

# **Hull CVS Members Review 2004**



Minerva Research

Minerva Chambers, 73 Spring Bank, Hull. HU3 1AG

Tel: (01482) 219390

e-mail: [mrp@mtc-arts.org.uk](mailto:mrp@mtc-arts.org.uk)

# Contents

## **The Postal Questionnaire**

1. The respondents
2. Email and the web
3. Type of organisation
4. Sectors covered
5. Are you a member of another organisation?
6. What CVS services have you used in the last 2 years?
7. How frequently do you access these services?
8. Best and worst things about the service
9. Is the service available elsewhere?
10. How would you rate the CVS services you used
11. Other services accessed
12. New CVS / New service
13. What could the CVS do to improve accessibility to their services?
14. What benefits would you expect as a member?
15. Should the CVS change its name to Community and voluntary services?
16. Summary

## **The Interviews**

1. The interviews
2. CVS Membership
3. Marketing the CVS
4. CVS Services used
5. ICT capabilities and support
6. CVS Newsletter
7. CVS Directory
8. Sources of information and advice
9. Volunteers and Trustees
10. Summary of Interviews



# **The Postal Questionnaire**

# 1. The Respondents

Concurrent to this members review, Minerva Research Partnership was in the process of compiling data collected by the CVS as part of their own survey work. The New opportunities fund: Transforming your space survey was concerned with groups interested or involved with environmental and waste space management in the city of Hull.

There were 49 organisations who completed this survey and not the New Opportunities Fund survey issued by the CVS in 2003.

151 organisations responded to the NOF questionnaire but not the members review.

64 Organisations responded to both the Minerva Research Review Questionnaire and the NOF questionnaire.

This means that 55% of the members review respondents previously responded to the NOF questionnaire as well. Given the details asked for in the NOF questionnaire which were similar details to the review questions it should be considered a possibility the members receive too much in the way of questionnaires through their letter box and would explain the lower than expected reply rate for this members review.

There were a few interesting responses to our questionnaire, including a reply that said the addressee had not lived at the address for at least ten years and could not be contacted there.

There are a surprising number of respondents who were unable to or unwilling to fill in all the relevant questions they were asked, Some respondents did not answer the questions in the required way, for example ticking four boxes when asked to tick three.

## 2. Email and the Web

60% of the members have an e-mail address

30% of non-members have an e-mail address

60% of those who would consider membership have an e-mail address

27% of members would like IT support

10% of non-members would like IT support

12% of those considering membership would like IT support

Most of the organisations who responded have e-mail and web site's. More members than non-members have e-mail but a lower percentage of the members than non-members would like an e-mail newsletter as a members benefit. There is a similar percentage of organisations who would like IT support to those who would not want an e-mail newsletter. It appears that there is a need for developing the IT skills of the member organisations before the newsletter can be delivered electronically rather than by the current method.

The members and non-members, including those who would consider becoming members show equal percentages regarding websites. This throws some doubt onto the need for IT support for the members being the reason why they do not want an e-mail newsletter. It also means that there are 60% of members and non-members who would potentially benefit from having a members area on the CVS website.

As with all things "internet" there are various reasons why an e-mail newsletter would not be desirable. These issues will be further investigated during the interviews.

### 3. Type of Organisation

All community groups were either members or considering membership.

75% of the members were charities, this compared with 60% of non-members. Overall 72% of organisations stated they were charities, this coupled with between 10% and 15% who stated they were a branch or project of a national charity means that charities are very strongly represented in this sample of respondents. The reasons for this are not clear.

Companies limited by guarantee make up 20% of the overall numbers of the respondents. Self help and community groups make up the majority of the rest of the organisations who responded.

There are circumstances where a group fits into two categories.

There were very few residents groups, network or umbrella group. The 'other' listed types of group were:

Organisation "of and for disabled people", access group, City Council, rail users group, industrial & provident society (housing association), housing association, social services, student community action, church, voluntary, charitable trust, government programme, EIC supporting community groups, statutory government, amenity society, student association, credit union

A wide range of types of organisation make up the CVS membership, It is therefore important to be able to offer the types of support and advice at the differing levels these members and non-members who may use the CVS services would require. The differences between these diverse members should be fully understood since the services needed or requested by them fit into the same categories.

