works to advocate for young people more widely.*

*I love working with such a wide range of people in their communities. I am working to facilitate work in communities that can really turn young people's lives around. I really feel the youth groups add significantly to their own communities and represent positive agents for change in what are some challenging locations where young people are often disaffected. There are some really great people working in the voluntary youth groups I support. On the downside the contracts of employment for me as a development worker are short in this sector. The longest contract I have had so far has been 18 months.*

*During my time doing this kind of work I have been able to complete a number of training courses relevant to management in the voluntary sector, covering issues such as fundraising, making funding applications, monitoring and evaluation of projects as well as subjects such as financial management and "full cost recovery" methodology.*

#### 3.4.2 Rachel – Regional administrator for a young persons' charity – graduated in Art and Design in 2001

*I have been in my current position for 3 years now and I work part-time, which allows me to continue with other interests I have in both art and design but also in youth work. When I first graduated I didn't know what I wanted to do. I did have the ambition of running my own café but this idea faded. I stumbled into a general administrative job before seeing this administrative job being advertised. It looked a good way to use my organisational skills for an organisation that I felt was making a positive difference to the world. I am in charge of the regional office administration for what is quite a large charity. I manage finances and organise IT systems. I also manage our reception and assist the regional manager in the enabling of our frontline services in supporting young people.*

*I really enjoy the fact that I am an enabler. I enable other people such as youth workers, social workers and counsellors to do their work with young people. I am removed from this frontline work but I fully support the vision and values of the work we do as a charity. My role gives me a really wide perspective on what we are achieving. On the downside – there is never enough time to do everything I would like to do in a small office. It really is a challenge to manage and administer systems and people when resources are stretched.*

### **3.4.3 Oliver – project co-co-ordinator for a disability charity – graduated in Modern Languages in 2004**

*My role as a project co-ordinator is actually a part-time one, the other role I have is a more frontline service delivery role with another disability charity. The voluntary sector does have many part-time jobs on offer so the pattern I have is not untypical of the sector more widely.*

*As part of an overseas development placement year after I graduated I had spent a year in Nigeria in a deaf school, which was my first real work experience in the d/Deaf community. The job at this disability charity allowed me to build on that experience. When I applied for the job, the opportunity to start up and manage a three year project was really appealing. It also offered me the opportunity to be supported to learn BSL; I had already learnt ASL in Nigeria.*

*The aim of my project is to support deafblind people or their carers to access Direct Payments effectively. Direct Payments is a system to allow disabled people to have access to funds that will allow them to directly employ potential carers/support workers. The project will run over 3 yrs and will include consultation of deafblind people who use Direct Payments, creating accessible information on Direct Payments, setting up a database of skilled/qualified people that deafblind people may want to employ to support them, establishing an advisory service for deafblind people and carers and training centres for independent living to build their capacity to advise deafblind people on using Direct Payments.*

*I enjoy having various experiences through my two jobs which is great as I am starting off in my career. It can be hard to manage the two roles, especially as they are both currently very new roles so neither is particularly established. Meetings are not always on my regular days at each organisation so some 'juggling' is necessary. I do find it a challenge to stay on top of information, but I think it is still early days and this should improve.*

### **3.4.4 Anna – graduated in Sociology in 2004 – now working as a project executive for an International humanitarian aid charity**

*I wanted a job which gave me the satisfaction of working for a good cause but also the buzz of working in a business environment in a marketing and events role. Corporate fundraising seemed like the ideal combination of both and when I saw this job advertised at one of the world's most respected charities I really had to go for it.*

*My specific role is to work with a major retailer for whom we are their "Charity of the Year 2007". We have a target to raise £2 million from staff and customers at the retailer during 2007. I work in a project management team of five people and my role is focused on developing the fundraising campaigns and initiatives to motivate and inspire the retailer's 260,000 staff in stores, depots and offices across the UK to support us. For example I am currently working on a staff fundraising campaign in August called 'The King Lives' to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Elvis' death. Staff will be encouraged to dress as the king for a day or to "talk a little less" in a sponsored silence.*

*Another large part of my role is supporting our 80 community fundraisers around the UK to effectively engage with and support the retailer's staff in their area. At the moment I am working with them to organise a national collection at all stores in September, led by our own staff and volunteers.*

*Finally I also research and develop new customer marketing initiatives known as CRMs (cause related marketing). This is most often an "on pack" promotion on a product or service sold in the store. For example I am currently working with the retailer and a leading supplier to develop an exclusively themed kettle which will be sold through stores and will benefit the charity.*

*I love my job. The highlights for me are:*

*>the opportunity to be creative in developing the staff fundraising campaigns and the new customer marketing initiatives.*

*> in my role I get to work with a varied and diverse cross section of people across the charity and also with the retailer nationwide. The commitment from the staff in both organisations to give their all for the work we are funding is amazing and that is extremely motivating to me.*

*>I am out and about across the UK visiting depots and stores and working with the local staff in the charity to show the retailer's staff the work we do and the people we help. Seeing first hand the difference we make to people in crisis in local communities is really inspiring to me - it makes all the hard work worthwhile!*

*The lower points*

*>Working with such a big and successful supporting company, there are always so many opportunities to raise money and so much work to do, it can sometimes be difficult to know where to start and fit everything in.*

*Having a strong degree and a good academic history definitely helped me in the application and interview process when I first joined the charity. I moved to my current role after two years here and I'm sure that the short courses I took in project management and delivering effective and convincing presentations helped me to take the next step up. However, I didn't have to complete any lengthy further education or training to get my current job. It is a lot of learning on the job really.*

### **3.4.5 Alison – graduated in Classics in 2005 – now working in charity administration for a fundraising and development charitable organisation**

*When I first graduated I was interested in working within theatre. However after some work experience I decided this was not for me. I was looking around for something to do and stumbled on an internship run by the organisation I now work for. I liked the idea of working for a “good cause”. Since working here I have really valued what is a rewarding and supportive atmosphere.*

*I have two projects I am responsible for. One is managing an overseas development placement. I interview applicants and select candidates for a dental elective position in India. I also liaise with colleagues in India who manage it from that end. The other project is managing a CardAid fundraising initiative. I liaise with charities that will benefit and am involved in the design and production of a Christmas card catalogue selling charity Christmas cards.*

*I have lots of responsibility in this job and supportive colleagues. I also enjoy the overseas contact that I have. It is a role where I have to be flexible and use a variety of skills. I have had internal training in coordinating the projects that I do. I was lucky in getting this position as it was a progression from an internship I had done here.*

### **3.4.6 Paul – graduate of Ecological Sciences/Wildlife Management (2000) now working as a Programmes manager for an international environmental charity**

*When I graduated I was looking for a job in the environment sector and temped for a few months while looking for a job. I successfully got an internship with the charity I work for now and have been here ever since. My role as a Programmes manager involves overseeing the development management of overseas projects. This encompasses fundraising, project evaluation and selection, administration and reporting on projects. I also have a role around education. We have close links with a local university and run an intern programme in partnership with them. Interns work for us and also complete an environment diploma course supervised by us but supported by the university. So effectively it is an internship with practical and academic components. I also teach three modules on practical environment conservation on an MA course.*

*I have a very interesting and varied job and clearly relates to what I studied which is what I have wanted. I get involved in lots of activities and there are opportunities to travel and meet really interesting people. The job demands a high level of commitment and sometimes too much travel.*

*I have completed a lot of training supported by my employer. I have completed courses in project management and administration, public speaking, financial accounting. External courses are generally run through one of NCVO, London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) or the Directory of Social Change*

**For more information**

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) – go to explore types of jobs – charity officer  
Working for a Charity - [www.wfac.org.uk](http://www.wfac.org.uk)

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### 3.5 Policy and research

#### Findings

- I have decided to include a short section on policy and research as this is a niche and popular area although not strictly management and administration.
- Working in policy and research are popular options for graduates as in many ways you could be using your graduate skills of analysing complex information and writing reports as well as being connected to the wider political issues that a charity may be involved in.
- Relative to the numbers of people working in charities in more frontline service delivery roles, the numbers of jobs in policy and research are small, but if this is what you would like to do, there certainly are opportunities if you persevere and look carefully.
- Higher level qualifications are desirable and gaining volunteer experience first is commonplace.

#### 3.5.1 Anita – Masters graduate in Politics (2006) – now working as a policy and information officer for a national health charity

*My first degree was in History and I did an MA in the Politics of Democracy. I was interested in working in the voluntary sector because I wanted to do something a bit different to a lot of the corporate graduate training schemes that had such a high profile when I was at university. I was especially interested in public policy, and had some experience in health and social care policy from an earlier internship, so this role at a health charity really appealed to me. The charity has a reputation for having very good training and development of staff, so I saw it as a good place to start my career.*

*My role is quite mixed. Part of my work involves formulating the charity's public policy positions in response to government initiatives, so I write a lot of consultation responses, submissions to government and briefings for senior staff. I am also involved with making sure the charity's messages are in line with the latest research and views of people with suffering from the health condition our charity focuses on. This means that I carry out opinion research - including large-scale surveys and focus groups - and analyse the responses. I also work on particular projects that have policy implications.*

*The 'ups' are that it's interesting to be dealing with policy - I like that I have to think about my job, rather than just doing it all automatically. It's also really interesting to be involved with lots of different types of work. The 'downs' are probably that there aren't that many opportunities in this kind of role outside London.*

*I don't think I would have got into the job without the MA in Politics. I think it's a lot easier to get a job like this with such a qualification.*

#### 3.5.2 Paddy – Masters graduate in International Development (2006) – now doing an internship working as a Livelihoods research assistant in the programme policy team of an international development charity

*My first degree was in Geography and I then did a Masters in International Development which focussed on the economics and management of rural development. I chose to do this internship as I wanted to develop a career in international development and this particular placement fitted well with my background and my future career aspirations. I would not have applied if I didn't think it would help me get a 'foot on the ladder' towards where I want to be.*

*With a focus on the livelihoods of people living in poverty, I conduct background research and work with other members of the programme policy team to develop the charity's policy positions and to support the work of programme staff working overseas. This charity is a fantastic organisation with a vast wealth of expertise. Working alongside such experienced and committed professionals is really inspiring and means you learn incredibly quickly. My work has been really interesting and there is no lack of motivation to get out of bed in the*

*morning. The downside of working for such a large organisation is that there is inevitably a lot of bureaucracy and it can take quite a while to get decisions on seemingly simple issues.*

*The job description specified that a degree in development, business or economics was necessary for the role, and in practice I have found that my masters degree in particular has given me a very useful background in many of the issues I'm now working on.*

**For more information**

[http://www.policyjobs.net/blogsection/Uk\\_Vacancies/](http://www.policyjobs.net/blogsection/Uk_Vacancies/)

<http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/jobs/charities>

Academic jobs site [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) (includes some charity vacancies)

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### **3.6 Marketing, communications and campaigning**

#### **Findings**

- For virtually all charities getting their message across is critical to their success so they need people who can work to raise the profile of their organisation and communicate their message. Interestingly, job titles won't always say marketing and communications so it is wise to always look carefully at what jobs involve.
- Individuals come from a variety of academic/work backgrounds into this work but the requirement of strong organisational and interpersonal skills is a common theme for people doing these jobs.
- A relevant degree/academic background is useful.
- Marketing and communications skills are highly transferable and there is lots of possible career movement for people with this occupational background.
- Campaigning is a more niche field and smaller numbers of people actually do this work.

#### **3.6.1 Ellen – Communications graduate (2005) – now working as a media and communications executive for a professional body representing the chief executives of charities**

*Moving into this job seemed a natural progression for me from roles in which I had been involved in governance and political issues. I had been a Student Union sabbatical when I graduated and then worked for an MP in his constituency. I liked the idea of working for an umbrella organisation within the Third sector. The sector does seem to play a big role in influencing public policy debates and I was also interested in how Third sector organisations actually run themselves.*

*In my role as media and communications executive I am attached to the policy team and have to have a depth of understanding of relevant policy issues. I am involved in numerous events that address the externally-facing policies of the organisation. I participate in consultation events and international work. I have specific responsibility for representing my organisation with articles in the Third sector press. I also have a watching brief on the publications of my organisation. I write and draft opinion pieces on behalf of senior staff and work hard in building relationships with journalists within the wider media to make sure our views are represented and disseminated and we build our profile. The body I work for is particularly keen to spread the message of how professional the sector is and this is an aim that informs my work. I do have a lot of autonomy as I am not part of a bigger media team and work more closely with policy staff.*

*My job gives me a really wide overview of what is going on in our organisation and I am dealing with a really interesting subject matter as we are looking at the current and future role of the Third sector. I like having a communications role that is based in the policy team as I can really get under the skin of our organisation. I have a challenging job and the volume of writing I have to do can be a slog. It can be a bit reactive at times too as we are forced to respond to issues coming up that are out of our control or sphere of influence. A big challenge is building up relationships with journalists as we really do rely on them to ensure our stories/opinions are published. Unfortunately they can let you down, but that is part of the job.*

#### **3.6.2 Fiona – English graduate (2004) – now working as a marketing and communications executive for an international development charity**

*I wanted to work for an organisation which allowed me to feel proud and passionate about my job – my job does this. I had no interest in making rich people richer. Instead I wanted to work in a global organisation that allowed me to feel that the world is a small place, where we are all connected and our actions have an impact.*

*Working in the Marketing team at an international development charity allows me to work for an organisation renowned for its innovation in fundraising. I can therefore acquire a variety of skills in a variety of areas.*

*I am a Marketing Communications Executive in our Loyalty team. I work in a small team who engage supporters who have been with us for two years or more. This team is part of a wider unit who recruit and retain supporters to ensure that our work is fully funded and can grow.*

*I project manage fundraising campaigns with a variety of mediums - mail packs, telemarketing, emails. As a team we ask for one off gifts, regular gifts and manage emergency appeals for crises such as the Tsunami and Pakistan Earthquake.*

*The ups are the variety of work and exposure to a huge range of our programmes. The sense of satisfaction on working to raise millions of pounds for our work is fantastic. There's always lots going on here and plenty to get involved in - the social scene is great. There is also an opportunity to travel to our international programmes which is great for me as I'm an avid traveller. On the down side it can be frustrating when resources are limited and things can take a long time to get off the ground. As with any job, there's a fair share of mundane tasks which have to be done in order to achieve your goals.*

*I am currently studying for a Postgraduate Diploma in Interactive and Direct Marketing. It's not a must as a condition of my post but it means that I am able to do so much more and improve my career prospects enormously. I think it's good to be proactive in doing further study if you want to make a good career in the sector.*

### **3.6.3 Hannah – Modern History graduate (2005) – now working as a schools outreach co-ordinator at an international development charity**

*I wanted to work somewhere where I'd feel motivated and inspired every day. This charity is an ambitious organisation - with the ultimate goal of overcoming poverty and suffering - and I wanted to be a part of that. To me, my employer stood out from other development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) because of its focus on working with others to tackle the causes of poverty. It realises the importance of listening to those who are suffering, and not presuming to know the solutions to their problems. It's also got a really strong campaigns record, and I wanted to learn more about the work being done to promote lasting change in attitudes, behaviour, policy and practice - vital if we are to achieve a world free from poverty.*

*My role is as Schools Outreach Coordinator in the Education and Youth Team. I coordinate a group of 80 volunteer School Speakers, who are based all around England. They go into schools approximately once a month to run workshops on the struggle against global poverty, and to inspire and empower young people to take action. In addition, I am currently developing several new initiatives for engaging with schools and young people.*

*I love going into schools and working with young people - their enthusiasm is incredible! I also really enjoy chatting to our volunteer speakers after they've been into schools, to find out how it's gone, what worked well and how we might improve sessions in the future. Running training sessions is another highlight - I get a real buzz from seeing smiling faces at the end of a course. I occasionally have days when I'm stuck behind a computer for hours on end, which I don't enjoy so much, but it's an inevitable part of most jobs.*

*I had an internship here before I got this job and had some great training in IT which has been really useful in this job (e.g. PowerPoint courses & courses on creating/editing webpages).*

