

## **Group Training Associations (GTAs) and apprenticeships in the voluntary and community sector: Frequently Asked Questions**

July 2009

This briefing aims to help voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to understand:

- the aims of Group Training Associations (GTA)
- the benefits of apprenticeships for VCS organisations
- VSNW's involvement in a bid for national GTA for VCS organisations
- the benefits for VCS organisations of joining a potential new sector-specific GTA

## **What are Group Training Associations?**

Group Training Associations (GTAs) were first established by groups of local employers in the 1960s. By February 2009 there were over 125 GTAs in Britain.

GTAs concern themselves with work-based training, learning and development for specific fields of work. There are GTAs in fields as varied as engineering, manufacturing, technology, airborne systems and seafishing.

One of the principle activities of a GTA is to manage apprenticeships.

Most commonly established as charities but also some as Companies Limited by Guarantee, GTAs are governed by a board whose membership is drawn from employers being served by the GTA. As a distinct legal entity a GTA can bid for and secure funding for its work in order to provide training for the employers that it exists to serve.

At present there is no GTA specifically for employers within the voluntary and community sector (VCS).

## **How much money is the government putting into creating new GTAs?**

Through the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) the government has set aside £7 million over two years to support bids to create GTAs that will generate an increase of 15,000 apprenticeships over and above those that would be created under normal circumstances.

## **How many new GTAs will be created? Who will they be for?**

Between 10 and 15 new GTAs will be created by the end of 2009. There will be an emphasis on encouraging work with small and medium sized enterprises as well as with sectors where there has traditionally been a very low take-up of Apprenticeships. Both criteria apply to most of the VCS.

## **Who is leading on the bid for a GTA for the voluntary and community sector?**

A consortium of different organisations with direct or indirect experience of employment in the voluntary and community sector, namely Rathbone as the lead supported by: Skills Third Sector, ACEVO, North Warwickshire and Hinckley College, VISTA, VSNW, Learning Curve, Princes Trust, St John's, NACRO and Barnardos.

### **What is the timescale for developing this GTA?**

An invitation to tender has been issued to Rathbone and has to be completed and returned by 27<sup>th</sup> July. If the tender is successful Rathbone will be notified by 16<sup>th</sup> September. Contract negotiations will take place in October.

If successful, the proposals from Rathbone and its partners could see the first apprentices enrolled before the end of December 2009.

### **What is an “apprenticeship”?**

Apprenticeships are a workplace opportunity for individuals to gain industry specific experience and qualifications that provide a solid foundation for a long term career.

Apprenticeships are made up of two elements: an “on-the-job” element where as part of a wider team individuals gain skills and knowledge from experienced staff in the workplace and an “off-the-job” element, often on a day-release basis, where the individual receives structured training that relates to their role with their employer and leads to a nationally recognised qualification.

Apprenticeships exist at two levels. The first enables an individual to work towards and gain a Level Two qualification which is equivalent to 5 good GCSE passes. The second, called an Advanced Apprenticeship, enables an individual to work towards and gain a Level 3 qualification which is equivalent to two A level passes.

Depending upon how long it takes to become competent at the job the apprentice is training for, apprenticeships generally last between one and three years.

### **If I provided one or more apprenticeships what would the GTA do for me?**

Staff from the GTA or one of its providers would talk to you and the person taking up the apprenticeship about the job they had come to do and what training it would take for them to become competent in that job.

A programme of training to equip the individual to that level of competence would then be organised and paid for by the GTA – either through direct purchasing from an existing provider of training or by the creation of bespoke VCS relevant training for small groups of apprentices in common fields of work.

### **If I provided one or more apprenticeships what would it cost?**

From August 2009 all apprentices must be paid at least £95 per week. As an employer you are free to pay higher than the national minimum but you may not pay less. The national average is approximately £170 net pay per week for apprentices.

If you would normally provide any personal clothing or equipment for an individual in the same line of work as the apprentice – uniform, safety clothing or workstation/computer you would also have to supply these items.

Like other employees apprentices are entitled to a minimum of 20 days paid holiday per year plus Bank Holidays.

### **If I provided one or more apprenticeships what would I have to do?**

Basically fulfil all the normal duties of a good employer including:

- induction
- supervision
- insurance

... and support the ongoing learning of the apprentice through their participation in day-release or block-release training as appropriate to their career ambitions.

### **Who can take up the apprenticeships created through GTA?**

Individuals living in England not in full time education who are aged 16 years or over.

This may mean that you already have members of staff who would be eligible to become apprentices in their existing roles.

**NB.** It may also mean that if you are currently designing or seeking funding for a new project with one or more additional staff posts that they could be suitable for opening up as apprenticeship opportunities which would bring in additional resources for staff development and training.

### **How could I become involved in this GTA?**

As the lead partner in the bid to create a GTA for the VCS, Rathbone is looking for organisations to express their interest in becoming founder members of the new GTA.

At this stage all this involves is completion of a short form, principally to express support for the creation of a third sector Group Training Association, and a statement of intent to use the GTA to train apprentices for your organisation.

There is also a request for some indication of the size of your organisation – staff and volunteers - the possible number of additional apprenticeships you may be able to create plus some idea of the occupational areas those apprentices would work in such as Customer Service, Marketing, Hospitality and Catering.

### **What is the benefit of the creation of a third sector GTA?**

At the moment there are no national frameworks for apprenticeship training in occupational areas specific to the VCS such as fundraising and volunteer management. A third sector GTA could create those frameworks and draw down government funding to pay for the delivery of the training in those occupational areas.

Another challenge faced by the VCS is that the majority of organisations are small and rarely employ large enough numbers of staff to make buying in tailored training provision affordable. With its overview of the training needs of apprentices in the VCS workforce, a GTA could create economically viable groups of trainees by pulling together individuals from different organisations.

### **What next?**

If you would like to know more about apprenticeships in general go to <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>.

If you work in the voluntary and community sector in the North West, and are interested in running an apprenticeship, or for more information about VSNW and its involvement in the consortium on the development of a third sector GTA contact Karen Rigg on 0161 276 9304 or [karen.rigg@vsnw.org.uk](mailto:karen.rigg@vsnw.org.uk)

To express an interest in supporting the joint bid to form a third sector GTA please contact [michele.black@rathboneuk.org](mailto:michele.black@rathboneuk.org)

**VSNW** (Voluntary Sector North West) is the regional voluntary sector network for the North West. The purpose of VSNW is to ensure that the voluntary and community sector (VCS), in all its diversity, takes its full part in shaping the future of the North West.

VSNW works with 150 members which

- work across the region directly supporting and delivering services for individuals, or
- are VCS infrastructure organisations (LIOs) that work with local voluntary and community groups.

VSNW members provide community services, regenerate neighbourhoods, support individuals, promote volunteering and tackle discrimination. The 40 generalist LIOs in membership of VSNW have a membership of 6,780 VCS groups and are in contact with 19,800 local voluntary and community sector groups in the North West – just under two-thirds (63%) of the region’s VCS groups.

Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW)  
St Thomas Centre  
Ardwick Green North  
Manchester  
M12 6FZ

Tel: 0161 276 9300  
Fax: 0161 276 9301  
Email: [policy@vsnw.org.uk](mailto:policy@vsnw.org.uk)  
Web: [www.vsnw.org.uk](http://www.vsnw.org.uk)

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Registered office as above

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