The shortage of responses from these other categories might suggest that the CVS has not advertised its services to these organisations in the right way, since they are on the mailing list but have not responded. There is an important opinion not represented by the respondents as strongly as it should be.

***A wide range of types of organisation make up the CVS membership, It is important to be able to offer the types of support and advice at the differing levels these members and non-members would require.***

## **4. Sectors covered**

There was no limit to the number of sectors that the respondents could tick for this question, the following represent the highest number of responses:

Nearly 50% of the organisations offered advice and information, 42% dealt with youth and children, 41% dealt with disability, 32% dealt with education.

There were also high responses (over 20%) for organisations dealing with women, community centres, older people, family, fund-raising and Health.

Most of the organisations had multiple responses (up to 11 for one organisation), for example information and advice and health was a common grouping.

There were few organisations who covered more specialist areas such as ex-services and animal welfare.

Information which the CVS might provide would have to cover a wide range of sectors, there are organisations who provide information to cover the sectors they cover and there may be opportunities for signposting one member to another (a suggestion for improving the CVS accessibility).

There are services which cover all types of organisation, such as payroll that the CVS can easily provide to these diverse organisations and sectors, but any specialist knowledge would have to be delivered with a great deal of flexibility. Support such as training needs could be so specific to the individual organisation that it is impossible for the CVS to provide it. In this case more signposting should be involved.

With a high number of organisations covering similar issues a forum type linkage would be an important resource that the CVS could offer, learning from similar experiences is an important resource for community organisations.

Those who are non-members and those who would consider membership show similar patterns

## **5. Are you a member of another organisation?**

A bigger percentage of organisations who are CVS members, than those who are non CVS members, stated that they were a member or affiliated to another organisation.

It would be important to match the types of support that these organisations receive as a member of another organisation to ensure that the CVS is offering services above and beyond those already available. Most of these organisations have used other similar services in the past 2 years, including funding advice, training and newsletters and volunteer recruitment. These are all services the CVS offers.

Funding advice might be sought from several places since it is an important area of the business, as with Volunteer recruitment and newsletters. The services should be compatible and not competitive with these other organisations.

## 6. What CVS services have you used in the last 2 years?

4% of the members say they have not used the CVS services in the last 2 years. All of the non-members said they had used the CVS.

The services that are under-used, or have not been used greatly by both members and non-members are information and advice: on management, recruitment, developing own training and volunteer management. However 50% of the members and 40% of the non-members said they had sought funding advice.

As a source of information the CVS scores very low, however as a useful source of contacts they have 25% use by members and 40% by non-members. It could be that the information needs of members are best served by talking with similar organisations who have had similar problems rather than the CVS.

The CVS newsletter was the most used service, closely followed by the CVS directory. This further suggests that as a use of general information the CVS is important but as a more specialist source of information the members and non-members would prefer to use other sources. Or perhaps they do not know that the CVS offers such a service.

Community network events were accessed by a third of the members further adding to the points above, further suggesting that there exists a strong need for members to contact one another regularly.

The payroll service was only used by CVS members. 33% said they had used this service.

Of those who were not members but said they would consider membership 60% said they had used the CVS newsletter and 40% had used the CVS directory. It would seem that these services reach a wide audience and are a useful way for the CVS to advertise its events and services.

Practical services such as volunteer recruitment and training are services used by a third of the respondents. For the process of volunteer recruitment the advice on managing the volunteers may be part of the service and not seen as a separate service. It is impossible to say how many of the respondents might have adopted this point of view.

## 7. How frequently do you access these services?

Over 60% of the organisations stated that they accessed CVS services on a monthly or more frequently basis. Members access the services more frequently than non-members. Those non-members and those who would consider membership do not access the CVS on a weekly basis, but a large percentage still have monthly contact with the CVS, especially those considering membership.

All those who would consider membership stated that they were unsure if they were members or not. This suggests that some of these organisations may in fact be members.

## 8. Best and worst things about the service

86% of members gave a best thing about the service they had last used, 83% of non-members gave a best thing. These include:

Always on time and available  
Good advice  
Information ready to hand  
The extent of knowledge  
Very efficient and helpful  
Very helpful  
Advice  
Informative and potential volunteer

33% of members gave a worst thing about the service they had last used, 66% of non-members gave a worst thing. However some of the answers were simply to say that they had no problem or that the service was OK, It appears that the members in particular do not wish to give an answer to this question or that they did not have a problem with any of the services but it is unclear which is the case. The worst things stated by these respondents include:

No solution really  
Not enough advice  
It should be updated (directory)  
Too much to read when busy  
Most info available on net already  
No follow up as was offered  
Needs updating annually and info about groups not operating locally  
No response

These issues are important to those organisations who experienced these problems. They cover a wide range of problems and most could easily be addressed, for example it may be that the CVS provided all the information they had available but that was not as much as the organisation wanted, the CVS could potentially have signposted to another organisation in some cases.