### **3.6.4 Rachel - Law graduate (2004) now working as a student programme officer for a national children's charity**

*During my time studying law I became very interested in preventing crime rather than punishing it reactively. I wanted to work with children and young people experiencing the types of things that may lead to crime in order to help them as individuals to follow a better path and lead more productive and happier lives. Working for a UK children's charity offered me the opportunity I was looking for. I am currently a student programme officer and prior to that I worked for 18 months at this charity on a children's project.*

*My role involves organising large street collections for university RAG groups, recruiting and supporting student event fundraisers, raising awareness of the charity's work today amongst students. The best things about the job include: attending the fundraising events after all the hard work planning and organising them, seeing lots of guests there learning more about us and donating generously is brilliant. My colleagues and most other people I have met in the voluntary sector are very kind, friendly people – lovely to work with. Feeling like I've helped those in need and not just lined my own pockets at the end of a work day is always good. Getting to go out and meet people rather than being purely office based is good – it provides variety and interest. There is a "muck in" attitude – it's possible to get involved with other departments because most are under-resourced and it's often all hands on deck! Again, this provides interest and variety and I have gained lots of experience. On the downside fundraising targets can sometimes create pressure, my area is massive (North & Midlands plus North Wales) and I sometimes feel over-stretched and frustrated that I can't do more. The main requirements were good communication (written and verbal) and the ability to build and maintain good relationships with people*

### **3.6.5 James – Marketing graduate (2003) – now working as a corporate and events officer for a health sector charity**

*The organisation I work for has an excellent reputation in specialising in cancer issues so I was really keen to work here. I wanted to use my skills to fundraise. I also wanted to gain experience of working on mass participation events.*

*As a corporate & events officer I am involved in event management, fundraising, marketing, and researching and developing a network of corporate contacts. Working in events means meeting lots of people which is definitely a plus for me. Also due to the nature of our charity we meet lots of dedicated fundraisers who have been inspired in some way by the hospital. My job can be tough sometimes though when I see first hand the effects of cancer. However, that is the issue that I am part of a team to work on. The charity did specify that a graduate was required for this role when I applied, ideally with good relevant experience which luckily I had.*

### **3.6.6 Alana – graduate of Business (2007) – now working as a student programme assistant for a national children's charity.**

*I worked as a temporary employee for smaller children's charity and through a contact heard of my current job. I decided to apply to work for this charity because I have always wanted to work in the charity sector and felt that I wanted to contribute to the good work that the charity does. It is also very difficult to find a job in charities outside of London so this was a very good opportunity as it's in Leeds where I wanted to be.*

*As a Student Programme Assistant, I provide administrative support to the team – applying for collection permits, sending out materials, planning for events, recording and monitoring income etc. I am also responsible for carrying out research and building new relationships with FE/HE colleges throughout the country to promote the charity and offer volunteering and fundraising opportunities for students.*

*It is great working with students and seeing all the good work they do through volunteering their time for collections, events etc. I also really enjoy helping to plan for large events, such as megaraids (large street collections) and seeing the results at the end of the hard work and months of planning. The job can sometimes involve quite a lot of paperwork, so I have to be organised and also persistent in chasing and email / phone calls when desperately trying to sort things like collection permits! I haven't been doing the job for long and I will be taking part in additional training in the future to help me in my role.*

### **3.6.7 Rebecca – English Language and Literature graduate (2006) now doing an internship as an events co-ordinator within campaigns and policy with an international development charity**

*I've always been involved with international development campaigns and did a fair amount of charity work (RAG) whilst at university. Since then I've been looking into doing a Masters in Development Studies and needed some*

*work experience in order to get on the course, not to mention actually getting an insight into what the international development sector was really like from the inside.*

*As an intern I am the Events' Coordinator in the Campaigns and policy team. I am planning and coordinating something called "Mini-CHANGE", a programme training young campaigners in the necessary skills to enable them to raise awareness of international development work and the issues we are currently facing globally.*

*There are lots of really good things about the internship: a lot of independence; interesting research to do; a really active environment; and it's a transitional time in Campaigns at the moment - meaning it's possible to make an input and find out about lots of exciting new pilot schemes and influence the direction campaigns may go in.*

*There are no real negatives - occasionally I feel like a sales rep, ringing up universities/societies and asking them to feature us in newsletters. But it's definitely worth it, and after all I believe in what I am selling! It's also a really sociable job.*

### **For more information**

Chartered Institute of Marketing - <http://www.cim.co.uk>

Voluntary sector resources - <http://www.volresource.org.uk>

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### 3.7 Graduate schemes and internship opportunities

- Charities do not really use designated graduate programmes as a pathway into the sector. This is for a range of reasons and largely because charities will generally recruit for specific jobs rather than take on new staff with a view to train and develop them.
- There are moves to develop a career entry scheme for the sector via NCVO.<sup>19</sup>
- There are a handful of charities that do have graduate programmes which are very competitive. These seem to focus on general management roles.
- Housing charities appear to favour this as an approach more than any other sub-sector of the Voluntary/community sector.
- There are also some internship opportunities that could be suitable for graduates. But they aren't always paid although will offer subsistence and great training.
- Certain sub-sectors of the voluntary and community sector are particularly tough for graduates to get into. International development work and environment work are two of the most competitive. It is normal for individuals to have done voluntary work before getting into one of these sub-sectors.
- Volunteer internship roles may give you a foot in the door into some charities but even these can be sometimes competitive to get onto.
- In certain sub-sectors especially environment and international development, successful applicants will often have relevant postgraduate qualifications.

#### 3.7.1 Molly – Masters graduate of the History of Science, Medicine and Technology – now on the graduate corporate services scheme for a cancer charity

*Having studied the history of science and medicine at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, when I saw the graduate position advertised I felt I had a knowledge that was relevant to working for a cancer charity. I like the fact that I am working for a cause that I am really passionate about. The fact that it is a big charity means there is a really visible sense of the impact of the charity's work. When I first graduated I worked in the media and never felt the identification with my employer as I do now. On the graduate corporate services scheme, I do 4x 6 month business administration placements in various part of the organisation. I have done one in IT department and am now in research and strategy. My aims are to learn about the business and manage specific projects. A recent project I managed involved the recovery of overpaid VAT on products the charity should have got on a zero-rated level. This had a really positive outcome financially for the charity. It is great to have the opportunity to move around departments as this allows me to find out what I am best at and enjoy. I know it sounds cheesy but I love my job. I like the contact with volunteers on the ground at major events. I relish the impact I can make to the charity's cause and being involved in fundraising on the ground. There is a real buzz around events which makes me feel very proud of who I work for. Of course there are mundane parts of my job which is inevitable in the day to day reality and the constraints of this. There is a lot of training on the job. I am encouraged to be proactive about personal development. I have been learning a lot of business analysis skills and project management tools.*

#### 3.7.2 Jim – Natural Sciences graduate (2006) – now doing a gap year with an international development charity

*My university studies had introduced me to Development as a subject as I had studied several development modules as part of Anthropology which I could do as part of the Natural Sciences framework. I wanted to get into development and realised I needed a bit more experience. The volunteer gap year with this charity seemed an ideal way to get an insight into the sector as well as looking good on my CV! The internship I am doing is open to anyone over 18 so you don't need a degree, but a lot of the interns do.*

*I am working for a faith-based charity and am currently a youth and student worker, working in church youth groups and with student groups raising awareness of global issues that the charity works on and getting people*

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<sup>19</sup> Third sector: First Choice – Exploring the viability of a new scheme to attract graduates to the voluntary and community sector as the first stage in building their career. (NCVO 2006)

*involved in fundraising and campaigning. This does mean you have to be a Christian to do the job as this allows you to understand how to best operate in a church/Christian environment.*

*I love the fact that no two days are ever the same with different events and workshops to plan and run. There's also a high level of contact with lots of different people so things are never dull. Sometimes it can be a bit daunting going to new groups of people each time, but this soon becomes normal, and inevitably means I am really developing my personal skills and confidence. I have had a lot of training on the job while at the charity.*

### **3.7.3 Henry – graduate of Sociology and Social Policy (2003) – now doing a volunteer internship with an anti-poverty charity in the UK**

*I found out about this charity and then attended an information weekend last year. During the weekend we learnt about poverty in the UK through watching videos, chatting to the team and having discussion amongst ourselves. Following this weekend, and after a lot of thought, I decided to apply for their three month introductory programme as it sounded interesting and diverse, and seemed to be a good career step. My role is very varied, as nobody has a specific job title, and we all get involved in different areas of the organisation.*

*There are many different aspects to my role. The main project that I am working on is with the policy team. We are currently working on a project to provide training to people with experience of poverty, to enable them to go into their own communities and interview people about poverty in the UK, with the grand aim of publishing a research paper based on the interviews. At the same time I am involved in a 'doorstep library,' whereby I go into a deprived housing estate to read and lend books to families with small children. Through this we aim to meet families who are not reached by other organisations, and offer signposting and support. I have also attended various careers fairs throughout England to try and recruit new volunteers, have participated in 'family respite stays' at a Respite Centre, organised two fundraising events, and visited the international centre in France.*

*One of the most positive aspects is that I know that I am really reaching people who need support, people who would otherwise be very isolated and forgotten by the rest of society. At the same time this can be quite harrowing, as it seems like such a small drop in the ocean! However, when you see small steps that individuals or families have made towards gaining respect and dignity, then it makes it all worthwhile. It is also fantastic to be given such big responsibilities and opportunities so early on in a job. I also love the fact that the job is very varied and flexible, e.g. I am able to work at grassroots level but also support people at meetings with policymakers and MPs. The charity makes a special effort to tailor the job to suit individual volunteer's needs and skills, which I think is really valuable and not very common.*

### **3.7.4 Jenny – graduate of Politics, Philosophy and Economics (2005) and Masters in International Politics (2006) – now working as a volunteer intern reviewing civilian protection in humanitarian programmes for an international development charity**

*The internship I am doing offered me the opportunity to gain experience related to conflict resolution and protection, and to gain experience of international humanitarian work, and to gain exposure of the wider work of the charity as a whole. I am currently reviewing our civilian protection work in its humanitarian programmes round the world. This involves reviewing proposals, planning documents, correspondence etc, to see what protection work is being done on certain projects, evaluating this information according to specific questions, and interviewing field staff and managers to gain further information and opinion on our programmes. The interviews are definitely high points: talking with people engaged with humanitarian work is a very satisfying process, and always useful. Discovering more about different conflicts and what we are doing to tackle them is also fascinating. The downs are the failures: seeing where the charity could have done better and receiving challenges to my work - but both of these are hugely valuable experiences. I think an MA was desirable for the role I am doing although I didn't complete it specifically to get this position. I think my undergraduate studies also impressed the recruiters for the internship.*

### 3.7.5 For more information

All of the following have recently run programmes suitable for graduates – this includes both internships and longer term opportunities. This is not meant to represent a complete list. Inevitably definitions of what are graduate schemes and internships are fairly loose.

#### **Intern opportunities – Paid and unpaid**

Amnesty - <http://www.amnesty.org.uk>

ATD - <http://www.atd-uk.org>

Christian Aid - <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/jobs/index.aspx>

Charities Advisory Trust - <http://www.charitiesadvisorytrust.org.uk>

Turning Point – <http://www.turning-point.co.uk/>

World Land Trust - <http://www.worldlandtrust.org/>

Groundwork Trust - <http://www.groundwork.org.uk/>

Oxfam - [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/get\\_involved/work\\_with\\_us/](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/get_involved/work_with_us/)

British Youth Council - <http://www.byc.org.uk/>

CSV - <http://www.csv.org.uk/>

#### **Graduate schemes**

Barnardos - [http://www.barnardos.org.uk/work\\_with\\_us/jobs.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/work_with_us/jobs.htm)

Great Places Housing Group - <http://www.greatplaces.org.uk/>

Look Ahead Housing and Social care - <http://www.lookahead.org.uk>

NSPCC - <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

Cancer Research UK - <http://jobs.cancerresearchuk.org/>

#### **Overseas opportunities**

Student Partnerships Worldwide - <http://www.spw.org/>

Development in Action - <http://www.developmentinaction.org/>

Frontier - <http://www.frontier.ac.uk/>

Voluntary Services Overseas - <http://www.vso.org.uk/>

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### **3.8 Personnel and human resources**

#### **Findings**

- HR is an example of a management function that you could do within a charity environment. It may well be an example (like finance and accountancy) where individuals come to a charity having already gained relevant professional qualifications and having decided to use their skills in the voluntary and community sector.
- This would require you to decide you wanted a career in HR first! However some charities will support individuals through professional training in HR.
- Having a relevant degree clearly will help you get into this work for positions at all levels.
- HR activity in charities is a growing priority so working for a charity in HR is a developing area.

#### **3.8.1 Charlotte – graduate of Human Resource Management (2006) – now working as HR administrator for a national children’s charity**

*I studied for four years to obtain a BA (Hons) in Human Resource Management, accredited by CIPD. I chose to take up the post of HR Admin at this charity because it presented an opportunity to enter the HR industry in a position that allowed use of my knowledge and skills gained through university but also offered new challenges and new experiences for me to tackle. My role is as HR Administrator for the charity’s Recruitment Shared Service - where recruitment for the organisation is organised through regional areas in UK.*

*My job involves managing and facilitating the recruitment process for the South East of England region. This involves liaising with regional recruiting Project Managers, facilitating the opening of new vacancies, the creation of recruitment advertising, produced through our preferred recruitment advertising agency, receiving and collating completed application forms, corresponding with applicants via standard formal letters, processing vetting checks, references, police check and medical assessment, for those candidates who, after interview, have been selected to enter post, and finally, the issuing of formal letters of appointment and full statements of particulars, once all vetting checks have been completed and approved.*

*For me, an enjoyable aspect of my job is the fact that the management of each vacancy is a series of stages, with a beginning and an end. I am able to open each new vacancy and implement standard practices and procedures to see each post filled and each new employee welcomed. Further to this, my team of colleagues within the Recruitment Shared Service and the support provided by my team leaders and manager enhance my experience of work. In my opinion, aspects of my job which some would consider to be a down side are normally characterised by instances of deviations from the standard recruitment process which inevitably means some trouble-shooting.*

#### **3.8.2 Anne – graduate of Psychology and European Studies (2002) – now working as a HR executive for and international development charity**

*Since my first year of university I’ve felt strongly that I want to contribute to overcoming poverty and suffering in poorer countries. Of the International Development charities, this one was the one I knew the best and admired the most. My role is as a HR Executive (Management Information Team), but I also volunteer for the charity in my own time as the Chairperson of a local campaigning and fundraising group.*

*I am a member of the project team to develop a new HR system for the charity, in which I have two roles: firstly, leading on global training delivery of the new system; and secondly, project office support. I also maintain the existing international HR database, and deliver training on that.*

*I enjoy being a key trainer in supporting others in order to make their jobs easier. I sometimes wish though that I was closer to the frontline of the charity’s work!*

#### **3.8.3 Syed – graduate of Sociology (2005) – now working in HR at a national children’s charity**

*HR was definitely something I was interested in after university but there seemed to be a lot of barriers to getting in. After finishing my degree I looked into doing the CIPD qualification for a year but I couldn't afford to support myself through another year of education. It seemed that the majority of opportunities in HR needed experience or the qualification so it got put on the back burner for a while, until I was fortunate enough to find this role as a HR administrator. I knew of this charity and their values from a young age and wanted to be involved in helping them achieve their goals. It was great to combine this with my interest in HR. My job involves organising the HR and recruitment administration for the charity's recruitment campaigns. I have only recently started this job, therefore I am finding everything fresh and enjoyable, and I believe it will be satisfying seeing a recruitment campaign from start to finish. I am still to identify any "downs".*

### **For more information**

Chartered institute of Personnel development - <http://www.cipd.co.uk>  
People Matters - [http://www.volresource.org.uk/main/ind\\_peep.htm](http://www.volresource.org.uk/main/ind_peep.htm)

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## Chapter 4                    The role of volunteering experience – the graduate view

One of the questions I asked participants in the research was about volunteering. I did this in order to check out the popularly held truth that working as a volunteer was a way in to getting a job in a charity. Whereas I knew this may have held true for roles such as youth work and social care, I wanted to see if this was also true of people going into management and administration roles.

Of the 30 participants who answered this question 21 had done voluntary work and 9 had not.

