

ICT Hub

**Report on 2007 extension to
Baseline Research**

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The authors

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Paul has been researching and advising on voluntary sector ICT for over 20 years and is now an independent consultant and trainer. Among other things he is the author of *Leading the Way to ICT Success* (with Aba Maison and Martin Jones), published in 2002, and he carried out the evaluation of a four-year ICT support project in the London Borough of Newham, with the results published in 2006.

Andrea has over 10 years experience working in the voluntary sector, managing a wide variety of information and ICT projects. Her experience includes the development and delivery of information systems, and project management on the implementation of web sites and other ICT projects in small to medium voluntary organisations.

Acknowledgements and thanks

Thanks must go firstly to the staff and volunteers from over 250 organisations who took the trouble to complete the questionnaire. Important lessons have been learned from their efforts.

Valuable lessons have also been learned from the literature review, and we would like to thank all those researchers whose work we have drawn on, and in particular those who allowed us to see advance copies of their reports so that we could take their work into account.

Paul Ticher & Andrea Eaves
May 2007

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1. Summary of key points

Importance and relevance of ICT

We really are talking about information *and communications* technology, as the internet is now perceived as almost as important as computers in general (page 13).

ICT importance increases with the size of the organisation, apart from a slight drop for the largest ones (12).

Policies, strategy and spending

The trends are positive in terms of written policies and decision-making (organisational and personal), but the improvements are slight (page 14).

There are strong links between having a strategy and good decision-making, but a strategy does not automatically mean good decision-making (page 16).

There are links between both a strategy and a budget and the likelihood of spending money on ICT (page 18).

Fewer organisations spent money in each category in 2007 than in 2004, with internet connection seeing the greatest fall (page 18).

Funders appear to be hardening their attitudes: either they will or they won't give money for ICT expenditure, but with no clear improvement in their willingness to cover the costs of ICT realistically (page 46).

Our respondents are slightly less likely than they were in 2004 to say that they are using ICT 'much more' effectively now than two or three years ago. Taken with the fall in spending reported on elsewhere, this suggests the current trend could well be one of a general slow-down in ICT investment and progress (page 40).

Decision-making, and sources of expertise and information

Organisations with internal ICT expertise make better decisions. All organisations should be encouraged and assisted to develop their in-house ICT expertise, with an unpaid ICT expert being considerably better than nothing (page 21).

Our figures seem to represent a genuine dramatic increase in awareness and use of what is available in terms of external information and expertise, at least among the part of the voluntary sector represented by our respondents (page 21).

The level of use of the ICT Hub is worth noting, given that it had really only been in full operation for about a year at the time of the survey (page 22).

The use of external sources of strategic support varies with the size of organisation. Small organisations are more likely than average to use local services aimed at the sector, volunteers, and local educational institutions. Large organisations are much more likely to use paid-for resources (consultancy and shops), ICT Hub resources and circuit riders (page 24).

Accessibility, training and health & safety

It appears that there is a reasonable awareness of the selected key accessibility issues but a disappointing follow-through (page 26).

Formal approaches to training have declined slightly, but the approach which leads to the most satisfaction, by far, with staff and volunteers' skills is to carry out a regular training needs analysis (page 40).

A third of respondents' organisations have either never carried out an ICT health and safety risk assessment, or cannot remember when they last did so (page 40).

Use of specific technologies

There has been progress, if slow, towards getting computers networked (page 27). The larger the organisation, the more likely it is to have laptops and multiple office locations, but these are commonplace even in small organisations (page 28).

There has been a more marked increase in the proportion of organisations where all staff have access to the network and the internet, at least when they are in the office (page 29).

In all cases there has been an enormous increase in awareness of a range of up-and-coming technologies, as well as a large increase in their use. It would be hard to argue that this is unconnected with the ChangeUp programme in general and the work of the ICT Hub in particular (page 29).

There have been improvements in the application of security measures, especially those which are technologically-based (such as firewalls) rather than those which require staff intervention and commitment (such as backups, good password behaviour and training in security and confidentiality) (page 33).

In line with the findings that connectivity generally is still growing in importance, we see that more organisations are using the internet for more things (page 47).

Willingness to use communications technologies shows a clear link to having a senior source of ICT expertise within the organisation (page 48).

Technical support

The most common sources of technical support are the same in 2007 as in 2004, but there have been notable declines for approaches which are not ideal: the shop, the "accidental techie" and "staff fix their own problems". This suggests a more strategic approach to ICT support is bearing fruit (page 36).