One important area which seems to have been raised a few times is the timeliness of the information the CVS provides and how up to date it is. These issues could be overcome with a combination of a regularly updated online resource and an e-mail newsletter to those organisations able to pick it up.

***86% of members gave a best thing about the service they had last used. These include:***

***Always on time and available  
Good advice  
Information ready to hand  
The extent of knowledge  
Very efficient and helpful***



## **9. Is the service available elsewhere?**

20% of the respondents said that the service was available elsewhere, which suggests that they are genuinely happy with the service offered by the CVS.

40% did not know if the service was available elsewhere. There is no way to say if they are using the CVS service because it is the only one they are aware of or if it is the only one available to them and therefore, whether the positive comments about the service have a comparison or not. Those who say that the service is not available elsewhere may also fall into this category.

## **10. How would you rate the CVS services you used**

The CVS services were rated highly by most respondents, either 4 or 5 out of 5 for all the issues the research sought opinions on. The biggest concern was to do with getting in touch with the right person when they wanted to, and that the person delivering the support did not fully understand their needs. However they were very positive about the quality and timeliness of the services they accessed, which suggests that the issues of concern did not interfere with the overall delivery of the service.

There are no respondents who accessed other services on the basis that they had had a bad experience with the CVS in the past, which further suggests that the issues of concern would merely be improvements and not defining points when making the decision to use CVS services.

# 11. Other services accessed

30% of members have accessed other services similar to those provided by the CVS, this was the same percentage of non-members who had accessed other services.

The CVS members have used more varied sources, a higher percentage of members have accessed three similar services. The non-members have on average accessed only two similar services.

It appears that the CVS is not advertising its services through the highly used newsletter, either not advertising its services enough or not advertising them in a way that appeals to the members, which could explain their desire to use other services as well as the CVS services.

The CVS members rated these other services more highly than the non-members did. Those who said they would consider CVS membership rated the services the lowest. It appears that CVS membership appeals to the non-members more than to the existing members.

More of the non-members and those considering membership would pay a higher subscription for membership than those already members. However more non-members would want free benefits.

There could be several reasons for these opinions, a perception that CVS membership is seen as desirable, in which case the basis of this opinion must be investigated further so the strengths of the CVS can be identified.

The second reason could be that the members see no value in the membership because the services have traditionally been accessed without a subscription fee.

The question that must be asked is: Are there clear benefits to membership or not and do the non-members understand the benefits?

There is a question whether the membership subscription adds value or not, and free services are often perceived as being inferior to those which draw a charge for accessing them.

The other services were accessed for a variety of reasons, one of the main reasons was that they had accessed services from that organisation in the past. This was the same reason amongst members and those considering membership, whereas the non-members stated that they were the only organisation who provided the service.

The advertising of CVS services must be again raised, since it is likely that the respondents would need convincing to change their minds and make then use the CVS instead.

30% of the non-members said that they had a bad experience with the CVS in the past.

A quarter of the organisations had other reasons for accessing services from organisations other than the CVS, the other reasons were:

- I was an LSP sub board member
- National Body for Voluntary Sector
- Subscribe to their mailing list
- Complimentary services
- Tapping into expertise
- More up to date than CVS
- They are the umbrella for the whole range of voluntary / community groups with whom we hope to engage
- Provides specialist knowledge within my own organisation

The 'other' reasons suggest that they are tapping into other services because it is easier than looking for another provider. This is not always the case because some of the CVS members did not use the CVS for services that the CVS does provide. Again it appears that the CVS is not advertising its services as well as it could because there was also 28% of organisations who stated that the service they accessed was only available from the organisation they accessed it from.