- 4.1 Those who had not done voluntary work often brought skills relevant to the role they were doing from other experiences.
- 4.2 Some participants felt that the emphasis in having voluntary work before getting in to the sector was misleading and that it was possible to get in without this.
- 4.3 Sometimes it is necessary to have volunteered even to get a volunteer internship. The sub-sector where the expectation of having done voluntary work was highest was in international development.
- 4.4 For some individuals the experience of voluntary work had contributed to their choosing to work for a charity. It appears that the kind of people who want to volunteer (without really thinking about how this may be good for their CV) may be more likely to want to work for a charity later on.
- 4.5 For those who had volunteered this very much featured as integral to their career pathway and life motivations. Voluntary work can be highly desirable and many of the participants who had done voluntary work had gained exceptional evidence of skills and commitment via volunteering.
- 4.6 Some individuals continue to volunteer even when they have got a job with a charity to develop their skills.

Below are the responses to the question: **Did you have any experience of volunteering prior to getting into the sector?**

### 4.1 Participants with very little volunteering experience but with significant skills they had gained in other ways:

Nearly a third of the graduates I interviewed working for a charity had not done any significant volunteering prior to getting their job. However all of them brought relevant skills to the job they applied for. This could be through paid work, relevant studies, getting their foot in the door into an organisation and building from there. They may well have supported charity activities in the past but not as a volunteer.

#### 4.1.1 Ellen – media and communications executive for a professional body representing the chief executives of charities

*No I didn't really have any volunteering experience. However I did have other relevant experiences. I had been involved in student politics and ran a successful campaign for election as an independent sabbatical. I had a year as a Student Union sabbatical (democracy and communications officer) at a large university. In this role I acted as a trustee of the Students Union which meant I needed to know a lot about charity regulation and infrastructure. This sabbatical role also involved a lot of media liaison. When I finished this role I worked for an MP as communications officer in his constituency. I heard about the role I am doing now via a friend and had to apply via a not-for-profit sector recruitment agency. The experiences I had had qualified me well for the role.*

#### 4.1.2 Charlotte – HR administrator for a national children's charity

*I haven't done any voluntary work but I did have other relevant experience. Prior to this position I was a full-time student. During my degree in Human Resource Management I did a professional placement with a local authority. I was placed in an administrator post for the three month term in the Buildings and Maintenance Personnel/HR department where I assisted in the areas of recruitment, absence management, disciplinary and grievance and the general maintenance of employee personnel files.*

#### 4.1.3 Alana – student programme assistant for a national children's charity

*I have not had any voluntary work experience prior to working here. I have had several jobs ranging from working for a public sector funding body, an FE College and a health centre. This position is my first 'proper' full-time after university. I think that having a Business degree probably helped.*

#### **4.1.4 Vicky – Charity review visitor for charity Regulation body**

*I have worked here for about ten years starting here soon after graduation. I had not volunteered before I worked here. I started with an entry level administrative job and have worked my way up through various operational grades to the role I hold now.*

#### **4.1.5 Anna – project executive for an international humanitarian aid charity**

*I volunteered to help at a major Cancer Research fundraising event as a steward and I did a two week volunteer placement helping to prepare for and deliver the charity's annual AGM. I also had other relevant experience when I applied for the job here. I had a part-time role as a customer service rep in a credit card call centre and I was an events assistant at an events management company while I was at university. Plus I had done loads of other odd jobs and temporary roles in marketing, sales and events. I saw this job through a charity recruitment agency. I had the required experience for an entry level corporate fundraising role as I had worked in events, marketing and customer service in temporary and part-time roles at university and on my holidays.*

### **4.2 Participants who reject the notion that you need to have been a volunteer in order to get a job in the voluntary sector**

Some of those who had not volunteered were fairly adamant that you don't always need voluntary experience to get a job in a charity. These individuals had generally gained very good experience elsewhere. All were examples of individuals with strong commercial savvy.

#### **4.2.1 Michael – project co-ordinator for a Centre for Voluntary organisations**

*My first job here was as working on partnership development with the statutory sector. I heard about the job from a 'friend of a friend'. When I graduated I travelled for a year then worked in media planning & buying for three years after that. This gave me experience of project management, monitoring budgets, working to deadlines etc which have proved really useful and I think helped me to get the job. There was a general feeling that employing someone with private sector experience was a good thing. I had no experience of volunteering before getting into the sector. I had bought into the myth that you have to volunteer for months or even years to get a good job in the sector - I'm sure that is the case for some of the high profile national organisations in particularly competitive fields of work, but it's not the case everywhere.*

#### **4.2.2 James – corporate and events officer for a health sector charity**

*I didn't have any experience of volunteering but I did have a background in business to business events marketing industry and my degree was in marketing. My first role after graduation was as a Business Information Officer for a business support agency. I was then offered a position in the marketing and events department after a few months and continued to work as an Events Co-ordinator until I took up my role here.*

#### **4.2.3 Molly – graduate corporate services scheme for a cancer charity**

*I think it is dangerous to generalise about the need to have voluntary experience when applying to a charity. It all depends on the role you are going for. I didn't have any volunteering experience when I got this job. However, I had donated and supported the work of charities. I was very interested in cancer issues and my academic studies (History of Medicine) gave me relevant knowledge to the work of the charity.*

### **4.3 Examples of participants who have done considerable volunteering before even doing a volunteer internship**

Numerous individuals had actually done considerable volunteering experience before getting onto a volunteer internship. This is most notably the case in international development and the environment.

#### **4.3.1 Henry – volunteer intern with anti-poverty charity**

*I am currently a volunteer intern and have already done a lot of volunteering in the past. I took a gap year before university and spent six months volunteering for CSV (Community Service Volunteers) supporting students with disabilities. Whilst at university I volunteered with Student Community Action and a local drop-in centre for refugees and asylum seekers. The past two summers I have spent teaching English in refugee camps in Lebanon and the West Bank, and I have also helped organise events for Student Action for Refugees and the Refugee Survival Trust. However, it is not essential to have other experience of voluntary work before joining this charity as a volunteer intern.*

#### **4.3.2 Jenny – volunteer intern for an international development charity**

*In the past I have volunteered on a Kibbutz in Israel, on an environmental programme in Slovakia, and on an HIV and AIDS awareness project in Kenya. After my MA I also volunteered for six months in this charity's campaigns office for Yorkshire and the North East. I have also volunteered for two different MPs in their respective constituency offices.*

#### **4.3.3 Paddy – livelihoods research intern at an international development charity**

*My current role is voluntary although I can claim expenses. I took a year out from my undergraduate degree in Geography to work as a volunteer for a small rural development NGO in the Philippines. I have also travelled quite a bit in developing countries and have spent a few months doing administrative work for other international development charities. I also volunteered on a summer building and teaching project in Kenya. International development is a competitive sector to get into and most people who get into it seem to have done a lot of volunteering. This is on top of my Masters in International Development*

#### **4.3.4 Rebecca - volunteer internship as an events co-ordinator within the campaigns and policy team with an international development charity**

*I was an asylum caseworker at a refugee centre and used to volunteer with the charity I am doing an internship with once a week. I also did a lot of work on Make Poverty History. I taught in South China and Hong Kong, and organised community drama projects.*

### **4.4 Participants whose experience of voluntary work had contributed to their choosing to eventually work for a charity**

There was evidence that for some individuals volunteering had begun as something which was a hobby or reflected personal interests or commitments. This had then led them into considering working for a charity as a career. The volunteering they may have done did not always relate to the charity they were now working for, but provided evidence that they were proactive individuals prepared to take on responsibilities without monetary gain.

#### **4.4.1 Delia – community fundraiser for a disability charity**

*As a hobby, I have volunteered on a specialist railway in Wales since I was 14. I have also always helped with Brownies and Guides. Whilst at university I was involved in a number of committees, most relevant being the charities committee, but I also helped organise the Summer Ball and organised Freshers Week for my college during my third year. All these experiences were so valuable and I'm sure it would have taken me much longer to get into the charity sector without them.*

#### **4.4.2 Fiona – marketing and communications executive for an international development charity**

*In the past I volunteered for a local stage school, helping them with marketing and other small projects. I also spent time volunteering in the NHS when I was trying to decide what career I wanted. I was also quite active at university and college in unpaid roles as editor of the college newspaper and then writing for the university one. I was also the Events Manager for my university dance society. Getting experience anywhere you can is invaluable and has helped me. I started here in a routine role answering the phone to enquiries. After a year out travelling/temping I got the job in the Supporter Relations department speaking to supporters on the phone and working with participants who take part in our fundraising events. After about nine months I moved into my current role.*

#### **4.4.3 Alison – charity administrator for a fundraising and development charitable organisation**

*Most of my volunteer experience was in theatre as that had been the area I originally wanted to work in but this allowed me to gain transferable skills such as organisation and project management. About a year after graduating I was successful in landing a paid internship role here which I really enjoyed and did for a few months working on Card Aid before progressing to a full-time position.*

#### **4.4.4 Rachel – student programme officer for a national children’s charity**

*I had some experience as a volunteer helping young children to read in my local primary school and at my school’s after school crèche. I also volunteered for a short time as an assistant climbing instructor at my local climbing wall, taking groups of children for sessions. I had also had significant unpaid caring responsibilities for members of my family.*

#### **4.5 Participants who have had considerable experience of voluntary work which has been integral to their career pathway/personal interests**

For some individuals there was a very strong thread throughout their volunteering experience which pointed to a career in a certain field. In many cases these volunteering experiences showed an exceptional level of dedication and commitment.

##### **4.5.1 Oliver – two part-time jobs – one as a project co-ordinator for a disability charity, the other as a support worker for another disability charity**

*I have volunteered in various ways for the last 5-6 yrs. I have worked with children and adults with disabilities in a broad range of settings - including play schemes, a school, an after-school club, a supported living scheme and arts projects. To start with a lot of this work was voluntary and I then gradually started getting paid. I started to work during university holidays on this, then after graduation started to work more solidly into getting into this sector. My volunteering overseas involved work in a deaf school, which was my first real work experience in the d/Deaf community. When I returned from doing this overseas development placement in Nigeria, I had not lived in London before so volunteering was a good way to get involved in organisations, network and keep busy while job-hunting. I volunteered for a few days at one of the disability charities I am now working for and met people who worked in the organisation.*

##### **4.5.2 Rosie – community fundraiser for an international development (faith-linked) charity**

*After my undergraduate degree I went to South Africa for three months to do voluntary work teaching English and to work on the HIV/AIDS education programme in a township primary school. I had an ongoing volunteer role for the charity I work for now for a couple of years before I got this job. I did this voluntary work parallel to other paid work and further study. I have also done a small piece of volunteer research work for an international anti-poverty charity.*

##### **4.5.3 Paul – Programmes manager for an international environmental charity**

*I had done volunteer work for a conservation group at university. I also independently took part in an overseas community based volunteering placement in the Philippines and I also did a placement doing bird surveying in Peru for three months. The internship I did for the charity I currently work for was voluntary for six months. I managed to do this relying on my income from a part-time waiting on job together with subsistence from the charity.*

##### **4.5.4 Patrick – project manager for a regional Centre for Voluntary Organisations**

*Prior to getting this job I worked for three months as an unpaid intern at a political think tank based in Westminster. My job was to research potential invitees to events as well as general administration. After that I worked for a further three months as an unpaid voluntary project assistant for a community environment charity in the North-West. My work involved writing material for the website and promotional literature to take to events. I also helped organise a major conference on community cohesion. In addition to all this unpaid work, I also volunteered at university for ‘Nightline,’ a confidential listening service for students in mental distress.*

##### **4.5.5 Hannah – schools outreach co-ordinator at an international development charity**

*I think it was my experience of teaching and volunteer management that got me this job. I'd taught English as a foreign language in Nepal and China, and I did a six month stint teaching history at a school in Oxford. While at university I was a RAG representative, and President of a university charity which ran summer holidays for disadvantaged children, so that gave me experience of coordinating volunteers. I then spent seven months as a volunteer coordinating the 30+ interns at this charity. I then secured a paid job at the charity.*

#### **4.5.6 Anita – policy and information officer for a national health charity**

*I did a lot of voluntary work for the students' union while at university, and I'd also done some volunteering with disabled people and at a primary school. My six month internship, which I did, while studying, at a political think-tank was also voluntary. I also did a six-month paid internship at a social care charity. My role there involved working directly with the Chief Executive (who is quite a big name) and attending a lot of meetings with him, as well as a bit of policy work, so I got a lot of really valuable experience and knowledge of the sector from it. I saw this job advertised in the Society Guardian (Wednesday), and I applied! I wouldn't have been able to get a job like this without having got a bit of experience through paid and unpaid internships though.*

#### **4.6 Participants who continue to volunteer as well as working for a charity as a way to develop skills**

Some individuals continued to volunteer even though they already had a job with a charity. This invariably reflected their own life choices and indicated their own ambitions and future life plans.

##### **4.6.1 Rachel - Regional administrator for a young person's charity**

*I have probably done more volunteering since I started working for a charity than before. I am currently doing volunteer youth work alongside my administrator role as I do want to move into a more frontline youth work role. Prior to getting this job I had previously volunteered for Big Arts week and done some community arts volunteering going into schools and local communities.*

##### **4.6.2 Maria - Development worker for a youth charity**

*I have done quite a lot of volunteering for many years. I did voluntary work at an Oxfam shop while still at school. I didn't do a lot of voluntary work whilst at university but did do some creative workshops with children which were organised via Community Action. Shortly after I graduated I did a year's voluntary youth work part-time and got the Millennium Volunteers award. After that I did a two month volunteer placement abroad in India where I was co-ordinating a group of volunteers in 2004. I still volunteer now as I am a charity trustee.*

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## Chapter 5

## Competition for jobs– the graduate view

How competitive it is to get a job is a question that most people will ask when looking for a career, so I wanted to ask my graduate participants what their experience had been so far with regard to this. Many of them are early in their careers so this will inevitably affect their answers. This was an area where there was consensus amongst those I surveyed that they had felt it was hard to get a job.

### Findings

Based on answers to the question: **How easy do you think it is to get a job in the sector?**

**5.1** Many had beaten off stiff competition to get the job they were in so were currently very satisfied.

**5.2** There was universal consensus that it was tough to get a job with a charity and that in order to succeed it was necessary to be very persistent.

**5.3** Individuals showed a clear focus in improving their chances in the competition for jobs.

### Competition for jobs

**5.2 There was universal consensus that it was tough to get a job with a charity and that in order to succeed it was necessary to be very persistent.**

Despite the fact that publications such as the *Voluntary Sector Skills Survey 2007* indicates that there is a lot of recruitment activity in the sector, I would conclude from my research that there was consensus amongst research participants that it had not been easy to find a job working for a charity or related organisation. Some participants indicated that it was hard to even find suitable vacancies to apply for and that they had had to apply for positions just to get their foot in the door. Some said that networking had been critical in getting into the sector: this could well relate to contacts established through volunteering. Even some of the vacancies which charities find hard to fill were competitive to get as these would often have a very demanding skill-set. Perhaps unsurprisingly those working in international development had found it most competitive.

#### **5.2.1 Oliver – project co-ordinator and support worker for two different disability charities**

*I have not found it easy to get work in the charity sector. The opportunities for an entry level job seemed few - I think for some of the roles that I applied for I either had too much or too little experience. Networking and 'who you know' are both useful. Having volunteered outside of London, I couldn't really use contacts from that to help me in London, but the experience itself was no doubt useful.*

#### **5.2.2 Rosie – community fundraiser for an international development charity**

*In terms of competition for jobs it is tough to get any job in the development sector. I think it's a case of taking every opportunity to develop skills that could be of benefit to the job you would like. This will be vital at application and interview stage. Whilst my employer is a faith-based organisation, they do not discriminate against any applicant who is of a different or of no faith. My application process involved an application form, followed by two interviews.*

#### **5.2.3 Molly – graduate corporate services scheme for a cancer charity**

*I know the scheme I am on is very competitive to get on so I have done well to be here. I think it really helped that I had good relevant experience in previous jobs that had allowed me to develop and demonstrate relevant skills. My employer does have an excellent reputation for retention and for training staff so I think I will be here for a long time to come.*

#### **5.2.4 Hannah – schools outreach co-ordinator at an international development charity**

*I found the competition to get a job here pretty tough. It's certainly easier to get a job if you have experience of volunteering; luckily some internship schemes do allow you to gain volunteer experience without bankrupting*

yourself. Unlike other schemes, the internships at this charity are usually part-time, so you can work part-time elsewhere to support yourself.