The sources of support which are declining in popularity are also those with which respondents are least satisfied — the shop, 'accidental techies' and 'staff fix their own problems'. The solution with which respondents are most satisfied is to have an internal support person (page 37).

2. Introduction

Background

In July 2004 the (then) ICT Consortium commissioned a piece of ‘baseline’ research from the authors. The purpose was to provide background to the bid which eventually resulted in the Consortium being awarded the contract to operate the ICT Hub from July 2005 to March 2008. The research comprised:

- a survey to give a snapshot of how organisations are using ICT¹, and to form the baseline for follow-up research;
- a small amount of qualitative research to provide additional context to the baseline survey;
- a literature review, to identify useful sources of additional relevant information and analysis;
- development of a proposed evaluation framework for the Consortium’s programme of work.

The evaluation framework has subsequently formed an important element of the evaluation process for the ICT Hub’s work.

The baseline survey was designed to form the basis of a longitudinal study into the progress of ICT use in the sector. For this reason, full contact details were requested from all respondents, at the same time giving them a straightforward opportunity to opt out of future contact.

The response was good, despite the tight timescale — from approval in July to final report at the end of September — as well as the fact that data gathering had to take place during the peak summer holiday season. In total 960 responses were received in time to be analysed for the report, and subsequently an additional 78 were received, mostly from smaller groups which were contacted in a later mailing.

These 1,038 responses formed the baseline for the current research.

The baseline survey extension and qualitative interviews

Once again there was a tight timescale for the work, from approval in December 2006 to reporting in March 2007. It was agreed that the most useful data would be obtained by approaching the same organisations as had responded previously, so that the results were directly comparable without having to make allowances for differences in the sample.

Of the 1038 candidates, 913 were invited to complete the new survey, either by post or by e-mail. From these, 250 usable responses were received, a response rate of 28%. (See Appendix C for more details and a commentary on the response.)

¹ Information and Communications Technologies. A glossary of technical terms is in Appendix A.

The qualitative support to the survey involved telephone interviews with selected individuals who had indicated that they were willing to be contacted by phone and most of whose organisations appeared to have recently made significant ICT investments. This provided additional insights into the factors which help to determine whether a voluntary organisation makes progress in its use of ICT or not. Sixteen respondents were interviewed, four from small organisations, seven from medium-sized ones and five from large ones.

It is important to note that the figures for 2004 quoted in this report relate to the answers given three years ago by the 250 respondents who also responded this time. This means that percentages are not necessarily exactly the same as those quoted in the 2004 report, based on all 960 cases. However, the profile of the 250 responses this time is very similar to that of the full response in 2004 (see Appendix D), which suggests that it is reasonable to make direct comparisons with the 2004 report.

The literature review

In addition to the questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews, a new literature review, covering the period 2004 – 2007 has been compiled, drawing on both national and local research, much of it funded by or related to the ChangeUp programme.

The review looks at evidence about the use of ICT in the sector and how it is supported — providing a reassuringly consistent picture despite the variety of perspectives, methodologies and specific topics covered in the various publications. The review also covers work on support options for ICT in the voluntary sector.

The bibliography in this report includes both these more recent pieces of work and the work reviewed in 2004, in an attempt to establish as comprehensive and up to date a resource as possible.

3. The evaluation framework

The stated objectives behind the programme of the ICT Hub can be summarised as:

1. Increased managerial understanding and awareness of the strategic benefits of ICT and better strategic planning.
2. Access to a range of ICT advice, training and support services.
3. Access to different models of ICT support including circuit riders and *pro bono* initiatives.
4. More relevant and affordable private sector products and services.
5. Funder recognition of the critical role and cost benefits of ICT.
6. Special emphasis on particular groups, including people with disabilities and elderly people.

The purpose of the evaluation framework was to provide a basis for assessing how well the Hub is achieving these objectives. Many of the questions in the baseline research were specifically designed to uncover information relevant to the framework.

The framework and the rationale behind it are discussed in detail in the 2004 Baseline report. It is summarised here in order to provide background for the current analysis. In drawing up the framework two key challenges were identified: the difficulty in establishing “causality” — which of the range of possible influences actually made the largest contribution to a measured or reported change — and the need to come up with a definition of effective ICT use. The first of these is being addressed in the reporting on the ICT Hub external evaluation. For the second, a set of indicators were developed, taking into account different sizes of organisation at different stages of development. These are not intended to be a comprehensive audit of an organisation’s ICT use, but to give a broad view of how it is doing.