## **12. New CVS / New service**

The top services that the respondents would like the CVS to provide, with 25% or more of the respondents saying they would like to access the service are:

- Technical help for funding bids
- Volunteer training and support
- Trustee support
- Conference facilities
- Printing service
- Transport

The first three on the list are fundamental aspects of the continuing existence and efficiency of the organisations concerned. The other services which the respondents asked for are not to be considered less important, they are very important to the individuals that wanted them. It would appear that the CVS must provide a wide range of services to meet the individual needs of its members, any specialisation and refinement of the services offered would have to be carefully considered.

60% of organisations would like to expand their services and 25% would like to offer a new service. 50% of the organisations said that it would be likely or very likely that they would need to access the CVS services to complete these plans. Only 20% of the respondents said that they would be unlikely to need the CVS services to complete their plans. 20% were unsure. The members are more likely than the non-members to need the CVS services. Those considering becoming members were more likely than the members to need the CVS services. This could be a motivating factor in considering membership.

This suggests that the members have a reliance on the CVS, and that they expect the support that membership brings. The independence of the non-members in progressing as organisations may indicate that the membership is looking to rely on the CVS, and that perhaps their plans are based upon the knowledge that they can access these services when they need to.

In rating the services to the three they would most likely need or would most want to be able to access, technical help for funding bids would be a top priority as would staff training and volunteer support and training.

Services such as conference facilities, a printing service and meeting space become higher priorities. This pattern is also similar for the non-members and those considering becoming members. There is an obvious pattern of practical and physical services being a priority rather than simple information and advice.

## **13. What could the CVS do to improve accessibility to their services?**

When it comes to accessing the CVS there are few respondents saying that the CVS should improve the quality of their services or the flexibility of their services, this figure remains below 5% and though not significant it should be considered and investigated further.

The main concerns that the respondents had was with receiving the right information and being kept informed of the changes within the CVS. Non-members and those considering membership were very keen to have a specific person to contact, it could be that the members already know who to ask for and therefore do not see it as a concern.

Overall just over 15% of the respondents stated that the CVS could improve its accessibility by moving location. Concerns were expressed about parking and the disabled access to the building. This was an even higher priority for the non-members than the members suggesting that this may be a reason for the non-membership.

Nearly 60% of the members own a copy of the CVS directory, 50% of the non-members owned a copy. There was a comment made about the information being out of date, or not updated regularly enough. This coupled with the need for organisation to be kept informed by the CVS of changes suggests that the data is not delivered as timely as they would like.

## **14. What benefits would you expect as a member?**

Members would expect reduced costs, Membership events, an e-mail newsletter, Priority access to services and low cost legal advice as a benefit of membership. Non-members would value a dedicated person to contact and members events. Those considering membership would want reduced costs a dedicated person to contact and a more personal service.

A website area for members, a say in the services available and information available only to members were benefits over 20% of members said they would also expect. These benefits were also expected by those considering membership and the non-members.

Since nearly 30% of the respondents were unsure if they were members or not this matter must be considered carefully. It is apparent that the current membership and benefits are not clear or easily identified. The value of being a member is also unclear to most of the respondents. Overall the respondents were quite realistic about paying to receive these benefits. 25% said they would pay up to £20. If the membership is set at £10 per year then 54% of the respondents would be willing to pay this. Only 22% said that they would prefer free benefits.

The non-members and those who would consider membership were more prepared to pay a higher membership fee than existing members to gain access to these benefits.

The balance and case for membership should be considered, that the members would be sure if they were a member, would have a regular contact with the CVS, and would be clear about the services they would be able to access should be considered strong points. Coupled with the members views about things like a members website area and a dedicated person to contact would seem to suggest that a membership is a useful tool that the CVS should be using. It would also allow the records of contacts within organisations and the advertisement of CVS services to be conducted on a more formal basis.

## 15. Should the CVS change its name to Community and voluntary services?

46% of the respondents said that the CVS should change its name, 11% said that they should not change their name and 35% said that they did not mind.

A higher percentage of the non-members and those considering membership said that the name should not be changed. A higher percentage of those considering becoming a member said that the name should be changed than the members or non-members.

## 16. Summary

The diverse nature of the CVS members and those who would be potential members means that the depth of services offered by the CVS must be adaptable and flexible at all times. Those non-members who responded also require access to services of a similar nature.

There is a desire by the groups who responded to the questionnaire to develop their services and a strong suggestion that they would like to be able to use the CVS to help with this development, provided that a few changes were made to make the service easier to use. Whilst not being hugely radical in their need for improvement a few minor changes such as being able to ring up and ask for a dedicated person would be seen to greatly improve the accessibility. Easier access seems to be the desire rather than different services.