#### **5.2.5 Jim – recruitment and marketing co-ordinator for international development charity**

*You do have to be really positive to get into this sector and it is a lot of effort to get in. You need to show evidence of commitment to the sector and many people will have spent time abroad before actually getting a job for an NGO. There has been a long term move to recruitment of the native population (south/south recruitment) for fieldwork roles. On the other side people who do fieldwork for a long time can find it difficult to get back into the UK job market. There are lots of niche areas of experience and knowledge that can affect people's ability to move around.*

#### **5.2.6 Fatima – programme Officer for an international development charity**

*I think it is very difficult to get a job in international development. Ironically it is not well paid and in the Asian community I come from it does not hold high status and is not regarded as professional which I find really frustrating. To get on in the sector you need to have relevant past experience and you need to be self-driven and creative. It is possible to get in but you need to have the right skills and attitude (you mustn't romanticise the work). In particular in my role I have found my writing skills have been crucial in making bids for funding etc. To get in most people will do a period of international volunteering which can be a great opportunity and I would recommend this.*

### **5.3 Individuals showed a clear focus in improving their chances in the competition for jobs.**

Many individuals had not left it to luck in terms of improving their chances in the labour market and had thought about ways to improve their chances of getting a job.

#### **5.3.1 Maria – development worker for a youth charity**

*I would say there are lots of jobs out there but you need to know where to look for them and I have really needed to direct my own career and be very motivated. Some small organisations will only advertise through local email bulletins and this is certainly the case in the field I work in. It is much easier to find out about these specific networks once you have got your foot in the door. It can seem a bit impenetrable to the outsider. Only larger charities will have money to advertise in the press or on the internet or via a recruitment agency. Many managerial jobs will expect you to have gained significant service delivery experience first. Most of my jobs in the sector have started as part-time and then gradually become full-time position.*

#### **5.3.2 Rachel – Regional administrator for a young person's charity**

*I don't think it is that competitive to get an administrative role in a charity. We do get lots of applications for such jobs but anyone who is clearly committed to the charity as well as having the administrative skills required is in with a good chance.*

#### **5.3.3 Janet – recruitment manager for a charity fundraising company**

*It is notoriously difficult to get a job with a charity. This is because the rewards are amazing and thus it is a very competitive sector. Charities do many types of fundraising such as events, corporate, trust etc, which are normally very difficult to get into without experience with the charity or with fundraising.*

#### **5.3.4 Charlotte – HR administrator for a national children's charity**

*I am sure it helped me in getting this job in that I had a relevant degree in HR. I think the recruitment and selection processes are well established. The advice provided for applicants is very straight forward and if you take the opportunity to use Job Descriptions and Person Specifications to illustrate your suitability for the role then applicants enhance their chances of being successfully short listed. The basis of successful selection is of course based on applicant's relevant experience, skills and qualifications.*

#### **5.3.5 Patrick – project manager for a regional Centre for Voluntary Organisations**

*My position was advertised in the Guardian so I'm sure quite a few people saw it. However, we are not a very well-known organisation and I'd have thought that it wouldn't attract many people from outside the voluntary sector. So I think it's wise to go for less well-known names to reduce the level of competition you may face.*

### **5.3.6 Anna – project executive for an international humanitarian aid charity**

*It's hard to generalise about competition for jobs. It really depends on the type of job you want to do and what the current job market is like. I'd say in general that the charity I work for is a very popular and prestigious organisation and this means that there are lots of applications for advertised roles which makes competition stiff. Also people are often so keen to get into the organisation that they are willing to take a pay cut or a step down from their current role to get in. However, if you get a foot in the door through a volunteer or temporary role it's often much easier to get a permanent role as this gives you an opportunity to prove yourself beforehand.*

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## Chapter 6 - Pay in charities – the graduate view

The voluntary/community sector does not have a good reputation in terms of pay. Clearly organisations that are not profit-making will not be able to pay their staff as well as employers that do make profit. I wanted to check this out with my research participants and I was met with quite a mixture of responses.

### Findings

Based on answers to the question: **What is your view of pay levels in the voluntary/community sector?**

**6.1** Some felt their pay level was good or comparable to jobs in the public sector.

**6.2** Some explicitly said they didn't mind earning less as they felt highly motivated at work.

**6.3** Others were very conscious that they could be earning more elsewhere even in another charity and were looking for other jobs.

**6.4** Individuals doing volunteer internships were fairly positive that this was a manageable option and would pay off in the longer term. A creative approach from interns and subsistence offered by the employing charity seemed to be critical.

### **6.1 Some felt their pay level was good or comparable to jobs in the public sector**

There were some individuals who felt their pay level was good or comparable to jobs in the public sector. It does seem that certainly at entry level many individuals are happy with the salaries on offer.

#### **6.1.1 Anita – policy and information officer for a national health charity**

*I think my pay is pretty good, though there aren't a lot of people who choose to work in the voluntary sector for the money. I think my salary probably does compare quite well to similar jobs in the public sector.*

#### **6.1.2 Jane – Regional fundraiser for a youth charity**

*My salary here is competitive and the charity is also really good in terms of helping me by investing in my professional development. The charity wants to keep salaries at a good level in order to attract high calibre staff.*

#### **6.1.3 Janet – recruitment manager for a charity fundraising company**

*The charity sector isn't high salary driven, although people are rewarded for their work and expertise. Our fundraisers can be very well paid, as we offer an uncapped performance bonus system. Most charity sector jobs will require lots of hard work, and will often involve going beyond the call of duty and job description in order to do the best for the charity.*

#### **6.1.4 Charlotte – HR administrator for a national children's charity**

*Pay levels here, in my view, tend to be higher compared to other organisations in the voluntary/community sector. Across similar roles to mine across the organisation pay levels are higher and are presented as progressive scales - which you move up every year. However the charity does not offer any performance related or award bonus.*

#### **6.1.5 Patrick – project manager for a regional Centre for Voluntary Organisations**

*My pay here is perfectly adequate but like anyone else I'd like to be earning a bit more! The low pay in the voluntary and community sector means that a lot of people are tempted by jobs in other sectors. This is effectively a 'brain-drain' on the sector. That said, it is possible to have a fulfilling, reasonably well-paid career in the VCS and it is a lot more professional than most people realise. I think salary levels within the sector are generally better than people think and many organisations offer pensions as part of the package, flexible working hours etc, so as a whole it's attractive to many people.*

### **6.2 Some explicitly said they didn't mind earning less as they felt highly motivated at work**

Some explicitly said they didn't mind earning less as they felt highly motivated at work. This is in some ways the stereotypical view of people who work for charities that job satisfaction was more important than money but it was simply expressed by many of my research participants.

#### **6.2.1 Delia – community fundraiser for a disability charity**

*Initially, I would say that salaries are quite low compared to some graduate salaries and you will never earn as much in this sector as in the corporate sector. However, for me, job satisfaction is much more important than monetary gains and you certainly get that!*

#### **6.2.2 Anna – project executive for an international humanitarian aid charity**

*I'm happy with my salary and I think it's about average for a role at my level in the charity sector, so in that respect I would say that my role pays well. You know when you take a job for a charity you're not going to get as higher salary as you would working for a company. Basically you don't work for the charity for the money! The rewards come in doing something that really motivates you.*

#### **6.2.3 Fatima – Programme Officer for an international development charity**

*I know the sector has a reputation for low pay but it is getting better and there are other rewards. At my charity there is an emphasis on personal development and training which is good. But I do think if you want to get into this sector you have to accept that you will not be earning a high amount of money.*

### **6.3 Others were very conscious that they could be earning more elsewhere even in another charity and were looking for other jobs.**

Some participants thought that there were considerable differences in pay across the sector and some thought moving job/employer was inevitable as a result. Participants were aware of how their salaries compared to others in the sector and were pragmatic about how this would affect what jobs they applied for. Some were very conscious that they could be earning more elsewhere even in another charity and were looking for other jobs.

#### **6.3.1 Jim – Recruitment and marketing co-ordinator for international development charity**

*My view on pay is that it can be very varied across the sector. You can see this by looking at the charity job sites. Someone doing administration at one charity may be on £23,000 which could be the salary earned by a small NGO's director! This can be all affected by factors such as funding sources – but charities are fairly transparent about pay so it should be easy to find out what is on offer. Individuals can then make their own decisions.*

#### **6.3.2 Rachel – student programme officer for a national children's charity**

*My view is that this charity does pay less than other charities for people doing the same job. People stay though because they like working here. But I do advise others to look and compare salaries carefully.*

#### **6.3.3 Alana – student programme assistant for a national children's charity**

*From what I have seen the charity sector salaries are fairly low paid, unless you are in a senior role, compared to jobs in the private sector. However I do feel that the salaries here are particularly low, even when comparing them to similar jobs in other charities. The lack of career progression and low salary means that I will need to look for a new job in the near future.*

### **6.4 Individuals doing volunteer internships were fairly positive that this was a manageable option and would pay off in the longer term. A creative approach from interns and subsistence offered by the employing charity seemed to be critical.**

Individuals doing volunteer internships were fairly positive that this was a financially manageable option and would pay off in the longer term. A creative approach from interns and subsistence offered by the employing charity seemed to be critical. Individuals pragmatically felt this may be the only way into some fields of work. Individuals appeared to manage financially as volunteers in a variety of ways and felt that others should not be too quick to rule out a period of volunteering. All individuals felt they were on well-organised internships in which they were gaining a lot.

#### **6.4.1 Henry – volunteer internship with an anti-poverty charity**

*This charity provides accommodation for all its full-time volunteers, so this obviously helps a great deal. I didn't receive any money for the first month but for the second and third months I have received £120. Although this is not a lot it has covered essentials. I had £500 saved when I began and have recently started a bar job so that I have a little extra. However, if I stay on as a full-time volunteer then I will receive roughly £400 a month, which is plenty to live on. I have found it quite intense living and working in the same building but it is in Central London so there are always other things to do, people to visit, and people visiting me. I would advise people considering such a placement to think of it more as a lifestyle choice than a job. It is difficult to compare it to anything, which is why we strongly recommend that people attend a working weekend before committing to the three month programme. It really is a great opportunity to learn about society and an excellent way into most careers, particularly politics, social work, charity work and teaching.*

#### **6.4.2 Rebecca – volunteer events co-ordinator with an international development charity**

*I have managed surprisingly well as a volunteer intern. I commute in from my family home and have a part-time job at the weekend. The charity is quite flexible about hours, which is great.*

#### **6.4.3 Paddy – livelihoods research assistant internship at an international development charity**

*As a volunteer intern I do have to be sensible about money. The charity pays subsistence expenses such as lunch (up to a limit), so I have a cooked meal at lunchtime and spend less on making dinner in the evening! Some people have part-time internships so can do other paid work alongside this, and some people are eligible for housing benefit, so make the most of all the support on offer. It is possible to do a volunteer internship and you don't have to be rich!*

#### **6.4.4 Jenny – volunteer internship for an international development charity**

*It has been a challenge to manage financially doing the volunteer internship. People have different strategies: some people work solidly for 6 months or so, earning money to pay for the internship; others (like me) work part-time during their internship; others scrape by on expenses claims and savings. It is amazing, but dozens of people cope on no or low wages.*

#### **6.4.5 Jim – gap Year with international development charity**

*It has been hard managing as a volunteer for a year. Being in London has been hard as it's an expensive place to be, but it has been ok! The charity pay my accommodation and bills (not my phone bill!) and also buy a bus pass for work travel, that I can use outside of work too. I then get a food allowance and some pocket money. Money is tight for the year, but it's worth it. Don't let the fact it is voluntary put you off – it could be worth it in the long run.*

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## Chapter 7 Career progression – the graduate view

Observations from the Voluntary Sector Almanac support the idea that charities are not currently particularly good at facilitating the career progression of their staff although this is something that is improving. I wanted to see how my research participants' views contrasted with some of this existing research.

All individuals had already given thought to the future and where they would like to head – most were positive and optimistic, though some had reservations about what might be possible. Many of those individuals who participated in my research were early on in their careers and were generally happy in their jobs and weren't really thinking about career progression and didn't see this as an issue currently. Potentially if I surveyed individuals ten or fifteen years into their careers, possibilities for progression may have had higher priority.

### Findings

Based on answers to the question: **Do you have any thoughts about your career progression in the sector?**

**7.1** All individuals had already given thought to the future and where they would like to head – most were positive and optimistic, though some had reservations about what might be possible.

**7.2** Those that were very early in their careers, were generally happy in their jobs and weren't really thinking about career progression and didn't see this as an issue currently.

**7.3** Some individuals appear to have progressed rapidly in their career so far – an indicator of the meritocratic nature of the sector.

**7.4** Some individuals were contemplating a move into more frontline delivery work that charities do as they felt limited by being "behind the scenes".

**7.5** Preferred location was mentioned by some as limiting career progression.

**7.6** Individuals who had or were completing professional training or qualifications tended to have organised this proactively themselves.

**7.7** Some individuals thought that they would probably have to move employer in order to progress their career.

**7.8** There was clear evidence that some individuals had made a direct progression from being a volunteer intern to being a paid member of staff.

**7.3 Some individuals appear to have progressed rapidly in their career so far – an indicator of the meritocratic nature of the sector.** Such individuals appear to have been very proactive and focused in their career direction as well as having the ability to seize opportunities that come their way. They may have taken up opportunities for training and have been willing to just get their foot in the door and prove themselves from there. Individuals who had or were completing professional training or qualifications tended to have organised this proactively themselves.

#### **7.3.1 Maria – development worker for a youth charity**

*In many ways my career has progressed fairly fast. I have just got a new job as a development worker for a voluntary sector mental health partnership. I will be able to transfer my skills and knowledge of partnership working to a new field which is exciting. Most of my jobs in the sector have started as part-time and then gradually become full-time position.*

*I have completed numerous short courses since working in the sector and I am sure taking advantage of appropriate training has helped me progress. These have included: Level 1 City and Guilds – teaching adult learners; 1 day courses in fundraising, full cost recovery; Change up courses (performance hub) courses; Monitoring and evaluation – how to support organisations implementing this; numerous one day training course in specific things such as writing funding applications.*

#### **7.3.2 Vicky – charity review visitor – Charity Regulation body**

*I just started here as an administrative assistant. I think that my career progression here was helped through the experience and knowledge I developed at each grade. I was a case worker, then I managed staff on our contact centre, I then spent some time mentoring and training case workers at a lower grade and then another brief spell as a manager before moving to Review Visits in the same grade. I think that this gave me a well-rounded view/skills/experience, which gave me the confidence to apply for a promotion. I am aware of many others who*

*have come here and gone straight to higher grade so I do not believe that the way I progressed to this grade is the only way to do it!*

### **7.3.3 Ellen – media and communications executive for a professional body representing the chief executives of charities**

*I have only been here two months but I do feel I have landed a really interesting job with what I think is a very competitive salary. The organisation I work for is committed to campaigning for better salaries in the sector and tries to practise what it preaches. Doing a job like this wasn't part of any career plan as I had originally been thinking of going into politics but have gone off this idea.*

### **7.3.4 Susan – Volunteer co-ordinator for a youth mentoring charity**

*I have recently been offered a new job as an Education Officer for a bio-ethics charity which I am really pleased about. This will follow on from my current job and academic studies perfectly. The charity is an academic one dealing with healthcare ethics – e.g., euthanasia, abortion, HIV etc. My MA dissertation was in bio-ethics so this job combines well my knowledge from my studies with the skills I have gained in this job and in other earlier experiences.*

## **7.4 Some individuals were contemplating a move into more frontline delivery work that charities do as they felt limited by being “behind the scenes”.**

There was evidence that some individuals wanted to move out of management and administration roles into what was the core service delivery work (e.g., social work) of the charity they were working for. This is evidence of the scope for career movement and the possibility to transfer skills.