The indicators were grouped under three headings:

- Decision-making and planning
- ICT facilities
- ICT administration and support

For the sake of this task — defining indicators of ICT performance — organisations were grouped into three bands:

- Very small organisations — those with a budget of under £10,000.
- Small organisations — with a budget between £10,000 and £100,000.
- Medium-sized (budget £100,000 to £1,000,000) and large (over £1,000,000) organisations.

Because size does make a considerable difference to an organisation’s ICT needs and capacity, these bands are normally expanded to four in the analysis of the data, where medium and large organisations are treated as separate groups.

The indicators are set out below without detailed commentary. Key issues are picked up in the report on the data collected.

ICT strategies and decision-making

Suggested indicators for ICT strategies, budgets and policies		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Encourage volunteers to use ICT appropriately Policy on file formats Policy on reimbursing costs	Defined ICT budget Statement of ICT strategy Data Protection policy, if appropriate	ICT & budget incorporated in business plan Data Protection policy Acceptable use policy
Evidence of having thought about how ICT could be used to improve service delivery		

Suggested indicators for use of ICT to assist in decision-making		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Use of e-mail between decision-makers	Spreadsheets analyse and present data effectively E-mail for decision-makers	Management information system Intranet & e-mail

Suggested indicators for measures to address the digital divide		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Disability Discrimination Act compliance		
Care not to exclude those without ICT access	Accessible web site Care not to exclude those without ICT access	Fully accessible web site Range of access methods to services
Provision of ICT training/facilities if appropriate		

ICT facilities

It should be noted that, as ICT develops, these indicators will change. Issues which were key differentiators three years ago, in 2004, (such as broadband access) are less significant now, while others have moved up the agenda. These issues are discussed later in the report.

Suggested indicators for ICT network		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Probably not appropriate	Peer to peer network	Client-server (or thin client) network
Virtual private network, if appropriate		

Suggested indicators for security and business continuity		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Key data copied to floppy disk or CD Anti-virus on all computers	Working manual backup procedure Anti-virus on all computers Software firewall at least	Automated daily backup Centralised anti-virus Hardware firewall Control over software

Suggested indicators for broadband access		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Use from home if available	Basic broadband service	Broadband at all sites, speed related to need

Suggested indicators for internet domain name		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Own domain, or presence on community web site Use of domain name in all e-mail correspondence	Own domain E-mail server Use of domain name in all e-mail correspondence	Own domain Protective registration of similar domains Full internal and external e-mail system

ICT administration and support

Suggested indicators for day to day running		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Satisfaction that day to day problems with ICT are at the lowest reasonable level		

Suggested indicators for training and support		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Reliable volunteer support available when needed Training provided if ICT use is essential for any particular role	Designated internal ICT support responsibilities Awareness of external support options Training for all staff up to minimum standards	Internal support worker Formal external support arrangements Regular training needs analysis and funds for training
Satisfaction with internal and external support arrangements Satisfaction that staff and volunteers have the necessary skills		

Suggested indicators for health & safety		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Health & safety risk assessments carried out for all workers using ICT equipment		

ICT used for service delivery

These evaluation criteria deliberately do not specifically address the use of ICT for service delivery, for three principal reasons.

- The indicators are concerned with *infrastructure* rather than the uses to which the ICT is put.
- Many organisations do not particularly want to be innovative in their use of ICT. All they demand of their ICT is that it functions with the minimum of fuss to support their activities.
- Because of the diversity of the voluntary and community sector there are serious practical difficulties in coming up with indicators which would serve to provide any kind of useful and reliable comparative assessment.

That is not to diminish the importance of considering ICT in service delivery, just to suggest that there has to be a limit to how much ground one single programme of work can cover.

4. Baseline research, 2007

As described above, 250 usable responses were received from the 913 organisations contacted. The profile of these organisations was similar to that of the 2004 study, and once again can usefully be compared with the shape of the voluntary sector as a whole.

The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac, published by NCVO, gives estimated numbers for general charities of different sizes in England & Wales. The latest report available, dated 2006, gives figures for 2004. Even though our survey looks only at England, and includes some voluntary and community organisations that are not charities, the figures in the almanac give a good idea of the population our sample is drawn from. The approximate proportions are:

1. Size profile of sector and survey respondents

Very small Under £10,000	Small £10,000 – £100,000	Medium-sized £100,000 – £1,000,000	Large Over £1,000,000
National population 2004 (nearly 170,000 organisations)			
57%	29%	11%	3%
2007 ICT Hub baseline extension survey (no data on 2% of respondents)			
6%	16%	57%	19%

This table shows that, as in 2004, the 2007 sample seriously under-represents very small organisations, under-represents small organisations and seriously over-represents both medium-sized and large organisations. However, as discussed in the 2004 report, it is the small and medium-sized organisations which are most likely to benefit from the activities of support organisations, such as the ICT Hub and its local and regional equivalents. Very small organisations often do not have the capacity to benefit, while large organisations can often afford to buy in commercial services. Although not ideal, the sample is therefore reasonable for our purposes.