The use of technology, namely the internet is available to the majority of groups. An e-mail newsletter and a website which could be regularly updated with information would help speed up the dissemination of information and reduce printing costs and the time needed to search through the information. Though it would not be suitable for all groups at the current time, the development of such a service would perhaps encourage the access by this medium.

***Information needs to be available to members more easily and updated regularly.***

Survival is a key issue for these organisations as much as the development of their organisation. Funding is an area that many want technical help with because this covers both expansion and survival. There are many sources of funding and some of the respondents have sought funding advice from other organisations. The CVS if not able to provide assistance in every case should consider signposting to other organisations, since the members already use other sources.

There are no strong negative opinions given about the CVS and its services from the members but a third of the non-members said they had a bad experience in the past. It was not asked when this bad experience was, and from the current use of the CVS services, it appears that a bad experience with one service will not stop the organisation accessing another service from the CVS.

Information needs to be available to members more easily and updated regularly. It was stated that the directory was out of date and the information was incorrect and that all the training sessions advertised in the newsletter were not available by the time the newsletter got to the respondent.

There is a false competitive position between the CVS and other organisations offering similar services. Prior knowledge and use rather than a judgement on the quality of the service or the availability of the service seem to determine which service the groups access, the timeliness of information in terms of advertising and keeping members informed of changes should be considered.

There appears to be a low level of expectation regarding the CVS services, a feeling that they get what they expected. This could be down to the fact that most of the services are free, perhaps there is the perception that because the service is free it has a low value and a low benefit.



# **The Interviews**

# 1. The interviews

These interviews were conducted with previous respondents of the CVS members review conducted in 2004.

A set of questions was used to form the basis of the interview and all responses were recorded.

It was agreed that 25 interviews would be conducted, these would be randomly selected from the Review respondents. Interviews took place between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2004.

Of the 25 organisations identified 16 took part in these interviews. No one refused to take part in the interviews, those who did not respond were unavailable, one organisation had an answering machine message each time contact was attempted and one number did not accept incoming calls and for one organisation there was no answer. Phone calls were made at least three times to try and contact these organisations.

## 2. CVS Membership

Many organisations pay membership fees to their national body, in some cases this is because for legal reasons they have to belong to that organisation. In some of the cases this was to become part of the national community for their type of organisation.

The prices paid varied widely, from £10 to £2,500 pa but they would not want to pay more than £20 for CVS membership.

75% of the organisations questioned said that they were a CVS member, this turns out to be less clear than it would appear. There were a few organisations who hesitated or said that they must be. Or that they were once, so assumed they were still.

The issue of paying for CVS membership was a complex one. The most common answer was it depends.

There were positive points thrown up by several organisations, there was the thought that if they had to pay to be a member they would be more interested in what they were getting for their money. That a service should be value for money and it should be clear what exactly they are getting for their money are points they don't feel are fully achieved at the current time. Accepting some blame for this themselves because the service is free.

This change in how they view the services could allow for the improvement of the service and better feedback to be obtained, it would also throw up regularly how and what these organisations wanted.

The groups that stated it would be a good idea to have a membership had similar concerns as those who said it would not be a good idea. These groups said they had to watch every penny they spent, hence the above opinions about being really aware of what they were getting. It was suggested that for established groups it would be easier to pay a membership than for groups just starting out. One group thought that they already paid £20 for CVS membership.

Some of those who were against charging for membership said that if they had to pay they might not bother. It would have to be seriously considered for others because they do not use the CVS often enough for it to be worthwhile.

Priority access, reduced costs and a better level of support or more importantly a more suitable level of support would be the basic benefits that the organisations would require from a membership. Again this echoes the need to be clear about what is being offered and what the benefits are. One organisation stated that they needed a black and white list of the exact services on offer to them from the CVS.

There were only positive benefits identified with the possible change in the relationship they have with the CVS. The underlying theme of this change would be to make it a more professional and definite working relationship.

### **3. Marketing the CVS**

There was only one respondent who had seen any CVS services advertised. This was only through the newsletter.

It is clear talking to these organisations that they do not fully understand what services the CVS provides and which they might therefore benefit from. The organisations who do access CVS services do so because they always have, and this is the only service they really understand. Many did not know where they had come across the service they used.