### **7.4.1 Rachel – Regional administrator for a young person's charity**

*I am planning to move into frontline service delivery as a youth worker but I still want to work part-time and keep my Arts work going. My short term plan is to move into a project co-ordinator role. I am specifically interested in a city centre youth work advice and information service.*

### **7.4.2 Kate – Volunteer co-ordinator for a national youth charity**

*I am actually planning to move into work as a counsellor with young people and have actually just completed an MA in Counselling. The work I have done as a volunteer co-ordinator would really help with this and I am thinking of looking for roles as a Counselling co-ordinator. I also have a strong passion for Music so hope I may be able to continue with that so potentially work in a part-time position as a counsellor.*

## **7.5 Preferred location was mentioned by some as limiting career progression.**

There were 2 participants for whom location was a stumbling block in terms of progressing their career. This does concur with the evidence that the sector is clustered in certain regions especially London and the South-East. This may have a particular impact on Headquarters management and administration roles.

### **7.5.1 Paul – Programmes manager for an international environmental charity**

*Location is a big issue for me as I may have to re-locate in order to progress my career. My current employer is based in a rural area so there aren't many opportunities nearby. As my charity is small there are limited opportunities for career progression here. So I am considering a move to a bigger organisation, but am also considering a return to higher education to do an MSc or PhD as well.*

## **7.7 Some individuals thought that they would probably have to move employer in order to progress their career.**

A few individuals were pragmatic that it may be necessary to move employer to progress their career especially if they were working for a small or medium-sized organisation. There was a sense that it would be unrealistic to expect one organisation to meet all your career needs.

### **7.7.1 James – corporate and events officer for a health sector charity**

*The charity I work for is a very small charity so it may be difficult to progress here. However, having done my homework I think there seem to be plenty of opportunities elsewhere in this sector for someone with my skills.*

#### **7.7.2 Anita – policy and information officer for a national health charity**

*The charity I work for isn't a very big organisation (though it is big for a charity), so that means there aren't that many opportunities for career progression internally. I hope that the next steps of my career will involve some management work, and perhaps will enable me to diversify my policy knowledge a bit.*

#### **7.8 There was clear evidence that some individuals had made a direct progression from being a volunteer intern to being a paid member of staff.**

Many individuals I surveyed had made the move from volunteer to becoming a paid member of staff so this is definitely something individuals wanting to get into the sector need to consider. However, it is important to emphasise that some of the charity HR staff I interviewed were very against the notion that there were any guarantees on this matter.

#### **7.8.1 Alison – charity administration for a fundraising and development charitable organisation**

*I started here as a short term, paid intern (one of the few opportunities of its kind that exists in the charity sector). The graduate internship I did can be fairly competitive, but interestingly it can vary from year to year in terms of both the quantity and quality of applications. We are not very well-known which limits the number of people who apply. When I joined the sector I did not expect a high salary, and was pleased to be paid doing the internship before progressing to becoming a member of staff.*

#### **7.8.2 Jenny – volunteer internship for an international development charity**

*Having done some voluntary research projects for people in the policy team, and following a good start on my internship, I've been offered a contract with this charity to do research as part of their policy and advocacy team. This is for five months, so I hope to start a proper job in September, either in Westminster for an MP or in an NGO or think tank on policy or advocacy. I feel like I've made a solid start but I've not yet started Life!*

*I am really glad I did this internship. I think it is competitive to get a volunteer internship at this charity as it's very well-known and high numbers of people will apply for particular internships. But if you're confident you've got the qualifications, you've got the experience, and you're passionate about our work then you stand as good a chance as anyone, and it's undoubtedly worth it.*

#### **7.8.3 Jim – gap Year with international development charity**

*After this volunteer internship position, I have secured a paid job with the same charity starting next month as a Volunteer Development Officer. I will still be working out of the London office, but working more with Adult Supporters. Getting on the internship programme can be fairly straightforward as long as you have a bit of youth experience and lots of enthusiasm to work against poverty. It also helps if you share the Christian faith as there is a lot of work via Christian youth groups. It is much easier to get a job for the charity if you've done the GAP year and it's a good opportunity to see if you like the organisation too!*

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## Chapter 8

## Getting a job at a charity – the HR view

I interviewed 12 staff in various HR roles in charities (voluntary/community sector organisations) with a view to get their insights into getting a job for a charity. The staff I interviewed were from a range of charities both large, medium-sized and small. In smaller charities often the HR responsibility was held as part of a manager's wider role.

### Findings

Based on answers to the question: **What methods do you use to recruit for jobs generally?**

### 8.1 Recruitment

**8.1.1** Many charities will use their own website to advertise positions. This is free for them and demonstrates candidates are actually interested in that specific charity as they will have had to go to that charity's website to find the job ad.

**8.1.2** They tend to use recruitment agencies for harder to fill positions – IT, finance, fundraising and marketing were quoted as examples.

**8.1.3** Many charities will advertise in their local press and job centres and in the national press for senior or harder to fill positions.

**8.1.4** Some charities will advertise all jobs internally first, hence the value of getting any job, just to get a foot in the door.

Charities generally did advertise their jobs, although smaller ones sometimes relied on recruiting staff from their volunteer workforce. There was an overwhelming sense in the case of charities that had their own website that this is where candidates should look for job ads and in some cases this is the only place vacancies were advertised. Charities did use a range of places to advertise including specialist agencies and websites as well as the press. I have grouped the responses from all the HR staff which relate to the above findings as many of the staff made comments which addressed more than one finding.

#### 8.1i HR co-ordinator – human rights organisation

*Job vacancies will all go onto our own website. For some specific jobs e.g., campaigning we advertise in the Guardian. For harder to fill positions such as marketing and fundraising we may use specialist recruitment agencies e.g., Execucare.*

#### 8.1ii People development manager – national health charity

*How we advertise depends on the job being recruited for. For some very senior roles we would advertise in the quality nationals. For other senior management roles we would advertise in relevant local papers. For project manager positions we use Job Centre plus. We also use our own website and numerous charity job sites. Some positions may also go to volunteers via internal networking.*

#### 8.1iii HR officer – international faith-based development charity

*We do advertise most of our jobs internally before advertising externally. However, if we can't find an appropriate candidate we will advertise on our own website and for harder to fill positions use agencies such as Reed and Adecco or a specialist agency.*

#### 8.1iv HR manager – national children's charity

*We use lots of ways to recruit – including our own website, other social care and charity websites, the local, national and trade press. We have a well co-ordinated recruitment shared service so our system is well-organised nationally. There are moves to work closer with other charities on this too.*

#### 8.1v Recruitment co-ordinator – international development charity

*We advertise the roles that we are targeting graduates for on our website. We also attend events organised by universities and events such as Forum 3. We work on getting national media coverage of what our international volunteers do which also attracts applicants. We also do some targeted work with certain groups, e.g., students*

*with disabilities. Interestingly many people who apply to us say they have heard of us through word of mouth. That's probably not surprising as we are one of the best known international development volunteering charities.*

## **8.2 Applications and interviews**

### **Findings**

Based on answers to the question: **Do you have any general advice for applicants about your approach to job applications and interviews?**

**8.2.1** Application and interview methods are fairly standardised and transparent. All charities selected staff using person specifications which they sent to candidates to inform them what competencies were required.

**8.2.2** Panel interviews are commonplace. Complex assessment centre activities are rare, though tasks/presentations may be set of specific relevance to job being applied for.

**8.2.3** Charities see themselves as highly professional and fair in their approach to recruitment and applicants should take the process very seriously.

Charities tended to have a transparent approach to their selection methods. Recruitment methods are tailored for specific jobs and it was only larger charities or senior roles that more sophisticated methods of recruitment were used.

**8.2.1 Application and interview methods are fairly standardised and transparent.** All charities selected use person specifications which they sent to candidates to inform them what competencies were required.

#### **8.2.1.1 HR co-ordinator – human rights organisation**

*Our approach to applications is fairly standard. We give out a person specification for each job and applicants need to do their application form with this in mind. We ask for a supporting statement and our expectation is that this will be two pages on average, and we do want quality over quantity. I suggest applicants go through the person specification systematically. It is even worth using a separate sub-heading for each item on the person specification even though this may feel disjointed for the writer. Applicants should take their time and aim to do a really good application even if they think their experience speaks for itself. Be realistic about what you are applying for. You may not have everything we ask for on the person specification but you should have quite a lot of what we want to make it worth your while applying.*

#### **8.2.1.2 HR officer – international faith-based development charity**

*The most critical advice I can give applicants is to focus their application and interview on the competencies we ask for and to provide evidence of your proven ability or potential. This may seem obvious but so many people don't do it.*

#### **8.2.1.3 HR manager, lesbian and gay charity**

*We tend to ask candidates to submit a CV and a one page (double-sided) supporting statement to show evidence of how they meet the person specification. Transparency, evidence and following instructions are what we ask! We generally have panel interviews for jobs and try to have an appropriate task for candidates to do, e.g., we would ask potential fundraisers to do a presentation to test their powers of persuasion.*

**8.2.2 Panel interviews are commonplace. Complex assessment centre activities are rare, though tasks/presentations may be set of specific relevance to job being applied for.**

#### **8.2.2.1 HR co-ordinator – human rights organisation**

*We generally run 3 person panel interviews which we think is fair. We sometimes also ask candidates to do a written exercise or job-related task. For more senior jobs we also do psychometric tests.*

#### **8.2.2.2 HR manager – national cancer charity**

*Recruitment for our corporate services graduate scheme is competitive; for our science scheme it is less so. We have a rigorous selection process for our graduate schemes which is not typical of the charity sector as a whole.*

*Firstly, applicants really need to do a good application. Avoid flowery statements – we want evidence of what you are saying. The first stage of our application is online and about half of all applicants will be screened out at that stage. We then invite applicants in for an information day and we have some interactive activities and an ability test for them to do. We then shortlist further and move onto a first round interview stage. This involves a group interview as well as a personal interview and case study. After this we will have got down to a really strong pool of candidates.*

#### **8.2.2.3 Regional director – youth charity**

*Our interviews tend to be made up of a panel of 3 and we will ask all applicants for a certain job the same question and then will add supplementary questions depending on their answers. For some jobs we may set exercises, e.g., for an administrative job it would be common to set a paper test. Sometimes we may involve our project users in interview processes.*

#### **8.2.2.4 Recruitment co-ordinator – international development charity**

*At interview we do a range of activities including a one-to-one interview, a problem-solving group task, a negotiating task. We involve numerous selectors to ensure fairness. There would tend to be two selectors per group of six candidates and selectors are assigned certain individuals to monitor closely.*

### **8.2.3 Charities see themselves as highly professional and fair in their approach to recruitment and applicants should take the process very seriously.**

There was a sense among some people I spoke to that sometimes candidates applying for charities had an expectation that charities would be a bit more laid back (maybe a bit more friendly and fluffy!). All the staff I spoke to were adamant about the professional approach they have to recruitment.

#### **8.2.3.1 HR manager – national children’s charity**

*Always prepare well for the interview. And don’t assume we’ll be more laid back because we are a charity! With regard to application forms candidates must ensure you provide evidence on how you meet the essential criteria for a post. At interviews make sure that you have researched the organisation and are clear on what the post requires and how you meet the essential criteria. Answer questions concisely and do not 'ramble'.*

#### **8.2.3.2 HR officer – international faith-based development charity**

*For interviews I would advise candidates to go for smart dress code and don’t worry if your interviewers aren’t as smart. Your smart dress conveys that you are being professional.*

#### **8.2.3.3 Regional director – youth charity**

*With regard to our application form, my advice to applicants is to always follow the instructions and address the person specification. We always cross-reference and score on this quite systematically in order to ensure fairness between applicants*

## **8.3 Role of volunteering**

### **Findings**

Based on answers to the question: **How important is volunteering experience when applying for jobs?**

The role of volunteering did meet with some mixed responses from the charity recruiters. Although universally valued there was some nervousness about the commonly held idea that getting relevant voluntary work was a guaranteed way into a job with a charity, although in some cases it clearly was!

**8.3.1** Charities varied in relation to their view of progression from volunteer to paid member of staff in their organisation. Some favoured this method of progression, others were very wary of hopes being falsely raised that becoming a volunteer was a “good bet” in terms of getting a eventual job.

**8.3.2** Having voluntary experience on a CV from any organisation is good evidence of understanding the volunteering ethos which all charities rely upon.

**8.3.3** Especially in smaller charities and in competitive fields, volunteering experience can be an essential pre-requisite to selection.

**8.3.1 Charities varied in relation to their view of progression from volunteer to paid member of staff** in their organisation. Some favoured this method of progression, others were very wary of hopes being falsely raised that becoming a volunteer was a “good bet” in terms of getting a eventual job.

**8.3.1.1 HR manager – national cancer charity**

*We are impressed with individuals who have volunteered but more because it shows you have get up and go rather than because it shows you have sympathy with a charitable cause. I would really encourage volunteering and for individuals to think what they are getting out of it and what skills you are gaining. When we recruit we are looking for certain skills and we don't mind where people have gained them as long as they can give us the evidence. For any job advertised it's all about - do you have the skills for the job rather than specifically where you got the skills?*

**8.3.1.2 HR manager, lesbian and gay charity**

*Volunteer experience can be useful but it depends on the job. For example for a fundraising and events officer, relevant volunteer experience would be great, as you would have an understanding of how events work. Experience of the voluntary and community sector and its inevitable strains is good. We do have a very strict recruitment procedure though. Sometimes our volunteers can apply for a job and be beaten by an external applicant which is disappointing for them. We really try to make this plain to all parties though.*

**8.3.2 Having voluntary experience on a CV from any organisation is good evidence of understanding the volunteering ethos** which all charities rely upon.

**8.3.2.1 People development manager – national health charity**

*I am pleased to see an applicant has done voluntary work. This shows they appreciate the ethos of the voluntary sector and how paid staff and volunteers work together. However, I would put this in a desirable rather than essential category as the job skills required for a job will always be the most critical wherever these have been gained.*

**8.3.2.2 HR manager – national children's charity**

*Having been a volunteer is not critical for us. It is always a bonus to see that someone has volunteered and therefore understands the ethos of a voluntary organisation. Admittedly between two close candidates having volunteered could be a deciding factor.*

**8.3.3 Especially in smaller charities and in competitive fields, volunteering experience can be an essential pre-requisite to selection.**

**8.3.3.1 Director - youth mentoring charity**

*We are a very small charity and we have found that it doesn't seem to work to advertise externally for jobs. We tend to recruit for any paid positions from our volunteer workforce. We have done this recently when recruiting for a volunteer manager. The volunteering experience individuals have come to us with is very relevant to their being selected. We find if people have volunteered with us they know the organisation well and can slip into a staff role quickly.*

**8.3.3.2 Recruitment co-ordinator – international development charity**

*For the one year programme that is relevant to students and graduates, having 12 months community/voluntary engagement experience is one of our selection requirements. We think this shows a commitment and give applicants the edge in terms of skills gained, not to mention an understanding of volunteerism.*

**8.3.3.3 Programme and recruitment manager, environment charity**

*For our graduate internship role it is not absolutely essential for someone to have done environmental volunteering before, but it does say a lot about a person if they have done some and is evidence of how interested and committed they are. We are involved in international environmental projects so if an individual has done some volunteering overseas so much the better. To be honest, having voluntary experience on a CV could swing it between two candidates who are otherwise fairly similar.*

## **8.4 General advice**

These findings relate to general points that came up rather than to a specific question.

**8.4.1** All charities expect candidates to have a high level of knowledge of their organisation and to be committed to the cause the charity is working for. Ideally candidates may be able to demonstrate evidence of commitment to this cause but this is not compulsory.

**8.4.2** Taking a lower level job as a foot in the door to a specific charity is commonplace, but candidates should be willing to commit to whatever job they apply for, for a reasonable length of time.

**8.4.3** Some charities have part-time jobs on offer that they find hard to fill (especially in housing and social care). This is a good way to get your foot in the door and get an understanding of how a charity operates.

**8.4.4** If you are interested in a charity or a specific job, be pro-active and contact the charity for more information before you make an application.