The numbers of organisations in each category have been slightly adjusted where the question had clearly been misunderstood by a few respondents. See ‘Quality of data’ on page 75 for details.

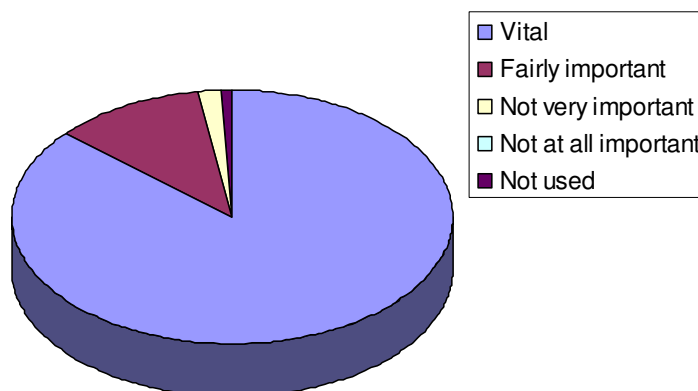
In the figures in the remainder of this report, no weighting has been applied to adjust the response to an approximation of the national picture but, where appropriate, separate figures are given for the different organisation size bands.

It is assumed that the geographical coverage and target group of the organisations responding has not changed significantly since 2004. They continue to represent a diverse range of organisations (see Appendix D) and to form a very useful sample of the voluntary and community sector. However, it would be unwise to extrapolate from the data to the sector as a whole without adjusting for the fact that smaller and more local organisations — which actually represent over half of all voluntary and community organisations in the country — are under-represented in the sample.

Importance of ICT

Even in 2004, 85% of respondents rated computers as “vital”, with only 2% saying that they were “not very important”, “not at all important” or “not used”.² By 2007 this had only changed marginally, with the “vital” percentage now 86%.

2a. How important are computers in general to your organisation’s work?



Looking at the figures in more detail, we can see that — as we might expect — the importance of computers generally increases with the size of the organisation, but with a slightly odd result for large organisations.

2b. How important are computers in general to your organisation’s work?

	Total	Smallest	Small	Medium	Large	No size given
	250	14	40	143	47	6
Vital	86%	43%	78%	93%	85%	100%
Fairly important	11%	21%	23%	6%	15%	
Not very important	2%	21%		1%		
Not at all important						
Not used	1%	14%				

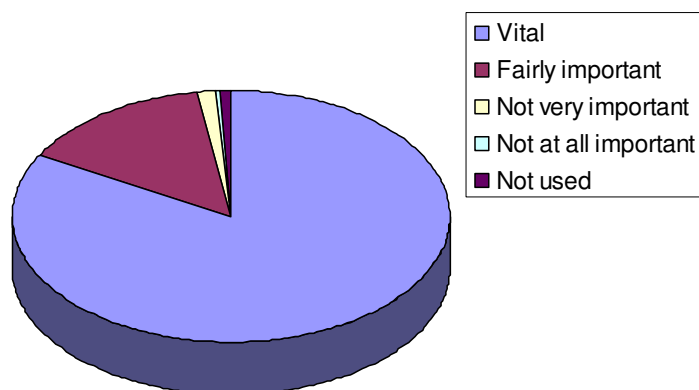
Only among the smallest organisations were there any that do not use computers, or any significant number that find them not very important. In general the importance of computers increases as the size of the organisation increases, apart from a slight falling-off at the very top of the scale. The seven responses represented by the 15% of large organisations finding computers just ‘fairly important’ have been examined, but there is no obvious trend. They include organisations whose services are largely face to face with clients — where it is easier to see why ICT might be less important — but others, including some in areas of the country where communications are traditionally difficult, in which one might expect to find computers more important.

² All percentages are of the total number of respondents, including those who did not answer that specific question, except where stated.

A more dramatic change is seen in the responses about the internet. Whereas in 2004 just over 70% rated it “vital” and 23% “fairly important”, the corresponding figures in 2007 are 82% and 14%, leaving just 4% for whom it is less important. This indicates that we really do now have to talk about ICT — information *and communications* technology; they are effectively one and the same thing.