This was a concern with paying membership, the members and none members need to know what services are available and what they are getting exactly.

Several of the respondents had recommended the service to other organisations and thought that they had been told about the service themselves.

The CVS newsletter was received by all the organisations, they all read through it and made it available to other people either in their organisation or to their members or beneficiaries. It was put on notice boards with other newsletters in several cases.

The advertising effect of the newsletter was to promote the CVS in general, the funding pages were very popular and the news about the CVS was also popular. People liked to keep up to date with what was going on in the city in general. Given that the CVS services are advertised in the newsletter it seems odd that these organisations could not recall seeing the services advertised. It may be that if they do not see what they specifically want they don't remember any of the other information, or the adverts may not be clear to them.

The respondents have highlighted an immediate need for the CVS to make them aware of the services that are offered, how these services work and can be accessed and what use they could be to individual organisations. It is an area that should be addressed sooner rather than later.

***The CVS newsletter was received by all the organisations, they all read through it and made it available to other people either in their organisation or to their members or beneficiaries.***



## **4. CVS Services used**

Under half of the respondents had used CVS services in the past year. These services were the payroll service and for funding advice. They found out about the services from people they knew, often at events and courses they attended. One respondent said that they had always used the service, the organisation started using it before they had been in the post and they had continued with it.

The majority of organisations were happy with the service they used, it was said to be very helpful and good value for money. Even those organisations who were unhappy with an element of the service would recommend it to others.

The problems with the services the respondents used were to do more with frustration at the time it took to receive any support and the volume of information they received. One respondent said that they had no follow up support, they were told how to complete the form and then left to it, when they faced a problem they put off contacting the CVS and would have found a follow up call to check on them a stimulation to help them seek further advice.

The problem with the services relate to the complex area of funding advice, there were concerns with funding to continue and that funds were tight and the task was often daunting. One respondent said that the CVS did not point out any new sources to them that they had not found elsewhere, but more practical help with the form and more support along the way would be welcomed by these respondents.

Any bad experience with the CVS did not effect their relationship in an adverse way. The main problem stemmed from the need for volunteers and the unreliability of them. One said they were promised volunteers for an event and only one showed up the first day and none the second day which left them with a problem. There was a concern that the volunteers did not fully understand what they were expected to do, was this not properly explained to them when they went to the Volunteer Bureau? Perhaps the volunteer request forms do not include enough information about the opportunity.

## **5. ICT capabilities and support**

Most of the organisations interviewed used e-mail and the internet on a daily basis, many others used it on at least a monthly basis. They use it to pass on relevant information and to keep in touch with people and organisations who may be able to help them.

Very few said they received or had received any ICT support. Most received none at all. They were happy with the support they did receive.

The cost of ITC support was mentioned by all the respondents, some had solved this problem because they had the skills themselves to solve any ITC problems, one had a volunteer who handled all their IT support. A good percentage said that they would like ITC support, but it was not really technical or in depth support that they needed. Mostly it was simple support they wanted for example dealing with databases or e-mail. Some more in depth assistance with updating and building websites was requested.

If the actual support was not delivered by the CVS they would expect to be signposted to a relevant organisation. There was a lack of understanding with regards to what was available with regards to ICT support and for someone to guide them in this area would be very helpful.

One organisation had a concern that because they dealt with children there were issues to do with online safety in setting up the facilities they wished to offer online. This was the only really technical or in depth issue that needed more detailed support.

## 6. CVS Newsletter

The newsletter was read by most of the respondents and then passed around their organisation or pinned on a notice board. Quite a few organisations filed the information with other newsletters to keep a historical resource available to themselves or their members. The newsletter was not usually passed to other organisations.

It was also stated by a couple of the respondents that the newsletter did not contain anything relevant to them, but that they liked to read it to keep up with the general changes happening in Hull.

Most people were interested in the funding pages and little else, they did not have many suggestions about information that should be included. There were a couple of suggestions that the CVS should let them know exactly what services they offered and another that said it could be used to help groups stay in contact with one another more easily.

There was nothing the respondents did not like about the newsletter, though it was unclear at times if they included all the other inserts and flyers that came with it or not, elements which often go unread. For some groups it did and others it didn't. It was stated on more than one occasion that it was just information and you can choose to use it or not, its useful or it isn't and that because they don't use it doesn't mean its worthless to everyone else.