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### **8.4.1.1 HR officer – international faith-based development charity**

*Recruitment managers have a high expectation that applicants will have done a lot of research about our charity. We expect well-thought out applications and on average one page of A4 for a supporting statement. Having voluntary experience not just with us could swing it for two very similar candidates – shows not driven solely by money. Certainly this would be about right for a graduate going for an entry level position.*

**8.4.2 Taking a lower level job as a foot in the door to a specific charity is commonplace**, but candidates should be willing to commit to whatever job they apply for, for a reasonable length of time.

### **8.4.2.1 HR co-co-ordinator – human rights organisation**

*Sometimes we get people applying to us just because they want to work for us and may not be so interested in the role advertised. It's really important that you are prepared to commit to a role even if you do see the job as a stepping stone into our organisation. We don't want people who just want to get inside our organisation with a view to moving as soon as they can.*

**8.4.3 Some charities have part-time jobs on offer that they find hard to fill** (especially in housing and social care). This is a good way to get your foot in the door and get an understanding of how a charity operates.

### **8.4.3.1 HR manager – national children's charity**

*For a student who would like to work for a charity they should use part-time and holiday work to get experience. We actually recruit students on a part-time basis to some of our jobs and this is something more charities are doing as sometimes students are more flexible about working weekends etc than other workers. Many of our staff will progress from temporary to more permanent work. There really is a need to be willing to get your foot in the door and the first job you get may not have everything on your wish list!*

**8.4.4 If you are interested in a charity or a specific job, be pro-active and contact the charity for more information before you make an application.**

### **8.4.4.1 Programme and recruitment manager, environment charity**

*My advice to people applying to us is to do your research. Don't send us a very generic CV, try and make it relevant to what you are applying for. I'd also say that as we are a small charity of only 15 staff, we don't mind if you make personal contact with us before you apply. Phone up to find out more about us and if we are right for you. If you were applying speculatively I would always recommend calling up first to get the name of the person you should be directing your application to. It is a simple thing and shows a professional approach.*

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## Chapter 9 Competition for jobs and career moves from other sectors – the HR view

Given the problems graduates report in trying to find jobs and some of the research evidence that career progression is limited in the sector I wanted to ask people in HR roles within charities about their views on these issues. Linked to this I also wanted to ask them about career movement in terms of moving into the charity sector having gained experiences in the public or private sectors, as well as what their views of pay were in the sector.

### Findings

Based on answers to the question: **How competitive is it to get a job working for your charity? Are there any jobs that are hard to fill?**

#### **Competition/hard-to-fill vacancies:**

**9.1** Competition can vary from job to job and from charity to charity. Jobs such as campaigning are very tough to get into, but other jobs such as fundraising are sometimes hard for charities to fill.

**9.2** Designated graduate opportunities and internships do tend to be highly competitive – partly because they are so few in number.

**9.3** Some of the hard-to fill positions tend to be at senior level but also those at entry level which may seem less attractive perhaps demanding unsocial hours etc. Such hard to fill positions could offer a foot in the door to individuals trying to break into the sector.

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#### **9.1.1 HR co-ordinator – human rights organisation**

*Competition can vary from job to job. Some areas such as campaigning are very competitive and we may get 60/70 applications for an entry position. However sometimes we find it harder to fill positions where it is possible to earn more elsewhere – this is the case in jobs such as IT or marketing – especially at more senior level.*

#### **9.1.2 Regional manager for a youth charity**

*I would say it is reasonably competitive to get a job with us, certainly in our service delivery work. This is partly to do with the fact that we offer good terms and conditions compared to some other similar organisations. There are some positions that are hard to fill though. These include the roles of specialist fundraiser, volunteer co-ordinator, and administrative assistant. In the case of general administration sometimes a lot of people will apply but very few will be suitable in terms of being able to deal with the multiple demands of administration in a charity as well as supporting the charity's cause. We find that the response to advertising of job vacancies can be unpredictable.*

#### **9.1.3 HR manager - lesbian and gay charity**

*We get a good response generally to ads for jobs. A lot of people are really positive about working for our organisation. This may be because they have an affinity with us and are lesbian, gay or bisexual themselves. They may want to work for an organisation that positively affirms their sexuality.*

#### **9.1.4 HR manager – national children's charity**

*Competition very much depends on the position, skill set and location. If someone is keen to work for us, is relevantly experienced and in tune with our values they should be able to secure a position - might not be the first one though. Some vacancies attract c50 applications, some one or two.*

**9.2 Designated graduate opportunities and even internships do tend to be highly competitive – partly because they are so few in number.**

#### **9.2.1 HR manager – national cancer charity**

*Our graduate programme is very competitive to get onto. However, there are some jobs we find hard to fill, e.g., charity shop managers, good PAs and administrative staff as well as some senior roles. Our science recruitment is steady and many of the roles there have very specific requirements which limit applications.*

### **9.2.2 Programmes manager – international environment charity**

*It is fairly competitive to get onto one of our graduate internship roles. We get about 30/40 applications for our general conservation internship and less for our fundraising and IT internship roles. I have noticed recently that some of our interns have chosen to give up good jobs because they want to work in the environment e.g., someone moved from a business consultancy background to do fundraising for us and an ex- salesperson who is doing a carbon sequestration project.*

### **9.2.3 Volunteer internship co-ordinator – Environment charity**

*We run a volunteer internship opportunity for graduates and many of our paid staff are recruited from this cohort. We notice people come to do our volunteer internship from all sorts of backgrounds some giving up good paid jobs because they want to gain work experience in the environment sector.*

**9.3 Some of the hard-to fill positions tend to be a senior level but also those at entry level** which may seem less attractive perhaps demanding unsocial hours etc. Such hard to fill positions could offer a foot in the door to individuals trying to break into the sector.

### **9.3.1 Volunteer internship co-ordinator – Environment charity**

*The hardest jobs we find to fill tend to be the ones that need specific qualifications e.g., landscape architecture as we are only drawing on a limited pool of people.*

### **9.3.2 HR manager - lesbian and gay charity**

*We do have some hard-to-fill positions – e.g., our facilities assistant who is in charge of the building, meeting and greeting people, administering the helpline and monitoring health and safety. People are put off sometimes by the unsocial hours of this post. It would be a good role though for someone to do who wanted to just get a foot in the door into our charity.*

### **9.3.3 Placement recruitment manager – international development charity**

*Our one year placement in international development does attract a lot of applicants and there are certain specific skills which we are always seeking. Examples include TEFL, language skills and advanced IT skills. Sometimes we struggle with overseas programmes that want very niche skills, e.g., in art and design*

### **9.3.4 People development manager – national health charity**

*Generally we get a good response to job ads. It can be more challenging where rates of pay are higher elsewhere. It can also be harder to fill lower paid jobs such as retail assistants doing anti-social hours. This could be a good way for students to get experience.*

## Public/private sector career moves

I have included this section here as it closely relates to competition for jobs as some of the hard-to-fill positions do appear to attract people in from other sectors. Research indicates that moves from other sectors is a common pathway into the sector and I wanted to check if this was borne out in the experience of charity recruiters.

### Findings

Based on answers to the question: **How common is it that people move from the public or private sector to the voluntary/community sector?**

**9.4** Some charities are very keen on individuals moving to them from private sector backgrounds as they welcome the commercial awareness such individuals bring.

**9.5** Lots of individuals with management skills such as HR, IT, finance will go to the charity sector from either the public or private sector. This means that they can hit the ground running.

**9.4 Some charities are very keen on individuals moving to them from private sector backgrounds as they welcome the commercial awareness such individuals bring.**

#### **9.4.1 Director – youth mentoring charity**

*The two of us who run the charity both moved out of private sector accountancy and law jobs in order to set the charity up. I feel the skills we had from previous employment have been crucial in our success to date. We are a very small charity with only about 12 staff nationally.*

#### **9.4.2 People development manager – national health charity**

*At senior management level many individuals will come to us from the private sector even potentially taking a pay cut. They generally bring highly-valued skills.*

**9.5 Lots of individuals with management skills such as HR, IT, finance will go to the charity sector from either the public or private sector. This means that they can hit the ground running. Staff working in service delivery roles often move in from the public sector.**

#### **9.5.1 HR co-ordinator – human rights organisation**

*I think moves from the private sector to us are common. People want to use their existing skills in a more worthwhile place. This can be a great bonus for us especially in our more commercial-type roles.*

#### **9.5.2 HR manager – national cancer charity**

*I have noticed individuals making career moves to us from both the public and private sector. A common theme they present is a “personal dedication to put things back in”. Many people are attracted to the work-life balance we offer as well as feeling they are working for an ethical employer. I believe we also offer a competitive salary.*

#### **9.5.3 HR manager – national children's charity**

*It is very common to move between us and public sector (both ways). I don't know an exact figure but I would expect c60-70% min of our staff to either have public sector experience or move from us to that sector. Many of these staff are working in service delivery. It is less common to move from / to private sector. I came from private sector (recruitment consultancy) and I am in the minority. Other than in Finance and one other Head of Shared Service in HR (Learning and Development), I can't think of anyone else at management level who has come from private sector.*

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## Chapter 10 Career progression in charities – the HR view

I was interested to find out what HR and related staff thought about career progression and pay in charities. Their experiences through their roles would put them in close proximity to this issue.

### Findings

Based on answers to the question: **What is your view regarding the career progression opportunities available in the voluntary/community sector?**

#### Career progression

**10.1** Career progression is limited as many charities have flat structures, don't pay bonuses and there are a lot of *niche* areas in charities where there is not a lot of turnover of staff.

**10.2** Career progression for those who have a clear professional role – e.g., in finance, marketing, HR and definitely service delivery roles (e.g., social work) can be good. The path can be less clear for those in more one-off roles – e.g., as a volunteer manager, campaigner or fundraiser. Such individuals may have to move charity to get their next job.

**10.3** Where you live geographically can affect opportunities – probably the most opportunities in HQ management functions are in London and the South-East.

**10.4** There is a fair amount of turnover of staff in charities – people using the skills they have gained to get their next job elsewhere. This may be to get a job in another sector or for another charity.

**10.5** Charities often have the approach of trying to fill jobs internally first which is good for staff career progression.

**10.6** Your career in the charity sector will be very much influenced by your own ambition and drive – a clear path is unlikely to be presented to you in this sector. Individuals need to be astute and think laterally about what their next move might be.

**10.7** Many respondents were conscious that the lack of career progression in their organisation could be a stumbling block for some staff. However, many were taking steps to address this issue with a view to coming up with a solution.

#### Pay

Based on answers to the question: **What is your view of pay levels in the voluntary/community sector?**

**10.8** Charities are conscious that pay levels may not be as competitive as elsewhere. Many offer staff the potential to participate in training and professional development and believe they generally offer staff favourable work-life balance.

**10.9** Choosing to work for a charity may mean you earn less than in a similar job elsewhere but the rewards and conditions may make this the right choice for certain individuals.

#### Career progression

Career progression was clearly a thorny topic for many of my respondents and generated quite lengthy responses. My conclusion was that this was an area where charities were very aware that they needed to do more to offer their staff structured career paths, although there was a sense that individuals needed to take responsibility for their own career too.

**10.1 Career progression is limited as many charities have flat structures**, don't pay bonuses and there are a lot of *niche* areas in charities where there is not a lot of turnover of staff.

##### 10.1.1 HR co-ordinator – human rights organisation

*If I am honest, career progression is quite limited here. This comes up again and again in staff surveys. We don't really offer clear career paths and our structure is fairly flat. We have lost of niche areas and people tend to stay with us so there are limited promotion opportunities.*

**10.2 Career progression for those who have a clear professional role** – e.g., in finance, marketing, HR and definitely service delivery roles (e.g., social work) can be good. The path can be less clear for those in more one-off roles – e.g., as a volunteer manager, campaigner or fundraiser. Such individuals may have to move charity to get their next job.

**10.2.1 Regional manager for youth charity**

*I think career progression is good certainly in service delivery roles in youth work and we experience quite a lot of internal moves. It can be more difficult though for those in standalone roles such as being a volunteer co-ordinator.*

**10.2.2 HR manager - lesbian and gay charity**

*I think career progression can be very much influenced by an individual's ambition and drive. There aren't loads of jobs in the charity sector – but there are opportunities if you think more widely and are flexible. Realistically there are more jobs in service delivery roles – e.g., counselling and health promotion than there may be in management.*

**10.4 There is a fair amount of turnover of staff in charities – people using the skills they have gained to get their next job elsewhere. This may be to get a job in another sector or for another charity.**

**10.4.1 HR officer - international development charity (faith-linked)**

*I have noticed that some people do leave the charity and move onto careers in the public or private sectors. Equally many people come to us from other sectors especially in some management functions such as HR and finance. So there is quite a lot of movement in and out of our charity.*

**10.5 Charities often have the approach of trying to fill jobs internally first which is good for staff career progression.**

**10.5.1 HR manager – national cancer charity**

*Career progression here is good. 20% of vacant jobs are filled internally. There is a lot of movement around the charity and we have a strong ethos to give people advancement. Of the final 16 short listed for our marketing and fundraising programme, quite a few had completed internships with us. I do think career progression is probably better here than in many smaller charities. Our larger size does make it easier to offer more career progression possibilities. We can also support numerous professional qualifications that staff may want to do.*

**10.6 Your career in the charity sector will be very much influenced by your own ambition and drive – a clear path is unlikely to be presented to you in this sector. Individuals need to be astute and think laterally about what their next move might be.**

**10.6.1 Volunteer internship co-ordinator – Environment charity**

*Career progression here can be up and down and sometimes it's to do with what funding there is for projects as much of the funding we get is short-term although this is gradually changing. Individuals wanting to work in the sector need to be savvy about this and flexible enough to deal with a level of uncertainty but also be able to seize opportunities when they arise.*

**10.6.2 Director – youth mentoring charity**

*There is so much going on in the charity sector right now with themes of multi-agency and partnership working so you really have to be on the ball. There are no transparent career paths for any of us working in the charity world – we all have to think laterally with regard to our progression. As a small charity we can take advantage of lots of short training courses which attract funding. I would like to see more graduates being attracted to work in this sector. Graduates can bring a greater capacity to the sector and cope with the multiple demands jobs require. For anyone interested in the sector I recommend getting involved as a trustee or a member of a management committee of a charity. There is currently a national shortage of people willing to take on such roles.*

**10.7 Many respondents were conscious that the lack of career progression in their organisation could be a stumbling block for some staff.** However, many were taking steps to address this issue with a view to coming up with a solution.

**10.7.1 HR manager – national children’s charity**

*My personal opinion is that career progression is very poor. Part of the reason for that is our structure is very fragmented and it is difficult to plan a career across a number of projects. We are currently undertaking a job evaluation review which will ensure most roles sit in better "job families". Improving career progression and development initiatives will be looked at after that. Interestingly however, development opportunities at middle management are pretty good. The majority of Project Managers or Seniors (1 below Project Manager) we recruit are internal applicants.*

**10.7.2 Programmes manager – international environment charity**

*As a small charity career progression here is certainly limited. However we do currently have a consultant who is looking at how we work with a view to make suggestions for change, so things may improve. There are excellent opportunities to move onto working for a good range of other employers in the environment across the private, public and voluntary sectors.*

**Pay**

Where charities felt that pay was not as potentially competitive as elsewhere, HR staff felt strongly that conditions of work in charities were often good in that they were prepared to support professional development. There was a view that charities were a flexible employer and could offer a career that fitted in with work-life balance and lifestyle choices.

**10.8 Charities are conscious that pay levels may not be as competitive as elsewhere.** Many offer staff the potential to participate in training and professional development and believe they generally offer staff favourable work-life balance.

**10.8.1 People development manager – national health charity**

*At senior management level many individuals will come to us from the private sector even potentially taking a pay cut. We are fairly large with 3,000 employees so there is scope for movement but we are also fairly flat in our structure which limits things. We have performance management schemes which allow individuals to discuss how they could move around. We do support employee development and will fund professional development where appropriate.*

**10.8.2 HR officer - international development charity (faith-linked)**

*We have an excellent training department and staff can take advantage of training available. We can't agree all requests for training as we are governed by funding available. I have to admit that career progression is limited as we do have a fairly flat structure. This can be a big factor in individuals looking for jobs elsewhere.*

**10.9 Choosing to work for a charity may mean you earn less than in a similar job elsewhere but the rewards** and conditions may make this the right choice for certain individuals.

**10.9.1 HR manager – national children’s charity**

*The whole field of pay is a thorny topic. At entry level, administrative staff (e.g. HR Administrators in my team) generally paid quite well in comparison to private sector and pretty good benefits package - pension, holidays etc. More senior management (e.g. myself) salary probably below what I could command in the private sector (I took a drop in earnings to come here) however as my skill set is rarer in this organisation than it would be in a similar sized organisation in the private sector I have much greater autonomy and the scope of my role is broader and deeper. This role has been quite a conscious career move to make a bigger jump forward in the future. There will be managers in e.g. Finance who have joined for similar reasons. For those that don't the aspiration to work in the charity sector (change of direction, put something back etc) tends to balance out reduced earnings.*

### **10.9.2 Regional manager for a youth charity**

*I do think there is some evidence of people downshifting from private sector to work in the charity sector.*

*In terms of careers moves, for service delivery roles it is quite common that people move to us from the public sector. For more management and administration roles it is more common that people may come to us from the private sector.*

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## Chapter 11

### The qualities that charities look for in candidates – the HR view

I wanted to know if there was anything that differentiated what charities look for in candidates for the management and administration roles that this research focuses on. Obviously individual roles will indicate what they want in person specifications for jobs, but I wanted to know if there were any more hints HR staff could give in terms of the kind of person a charity would be looking for.

#### Findings

Based on answers to the following question: **What skills and qualities do you look for in candidates?**

**11.1** More so than perhaps any other sector, charities expect candidates to believe in what their employer is doing. Charities expect candidates to be highly motivated and committed to the work the charity does.

**11.2** Some roles require individuals to have an appetite to “make a difference”.

**11.3** Interpersonal skills and planning and organising are critical to many roles.

**11.4** Flexibility is required in dealing with the uncertainty that can be commonplace when working for a charity.

**11.5** Respect and understanding of the volunteering ethos.

**11.1 More so than perhaps any other sector, charities expect candidates to believe in what their employer is doing. Charities expect candidates to be highly motivated and committed to the work the charity does.**

More than any other quality – the above notion was expressed most clearly by the staff recruiting for charities. They wanted individuals who supported their core purpose. My view is that this expectation is stronger than recruiters in other sectors. However, charities also emphasise that they do recruit against a competency framework and that those skills are paramount.

#### **11.1.1 HR co-ordinator – human rights organisation**

*It is really important that people understand who we are and what our values are. A successful applicant will generally meet our cultural fit and be really enthusiastic about what we do. We feel we are not just “any old employer” and we want people who would be proud to tell people they work for us.*

#### **11.1.2 HR officer – international Faith-based development charity**

*For all our posts we look for a sympathetic understanding of our Church and our associated work in development. Being an actual believer is pragmatically desirable for a number of roles where there is direct contact with Church communities. Generally the most important thing is that the candidate shares our values and can work towards our mission. For specific jobs there will obviously be additional specific and technical skills required.*

#### **11.1.3 Regional director – youth charity**

*We are a medium-sized charity with 175 staff nationally. The vast majority are involved in service delivery with our client group young people. For all roles we recruit for, applicants need to fit with our vision and support the values of our organisation and understand how these are practically applied.*

#### **11.1.4 HR manager – national children’s charity**

*It is difficult to answer as we recruit such a diversity of roles. Over-riding all skill sets we look for individuals in tune with our organisational values - these are: Passion - we are driven by our desire to help children and young people overcome injustice and disadvantage; Equality - we believe all children and young people have equal worth and equal rights; Hope - we believe in a child or young person’s potential, no matter what they have experienced or what they have done.*

#### **11.1.4 Programme and recruitment manager – Environment charity**

*For our graduate internship, you need to demonstrate a good general knowledge of the environment. It's also good if you have other skills, e.g., PR or marketing, languages – anything that makes you stand out. Graduate applications can be a bit samey so anything unique is good.*

## **11.2 Some roles require individuals to have an appetite to “make a difference”.**

In some ways I think this concept is similar to the ideas above but actually makes clear that candidates will be able to contribute to the advancement of the core values of the charity.

### **11.2.1 HR officer – international faith-based development charity**

*Skills and qualities tend to vary from role to role. However, for our intern opportunities we want people who are motivated to make a difference. A commitment to Christianity is important as quite a lot of our work is with churches. However, for Head office staff e.g. IT or finance, you don't have to be a Christian. Many of the people in our regional areas are from a Church background though this is not an essential pre-requisite. The sponsorship of our charity comes from churches but we definitely don't have a sense of missionary zeal or anything. This is a common misconception of faith-based charities. I advise those interested to always do your homework on specific charities.*

## **11.3 Interpersonal skills and planning and organising are critical to many roles.**

I think these skills perhaps rank as the two most sought after transferable skills sought by charity recruiters.

### **11.3.1 HR manager – national cancer charity**

*Certain skills are vital across all roles such as interpersonal skills and planning and organising. What is most important is that people want to work for us and are allied to our thinking and mission. We want people who want to make the most of opportunities and are greedy for chances.*

### **11.3.2 HR manager – national children's charity**

*This will depend on the role that is being recruited to - for a fundraiser you would need someone who has good communication skills/presentation skills etc. If we are looking for an administrator they might need good financial skills etc. Each post will have its specific requirements.*

## **11.4 Flexibility is required in dealing with the uncertainty that can be commonplace when working for a charity.**

This came across as a strong theme in answers and reflected wider structural issues in the sector, e.g., the need to apply for funding for projects and the fact that projects can sometimes be short term.

### **11.4.1 Recruitment manager, Environment charity**

*For our graduate internship, we want enthusiasm, passion for the work, desire to work and move up within the sector, general transferable skills, flexibility, motivation to volunteer, commitment*

### **11.4.2 HR manager - lesbian and gay charity**

*As we are a small organisation we need people who are organised and have good communication skills. We need people who are reliable and committed to our work and our cause. We also ask for flexibility in working for our charity – staff may sometimes have to work weekends and evenings as this may be the time we can reach our clients or organise events. We can't have people who are so fixed on regular hours!*

## **11.5 Respect and understanding of the volunteering ethos.**

This point relates to the first finding about supporting the charity's cause but puts greater emphasis on having volunteered and supporting that concept.

### **11.5.1 HR co-ordinator – international development charity**

*As a recruiter for international development volunteering role – we have very specific criteria. A constant thread of evidence of a commitment to the issues relevant to us will really stand out on a CV. We actually do expect individuals to have volunteered or done community work for a minimum of 12 months. We make this very transparent and applicants should show close attention to what we ask for.*

#### **11.5.2 People development manager – national health charity**

*Depending on the role, relevant qualifications or experience will always be critical. If these take in previous voluntary sector experience all the better. Candidates need to understand the volunteering ethos and show a commitment to the cause of a charity. We tend to expect individuals to show a strong identification with their work purpose.*

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## Chapter 12

## Careers advice – Words from the wise!

As part of this research project I surveyed careers consultants/advisers across the UK about their views of getting into the sector, borne out of their experience of dealing with both students interested in the sector and employers too.<sup>20</sup>

This section reflects an open-ended question that was asked of advisers: **Please indicate any other experiences/opinions you have with regard to advising on career pathways into the voluntary/community sector.**

Interestingly some common concerns emerged which I think reflect some of the key issues for individuals wanting to go into this sector. There were lots of comments under this section showing willingness amongst consultants to engage and advocate for the sector. There was also the frustration that the sector appears much less accessible than other mainstream graduate career fields, e.g., law, teaching, finance.

The sense of the situation faced by us as careers consultants is summed up by the following quotations:

*“I think that university careers services should include a lot more information about working for charities within their more general booklets for students.” Student comment*

*“I find clients can be very frustrated by the lack of transparent schemes and entry points for graduates in comparison with the commercial world. They hold that against us in the careers centre, thinking we don't choose to promote the voluntary sector. We spend a lot of energy trying to redress that balance.” Manager of Careers Education and Guidance*

The common themes that emerged represented both the barriers for people wanting to go into the sector but also represented the issues which students and graduates who want to go into the sector really need to face head-on.

### 12.1 Financial issues – affording to do voluntary work

There was a recurring commentary on the problem that some students/graduates will face the need to do extensive voluntary work before getting into the sector, especially in certain sub-sectors such as international development. This is becoming an increasing barrier as student debt mounts. This could be an obstacle particularly to less affluent students. However, there was one respondent who observed that in actual fact some charities can offer good rates of pay for part-time work for students: examples include in social care and as event stewards. This may be something that some students are overlooking and could certainly be a way forward for those who want to gain experience and develop transferable skills for the sector. This is also a way for charities to plug gaps in their workforce that may be hard to fill (e.g., due to casual or unsociable hours).

Interestingly my research showed that quite a lot of individuals have not done a lot of volunteering before they got into the sector. These individuals will have gained skills in other ways before getting a job in the sector and may well have been more focused on the kind of role they want. They may also have been active supporters of charities. In some fields such as international development and in such roles as policy and research the need for volunteer experience does seem insurmountable and in such cases students need to be creative – e.g., look for international volunteering opportunities that are not so expensive and will give support in fundraising. There may be a middle way for those who are put off volunteering for financial reasons. Also some of the graduate research respondents indicated that there are ways around doing voluntary work without being completely impoverished. A supportive charity would recognise this as an issue and help as best they can.

### 12.2 The need for relevant experience – meeting the challenge of getting this

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<sup>20</sup> Christie (2007), *Graduate career pathways into the voluntary/community sector - the Higher Education careers consultants' view*

There does seem to be an issue – that charities tend to favour recruiting people with experience who can hit the ground running. There is not really a culture especially in management and administration roles to take people on with a view to train them from early in their careers. This obviously affects students and graduates at the beginning of their careers. The sector is starting to recognise this and the current graduate scheme proposed is a good example of this.

What are the solutions then? Students and graduates interested in the sector need to plan ahead and look at ways of getting experience/skills while they are studying. Some universities do a lot of work in facilitating potential relevant work experience/volunteering opportunities. It could also be simply about doing specific activities at university – e.g., organising a fundraising event at your Hall. It may also require students to think more carefully what role they would like to perform in a charity with a view to getting relevant experience. This requires research into different roles. It would be also potentially easier to do a period of voluntary work while still at university when time tends to be more flexible.

### **12.3 Popularity of the sector – thinking beyond the big names**

There was consensus amongst careers consultants that the Voluntary and community sector is a popular area for many students/graduates. There were some comments that many students narrowed their focus too much to big name super-charities which do appear to be the most competitive to get into. In contrast there may be parts of the sector that are less competitive but would allow you to develop transferable skills; social care and housing is a good example of a less popular career area that could offer rewards. My research did also confirm that the development of relevant transferable skills in the public or private sector could contribute to a successful move to a charity in the future. There certainly was evidence amongst the graduates and HR staff of movement between different charities, and many of the graduates I spoke to who worked for less well-known organisations felt they had faced less competition because of this.

### **12.4 Getting information about jobs available**

There is no doubt that it is sometimes harder to get information about careers in the voluntary and community sectors than other sectors. The view from consultants was that students and graduates need to persevere in seeking information and need to realise that information may be more scattered and hard to come by.

There appears to be an appetite amongst consultants/advisers to provide information and support for students who want to go into the sector and there were lots of examples of good practice. There is an understanding that the sector does not have the resources to promote itself in the way commercial organisations do. Many Careers Services are working hard to provide information and support to their students interested in the field. This can be via tailored events or links can be developed via volunteer managers/bureaus. The message is to take advantage of the knowledge your Careers Service can offer.

However – individuals interested in the sector need to seize what information is actually available. There is a growing volume of information and individuals sometimes just need to know the right place to look. The graduates I interviewed certainly showed a considerable willingness to search out information for themselves about potential career opportunities.

### **12.5 Proactivity/flexibility needed by jobseekers**

There were lots of comments suggesting that individuals interested in the sector need to be flexible and proactive. This is not a career field for those who want a career path clearly marked out for them. These were some of the tips advisers offered:

- **Be realistic:** you need to be very realistic about what is possible initially, but also what you can achieve long term if you get stuck in and build networks and take advantage of every opportunity.
- **Be flexible:** you need to be flexible when joining small organisations and may need to move organisation to progress. Resources may be tight and you may be working within an organisation in great transition so be prepared to possibly be working with others who may feel in turmoil. Government / public funding can have

dramatic impact on the way your job develops but if you have strong beliefs in the area then this could outweigh any negative impact any of the above may have on you.

- **Be open-minded:** there are a broad range of ways into this area, sometimes it is more about thinking laterally than looking for a 'graduate' job. It's not always clear the diverse range of causes this sector covers, but a bit of digging can really open your eyes.
- **Volunteer:** volunteering can help you gain many other skills and often vocational training too which makes you better prepared for the job market.
- **Develop yourself:** be realistic about the self development work/time necessary to enter, and continue/progress in this sector. Be imaginative, tenacious and determined and believe in the power of networks and serendipity. You will have to create your own career ladder for yourself which takes a lot of motivation.
- **Use and develop networking:** it is critical to build relationships well in this small sector. Who you know can still contribute to getting a job.

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## Chapter 13 - Where to look for jobs in charities?

Charities both large and small don't tend to have large budgets for recruitment advertising so you do have to know the right places to look for jobs. Charities recruit in a variety of ways so you need to make sure you are looking at a number of places when trying to find advertised opportunities in the sector.

### 13.1 National press

Some charities will advertise jobs in national newspapers/magazines. Publications with voluntary sector job ads include the following which also have their own websites. It does tend to be larger charities that may advertise this way and sometimes for more senior level jobs:

The Big Issue – <http://www.tbijobs.co.uk/>

The Guardian - <http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/jobs/charities>

The Independent - <http://jobs.independent.co.uk>

The Voice - <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/careers/>

### 13.2 Local press/local job centres

Many charities will target advertising locally at newspapers and job centres.

### 13.3 'Trade' journals

There are some specialist trade publications that advertise opportunities. There may be one that is particularly relevant to the sector or role you are interested in. These include:

Third Sector Jobs - <http://jobs.thirdsector.co.uk/>

Social care jobs - [www.communitycare.co.uk/jobs](http://www.communitycare.co.uk/jobs)

Environment jobs - <http://www.environmentpost.co.uk/>

Opportunities in Development abroad - <http://www.wse.org.uk>

Housing jobs - [www.insidehousing.co.uk/graduates/](http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/graduates/)

See also the section below about targeting the sector you are interested in.

### 13.4 Charity recruitment agencies/websites

There are numerous specialist not-for-profit sector recruitment agencies/websites that you can sign up for. Many have what they do as obvious in their titles – others less so. Most of these are based in London and the South east but handle jobs nationally. Charities will often use agencies for jobs that may be harder to fill.

NCVO jobshop - [www.ncvo-jobshop.org.uk/](http://www.ncvo-jobshop.org.uk/)

Charity People - [www.charitypeople.co.uk](http://www.charitypeople.co.uk)

Charity Times - [www.charitytimes.com](http://www.charitytimes.com)

Prospect-Us - [www.prospect-Us.co.uk](http://www.prospect-Us.co.uk)

Jobs in charities - [www.jobsincharities.co.uk](http://www.jobsincharities.co.uk)

Charity Connections - [www.charityconnections.co.uk](http://www.charityconnections.co.uk)

Charity Action Recruitment - [www.c-a-r.org.uk](http://www.c-a-r.org.uk)

Charity recruitment search and selection - [www.crsearch.co.uk](http://www.crsearch.co.uk)

Charity Jobs - [www.charityjob.co.uk](http://www.charityjob.co.uk)

Harris Hill Charity Recruitment - [www.harrishill.co.uk](http://www.harrishill.co.uk)

Voluntary Sector Jobs - [www.voluntarysectorjobs.co.uk](http://www.voluntarysectorjobs.co.uk)

Eden Brown: Charity Jobs & Not for Profit Jobs - [www.edenbrown.com/charity-jobs/](http://www.edenbrown.com/charity-jobs/)

Morgan Hunt - [www.morganhunt.com](http://www.morganhunt.com)

### 13.5 Approaching charities directly

Many charities will advertise jobs on their own websites. This may be the only place they advertise. So if you are interested in specific charities make sure to look at their websites. Many larger charities have developed specific careers/jobs sections on their website. Examples include:

- Barnardos - [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)
- Oxfam - [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)
- NSPCC - [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- Amnesty - [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)
- Charity Commission - [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk)

You can also contact individual charities directly outlining what your skills are and the type of work you think you could do for them. This may be particularly relevant to smaller charities. The Voluntary Agencies Directory (NCVO) provides a great list of charities in the UK. GuideStar is also a very useful resource for researching charities ([www.guidestar.org.uk](http://www.guidestar.org.uk)).