The Newsletter should not be a condition of the membership if there is a charge because it reaches out to a large number of organisations who would not really have contact with the CVS otherwise.

An e-mail version of the newsletter would not work without the support of the traditional paper version. Very few said they would *prefer* an e-mail version, this was because they did not always read their e-mails due to the volume they received and the time it took to download them.

Concern was expressed about the size of the file and it clogging up their e-mail system and that they would have to print it out to make the same use of it at a cost to themselves. It would also look different to the current version depending on the printer used to print it and that would make it less recognisable.

The possibility of an e-mail version being available as well would be useful and allow people to pass it on more easily, perhaps if it was available on the website to be downloaded it would be as much use.

## 7. CVS Directory

Half the organisation said that they owned a directory, though comments about the possible age of the directory were expressed. One respondent said that they thought it was expensive to buy and that they were not that motivated to spend the money on a regular basis to obtain an up to date copy. One respondent said that they thought it would be difficult to update.

The overall use of the directory was infrequent, most organisations would access it to check contact details for themselves or their clients. The main thing was to be able to refer people to an organisation that might help them where their organisation could not.

If this directory was available on the CVS website it would be very useful to most of the organisations, It was felt that it would be easier for the CVS to keep it up to date if it were online, this was the biggest concern with the data in the directory. The option for a printed copy to be available should be maintained, one organisation said that it was their members who used the directory and that some of them were not computer literate.

The format of the directory was said to make it easy to find the organisations that you are looking for, it was simple to use and helpful. This format should be maintained for the website version of the directory. A further facility was suggested for the online directory; one of the respondents said that another organisations website had an "ask" facility, where a question could be asked and an organisation which could help them deal with the query would be suggested.

It was also suggested that a CD version of the directory could be made available, this would save time in searching online and would be easier to update.

The directory was seen as a useful source of information, it was seen as neither good nor bad, like the newsletter it was useful to have in case it was needed.

## 8. Sources of information and advice

Many of the organisations had a national body which they were a member of or had a national source for most of their information. Several organisations had national guidelines to follow or professional magazines that provided the most up to date information. The internet was also a very useful source of information for these organisations, they can search and find most of the information they need this way.

The CVS was seen as providing locally available information and was said to be very useful and have a high profile in Hull, as with the service issues it was seen as being very useful to small groups and as being a back up source of information for bigger more able groups. It was used by half of the organisations who took part in the interviews.

One of the respondents thought that their service was too specific and that the CVS would not be able to provide the depth of information they needed to access, it is unclear if this is the case or a perception of the organisation.

None of the organisations considered that they had received any bad information, though one said that sometimes the information was too complex and took them time to actually make use of it. This was specifically relating to a legal form which was too full of jargon and legal terms which made it difficult for the organisations beneficiaries to understand.

All the organisations received the CVS newsletter and this suggests that some do not see it specifically as a source of information relevant to them, it was pointed out that another organisations newsletter was full of disparate information which made it hard to find the relevant pieces for them. Another organisation said that they received a large volume of information in general and had to sift through it to find anything useful.

Finding the right information can have huge implications for these organisations, be it legal or financial. For example one organisation said it important for a list of local funding sources to be available. The CVS was seen as being a local organisation who would be able to provide local sources of information especially to small local based groups.

For advice these organisations used very few sources, it was less likely they would use the CVS for advice and would rely on other people they knew or more national sources. One of the responses about receiving bad information was that the CVS did not offer anything new to what they had previously found online.

The larger organisations are more capable at finding information for themselves and seeking advice from the most relevant source, they still use the CVS as an alternative source if they need to. The smaller groups are more likely to use the CVS for advice and information and the larger groups stressed that the information they did receive from the CVS, though not useful to them would still be useful to smaller organisations.

If the CVS does not know what the organisations want to know there is a real opportunity and a desire by these respondents to be signposted to other groups who may be able to help.

The consequences of receiving bad advice are similar to receiving bad information, the organisations sought help elsewhere. However in the case of bad advice the impact was an effect on the finances of the organisation.

There is an overall perception that information is neither good nor bad and once it has been collected it is up to the individual organisation to make use of it or not.