Some charities or groups of charities have their own newsletters and magazines as well as their own website. Find out if there are any specific magazines, newsletters or even email discussion lists you could sign up for. These may often be low budget avenues for smaller charities to advertise their jobs.

### 13.6 Targeting the sector you are interested in

Different parts of the voluntary/community sector may advertise jobs in different ways. So it helps to know which part of the voluntary/community sector you are interested in. There are specific vacancy sources for careers in the environment, international development, housing and social welfare, for example. Make sure to find out what would be appropriate for the specific field you are interested in. Here are some examples of places to look. This is not designed to be a complete list.

#### 13.6.1 Short term and volunteering opportunities in the UK

[www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)  
[www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)  
[www.timebank.org.uk](http://www.timebank.org.uk)

#### 13.6.2 International Development sector

[www.eldis.org/](http://www.eldis.org/) -gateway to development information  
[www.experiencedevelopment.org](http://www.experiencedevelopment.org) – development work experience  
Action Without Borders & Idealist – [www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)  
Development Gateway includes a Country Gateway Network - [www.developmentgateway.org](http://www.developmentgateway.org)

#### 13.6.3 Housing and Social welfare

<http://www.myhousingcareer.com/>  
<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/>  
<http://www.allhousingjobs.co.uk>  
<http://www.greatsocialcare.co.uk/>  
<http://www.socialworkandcare.co.uk>

#### 13.6.4 Environment sector

[www.ends.co.uk](http://www.ends.co.uk) – Environmental Data Services: including job and agency listings and a list of consultancies  
[www.greendirectory.net](http://www.greendirectory.net) – including a directory of consultants, NGOs and other relevant organisations  
[www.environmentpost.co.uk](http://www.environmentpost.co.uk)  
[www.environmentjob.co.uk](http://www.environmentjob.co.uk)  
[www.oneworld.net/jobs](http://www.oneworld.net/jobs) - for jobs in human rights, environment and sustainable development worldwide.

## 13.7 Careers fairs and the voluntary/community sector

University Careers Services across the UK vary enormously in terms of what events they can offer to students/graduates interested in the voluntary/community sector. This may be affected by the size of the institution and the nature of the students studying there. But as a basic starting point find out what is going on at your campus and at universities nearby that you can travel to. The events at many universities can be open to students from other universities – but do check this before you buy your train ticket! If your university doesn't offer relevant events, careers staff will still be able to point you in the right direction of where to get information.

In doing this research I surveyed university Careers Services nationally and one of my aims was to find out what kind of specific provision there was for students/graduates interested in the sector.

My research revealed that there was a lot of activity on university campuses which attempts to meet the needs of students interested in the sector. However, sometimes the activity that is going on can appear a bit hidden behind some of the higher profile commercial careers activity. So don't be put off and do persevere - you can check with your Careers Service what events could be relevant to you. There are many events which involve charities and focus on volunteering opportunities. These provide a valuable way to meet charity staff face to face, to network and find out about specific career and volunteering opportunities. Some large events are organised on an annual basis so it's important you make the most of them as you won't be able to go back the next week. There is no one definitive list of specialist charity events – you do need to do your homework. There are annual events in Manchester, London, Newcastle, Birmingham, Oxford, Glasgow and Bristol. Many charities may attend more general careers events or events that focus on a particular sector such as the environment or social care rather than attending a specialised charity careers event.

### 13.7.1 Some selected relevant events at universities

- University of Manchester Kaleidoscope public and voluntary sector careers fair, - [www.studentnet.manchester.ac.uk/careers](http://www.studentnet.manchester.ac.uk/careers)
- The Careers Group courses, London - Careers in Charities, Careers in International Development - [www.careers.lon.ac.uk](http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk)
- London School of Economics Public Sector & Policy Fair – [www.lse.ac.uk](http://www.lse.ac.uk)
- Northumbria Make a Difference Fair – [http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/stud\\_serv/careers/](http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/stud_serv/careers/)
- University of Birmingham Ethical careers event – [www.bham.ac.uk](http://www.bham.ac.uk)
- University of Bristol Alternatives Fair - [www.bris.ac.uk/careers](http://www.bris.ac.uk/careers)
- University of Oxford Alternative Careers Fair - [www.careers.ox.ac.uk](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk)
- University of Warwick Careers Unlimited - <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/careers>

### 13.7.2 Other major charity careers events

- London - Forum 3 Charity careers fair - [www.forum3.co.uk](http://www.forum3.co.uk) – organised by Charity People
- London - Guardian Society Careers Fair - [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)
- Glasgow - The Gathering Scottish Exhibition - Scottish Council for the Voluntary Sector [www.scvo.org.uk/thegathering](http://www.scvo.org.uk/thegathering)
- Compass Careers Fairs across the country – mainly dealing with social care sector opportunities
- London – Charity Fair organised by Directory of Social Change - <http://www.charityfair.org.uk/>

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## Chapter 14 - Education and training for professional development

The possibilities for professional development in terms of education and training are growing in the sector. In choosing what to do it really helps to know what you want for your career; for example, the education/training you might do could be very different if you want to be a human rights campaigner or a volunteer manager. You may perhaps have qualifications in social work, law, finance or communications before going into the sector. The sector is one that does favour experience too and many of the courses listed below are for people already in the sector. However, this is not exclusively the case. There could be some options below that could accelerate your chances of getting in if you are not already working for a charity.

There are a number of places to look for more information on education/training options.<sup>21</sup> The list I have collated below relates to courses that would support career aspirations in management and administration.

### 14.1 Selection of short courses

- [www.csv.org.uk/Get+Trained](http://www.csv.org.uk/Get+Trained) / - relevant courses and opportunities for practical experience.
- The [www.dsc.org.uk](http://www.dsc.org.uk) - wide range of short training courses, typically lasting one to two days and covering areas such as organisational development, management, finance and law, and skills development
- Institute of fundraisers – foundation course and certificate in fundraising management - [www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk](http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk)
- Working for a Charity - [www.wfac.org.uk](http://www.wfac.org.uk) – offer short training for charity administration/management – suitable for new graduates, including online course "Effective Voluntary Sector Management"
- Volunteering England - [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) (professional-level training in the core skills of volunteer management, for new and experienced managers, in the form of short courses usually lasting one to two days).

### 14.2 Selection of general courses (some postgraduate) for the voluntary/community sector

#### Online / national

- [Open University Business School](http://www.open.ac.uk/business-school) Runs a Management Certificate programme tailored to the voluntary sector, which can become part of Diploma or MBA. Various courses can be done online. Winning Resources and Support meets criteria for Institute of Fundraising's Certificate.
- Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Enhancement (Online) awarded through the University of Bradford, and meets criteria for full corporate membership of the Institute of Leadership and Management.
- University of Derby Certificate in Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector. Online, with any start date.
- [West Suffolk College](http://www.westsuffolk.ac.uk) School of Business Administration Certificate in Charity Administration by distance learning.
- [Masters in Public Policy and Management](http://www.york.ac.uk) or postgraduate diploma/certificate from the University of York.

#### By location

- University of Wales, Bangor [HE Certificate in Volunteer Management](http://www.wales.ac.uk).
- [Aston Business School](http://www.aston.ac.uk) (Birmingham) Public Services Management MSc and MBA, for people working in the public and voluntary sectors. There is one half module on 'working with the voluntary sector' which is specifically focused on the voluntary sector and partnerships between the public and voluntary sectors. Also doctoral research opportunities, research seminar programme.
- University of Birmingham [School of Public Policy](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk) Public Service MBA, with specific voluntary sector management option. Full or part-time options, and MSc/postgraduate certificate programmes too.
- [Bradford College](http://www.bradford.ac.uk) Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma/MA in Managing Change in the Community.
- University of Bristol [School for Policy Studies](http://www.bristol.ac.uk). "The MSc in Management Development and Social Responsibility fully integrates concern with social values in its content and learning processes, and is

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.volresource.org.uk> (14/1/2008) is a great place to go for more information and this is the key source for the information in this chapter.

intended to equip students with the knowledge, skills and awareness necessary for them to operate as reflective, competent and socially informed managers in a changing environment."

- Cambridge MBA - [Judge Business School](#) have a bursary scheme for "UK professionals in the not for profit sectors".
- [Centre for Charity Effectiveness, Cass Business School](#) (City University, London). Part-time postgraduate MSc or Diploma in [Voluntary Sector Management](#); PgDip/ MSc [Charity Accounting & Financial Management](#), PgDip/ MSc [Charity Marketing and Fundraising](#) and PgDip/ MSc [Grantmaking Management](#). New 2006: [ICAEW Diploma in Charity Accounting](#). Also occasional short courses.
- London South Bank University (LSBU) The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Certificate in Charity Finance and Accountancy
- [Centre for Institutional Studies](#), University of East London. MA/Postgrad Diploma/Cert, Voluntary Sector Studies; MSc/Postgrad Cert/Diploma, Public and Community Service; MBA Capacity Building for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations. 'Flexible programmes for people working in the public or voluntary and community sectors.' Also now MA/PgDip/Certificate in Social Enterprise, plus various short courses.
- [Glasgow Caledonian University](#) Certificate in Management, Voluntary Sector - part-time postgraduate. Can integrate into their DMS/MBA programme.
- [Leeds Metropolitan University](#) Run part-time Professional Diploma, Managing in the Community and BA in Managing in Health & Social Care Organisations.
- [Charity Law Unit](#), Liverpool Law School, University of Liverpool. Postgraduate research opportunities. They also run bi-monthly seminars on various issues.
- [Centre for Civil Society](#), London School of Economics. Postgraduate courses, including MSc in Voluntary Sector Organisation, MSc in Management of NGOs (in Developing Countries).
- London South Bank University Business Computing and Information Management Faculty, [Centre for Government and Charity Management](#). Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma or Masters in Charity Accounting and Financial Management, ICSA Certificate in Charity Management; Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma/MSc in Charity Marketing & Fundraising; Masters in Voluntary Administration (MVA).
- Middlesex University [School of Health and Social Science](#) MA or postgraduate diploma in [Social Policy](#) Focus on 'welfare' issues, two year part-time (two evenings a week) or one year full-time.
- [Robert Gordon University](#) Part-time postgraduate Certificate/Diploma or MSc courses on Scottish Public Sector Management.
- [Roehampton University, Centre for the Study of Voluntary and Community Activity. Voluntary Action Management](#) MSc/Postgraduate Diploma combine practical work experience in a voluntary agency with academic management theory and can be done full or part-time.
- [Charity and Voluntary Sector Unit](#), Sheffield Hallam University. Modules relating to charity management in MSc Management and BA (Hons) Business Studies. Also PhD in Charity Studies possibilities, and new 2005: MSc/Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate Certificate in [Charity Resource Management](#).
- [University of Southampton](#) Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma/MSc in the [Management of Voluntary Organisations](#) (Certificate available by distance learning) from the Division of Social Work Studies.
- University of Sussex [Centre for Continuing Education](#) Certificate in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations
- St Mary's College, Twickenham [School of Management and Business Enterprise](#) MA, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate in Charity Management.
- Warwick University [Business School Master in Public Administration](#) post-graduate degree. "Participants mix study with work over a three-year period. Study is based on three two-week residential blocks of teaching each year."
- [National College of Ireland](#), Dublin, School of Business and Humanities. Certificate in Managing Organisations in the Voluntary and Community Sector, one year evening course.

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## Conclusion

In doing this research project, I have been struck by the high calibre of individuals working in this sector - both graduates and HR staff. The level of experience gained by the graduates I surveyed was exceptional in many cases. This is a sector which attracts highly motivated individuals who are seeking rewards from their work that often relate to the positive social impact they are making. Many of them are extremely enthusiastic about their work. Working for a charity seems to some extent a lifestyle choice with the strong attraction of working with a like-minded group of people for a common cause. In many ways there have been few surprises for me in doing this research. However, the findings based on my research provide useful evidence for how people get a career in a charity. The research did also demystify for me what for many people seems a competitive and impenetrable sector. I hope this will also be the case for my reader.

The diversity of roles I have found out about has been considerable and the opportunities are manifold in a growing sector. Interestingly the findings from the Voluntary Sector Skills Survey 2007 indicate that many charities do struggle to recruit and yet many graduates are finding it very competitive to get a job. Perhaps this is as a result of the fact that the sector hopes to recruit skilled and experienced people which in many cases graduates are not. The sector itself has begun to address the challenge supporting individuals through a career entry scheme which is currently pending. I am conscious that there are gaps in terms of the graduates I surveyed. I do not have any case studies of recent graduates working in finance, IT or legal roles and these are some of the areas in which the sector is experiencing skills shortages. It would be interesting to do more research on this.

With regard to some of my initial questions I discovered some interesting answers. With regard to the value of volunteering – it was confirmed that this was important and was a pathway into the sector, but this needs considerable qualification in places. Individuals with experience elsewhere may get into the sector without it and some HR staff are actually concerned about raising people's hopes of progressing from volunteer to paid member of staff. With regard to received wisdoms about people progressing from the public and private sectors – this was partly confirmed – with some HR staff saying people moved from the private sector to management/administration roles and from the public sector for service delivery roles. However, many of the graduates I spoke to had managed to get into the sector fairly soon after University.

My research also partly confirmed that career progression can be limited in the sector and that pay is potentially not as high as elsewhere although many of the individuals I surveyed felt they were certainly being paid competitively. There was a strong sense that in this sector career progression is very affected by individuals' own ambition and drive and those who were successfully carving a career out for themselves had been very proactive in building their career to date. Effectively being altruistic about society and wanting to do a job that reflected this does not require selflessness on individuals' part. Generally a desire to have a career with a positive social impact co-existed with highly motivated and ambitious individuals who were prepared to push themselves forward.

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## **For more information**

### **Publications/reports**

Lacey (2006), *Pathways into employment in the voluntary and community sector – an evidence review* (UK Voluntary Sector Workforce hub)

Christie (2007), *Graduate career pathways into the voluntary/community sector - the Higher Education careers consultants' view*

Wilding et al (2006), *The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2006* (NCVO)

Reichardt et al (2007), *The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007* (NCVO)

*Third sector: First Choice – Exploring the viability of a new scheme to attract graduates to the voluntary and community sector as the first stage in building their career.* (UK Voluntary sector Workforce hub 2006)

Wilding et al (2003) *Future Skills 2003*, Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation

Clark, J. (2007) *Voluntary Sector Skills survey 2007*, UK Workforce Hub

*Voluntary Agencies directory* (NCVO)

*Charities digest* – available via [www.charitychoice.co.uk](http://www.charitychoice.co.uk)

*Working for a Better World* – UK Voluntary sector workforce hub (2006)

*AGCAS Voluntary sector briefing* – available on [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

Brown, *Working in the Voluntary Sector* (2002)

### **Websites**

<http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/charityofficer> – 7/7/2007

<http://www.volresource.org.uk> - 14/1/2008

### **Journals/newspapers**

Benjamin (21<sup>st</sup> February 2007) *State of dependence*, *Guardian newspaper*

Kennedy (14<sup>th</sup> March 2007) *Second Thoughts*, *Guardian newspaper*

Third Sector magazine – [www.thirdsector.co.uk](http://www.thirdsector.co.uk)

*Target public sector* (GTI)

*Ethical Careers Guide* (NGO Media)

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GMCVO  
Great Places Housing Group  
Development in Action  
Christie Hospital  
World Land Trust  
Asian foundation for Philanthropy  
Groundwork Trust  
Christian Aid  
CAFOD  
WRVS  
DePaul Trust  
Asthma UK  
ReachOut  
HSBP  
Dialogue Direct  
Charities Advisory Trust  
Lesbian and Gay Foundation  
Childline  
Creative Support  
Together Trust

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