***Finding the right information can have huge implications for these organisations, be it legal or financial.***

It was felt that a networking event between the CVS members on a less formal basis would allow the groups to exchange information and ideas and share their experiences more easily. This was seen as one of the best ways to advance the learning and knowledge locally. It was also suggested that groups could support each other in this way.

One concern was the timing of information events and conferences because many people were unable to attend these due to work responsibilities.

## **9. Volunteers and Trustees**

Very few organisations wanted any information or advice with regards to their volunteers. The questions were asked without the prompts being seen by the interviewees, which may explain this result.

The complexities of using volunteers were identified by a couple of the respondents as being factors that had put them off seeking to use volunteers. There is a poor understanding of the services available from the CVS and it could be that these organisations do not understand what the CVS can offer in terms of volunteers.

More organisations look to sources other than the CVS for information and advice on volunteering. Again it was down to national sources such as a national body for the organisation or another organisation which had faced the same issues themselves who provided the information and advice for volunteers. One respondent said that volunteers were unreliable and that they had experienced a problem when they had tried to use volunteers in the past.

No one wanted any training for their volunteers in general but for their trustees, all of whom are volunteers, there were a number of points raised.

There are few services these organisations would like to access for their trustees. There was a concern over the lack of external support for the trustees, some said that the current position meant they did not need anything specific because the trustees they had had the right skills to do the job properly, but that they would need support if the situation was to change in the future.

There was a need for training to be available to trustees, mostly concerning the roles and responsibilities of being a trustee. One respondent said that they had tried to interest their trustees in such a course but the trustees did not want to do the course. The respondent said that the trustees did not seem interested in the training or having the responsibility that their role should have.

The other issues for trustees were around knowing the minimum legal requirements, the legal benefits or issues that being a trustee might involve and the insurance costs and needs to cover trustees. It was pointed out by some of the respondents that the charities commission provided a great deal of information on this subject but it was felt that one to one training would be of benefit to trustees.

One organisation would like their trustees to have an understanding of risk management and health and safety and food hygiene, this was all to do with running a community centre.

## 10. Summary of Interviews

There are no negative opinions about the CVS, which follows the results of the members review questionnaire.

There is a lack of knowledge about the services the CVS provides, use of services relies on previous knowledge.

There is some confusion about the CVS membership, no one is 100% sure or not if they are a member.

No one refused to take part in the interviews, these respondents were keen to talk about their organisations and give their views to help the CVS develop.

The newsletter is a powerful tool the CVS could use to disseminate information as it is read by the recipient and or other members of their organisation as well as the clients of their organisation. It is competing with other newsletters.

ITC skills are limited but not to the point where they are restrictive to the workings of the organisations. There is a need for basic ITC support but not necessarily accredited courses, just someone to help with minor problems.

The traditional forms of the newsletter and the directory are not to be dismissed outright because this would potentially exclude some beneficiaries of them. However the use of an e-mailed newsletter and an online directory should be seriously considered.

An online directory should be very easy to use, with appropriate search facilities to help people identify groups easily.

The needs for trustee and volunteer support are unclear, there was no immediate need identified by the respondents but it was felt that this would not always be the case.

These groups like to access as much information as possible from as many different sources as they can find, if they do not use the CVS now they do not rule out the prospect of doing so in the future. It was felt by the larger groups that the CVS could be invaluable in providing this information to smaller groups. Signposting to other information sources was a role that the CVS was expected to provide.

The CVS seems to be the last port of call for these respondents and not the first choice for seeking information or advice.

Any knowledge of the CVS seems to be held by individuals and not organisations. This may be due to the mailing list and the membership list being confused. If an organisation was a member and the recipient of the information there would be a continuation despite any staff turnover.

# Suggestions

Membership needs to be clarified, a regular cycle to confirm details, update records, seek the opinion of the members re: satisfaction, contact them pro-actively rather than waiting for contact.

The CVS services need to be promoted more rigorously.

A membership fee might help put a value on the services. Consideration of the types of benefits the members could have over non-members and how this fits in constitutionally with the aims of the CVS.

Website including the directory and newsletter

Regular informal members events might need to be arranged, a frequent networking event to allow organisations to share ideas should be considered.

A skills audit of the current staff *and* volunteer work force to ensure that opportunities are not missed and skills not wasted.

Volunteer recruitment may need further investigation to ensure volunteers know what they are actually going to be doing, and so that organisations requesting volunteers have the chance to explain what they want more fully.