3a. How important [is] the internet/e-mail in particular to your organisation’s work?

We see exactly the same pattern with internet use as we do with computers in general.



It is more important as the organisations get bigger, apart from a slight drop for the large organisations. Whereas the internet is only ‘vital’ for half of the smallest organisations, and ‘not very important’ or ‘not used’ at all for over a quarter of them, it is ‘vital’ or ‘fairly important’ for all but a tiny handful of medium-sized and large organisations.

3b. How important [is] the internet/e-mail in particular to your organisation’s work?

	Total	Smallest	Small	Medium	Large	No size given
	250	14	40	143	47	6
Vital	82%	50%	68%	88%	81%	100%
Fairly important	14%	7%	28%	11%	17%	
Not very important	1%	14%			2%	
Not at all important	< 1%		3%			
Not used	1%	14%				
No reply	2%	14%	3%	1%		

Even in 2004 our sample was self-selected; it was argued in the 2004 report that it was most likely that those who were interested enough to take the trouble to respond to the survey were keener on ICT and more aware of its importance than average. In 2007 this is even more true; respondents from this already-self-selected sample had to be motivated to spend the time once again completing the questionnaire.

One of the benefits of a longitudinal study is that, even if the sample is skewed, what we are largely measuring is the change over the past three years. If a trend is true for our sample, the same trend is likely to be true for the sector as a whole, even those organisations that are not yet at the same stage of ICT development.

In any case, the majority in our sample is so overwhelming that we can be confident in saying that many, many voluntary organisations now recognise ICT as an essential tool, and that the internet is seen as being increasingly important.

Two organisations said that they used neither computers nor the internet. Since the rest of the questionnaire therefore did not apply to them, the remaining questions are based on a total response of 248.

Decision-making and planning

The indicators for decision-making and planning include:

- having an ICT strategy
- having a specific ICT budget
- having policies to cover ICT-related issues, such as Data Protection
- evidence of having thought about how ICT might help with service delivery
- use of ICT to communicate between decision-makers
- use of ICT to analyse information as an aid to decision-making
- attention to accessibility (and DDA compliance)

Written policies

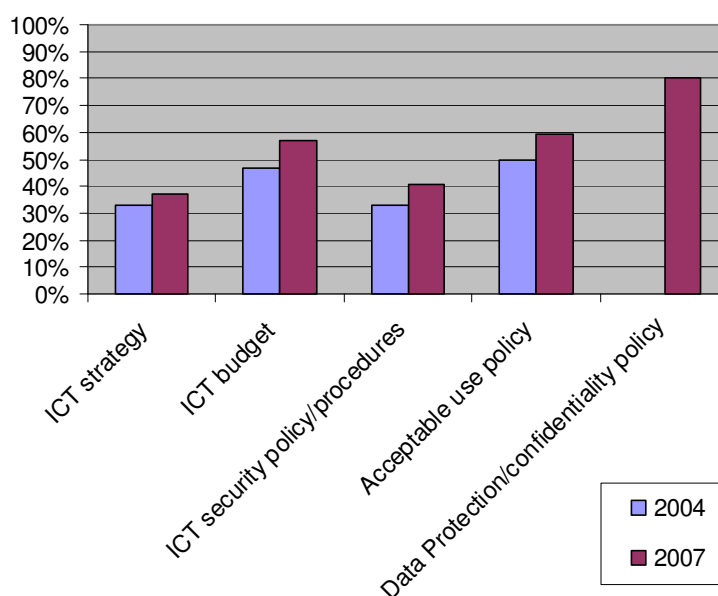
The first three of these are concerned with written evidence that the organisation is taking a considered and strategic approach to its ICT. It is interesting to see that on all of them there has been at least modest progress in the right direction.

4a. Which of the following written documents does your organisation have?

	2004	2007
ICT strategy, or ICT component of the organisation's business plan	33%	37%
ICT budget	47%	58%
ICT security policy and/or written security procedures	33%	41%
Policy on acceptable use by staff of ICT, e-mail and internet facilities	50%	59%
Policy on Data Protection and/or confidentiality	Not asked	80%

Although the direction of movement is good, there is still a long way to go. It is particularly disappointing that the proportion with a security policy has only gone up by eight percentage points and is still less than half of respondents. The use of specific security technologies is discussed on page 33 below.

4b. Which of the following written documents does your organisation have?



When we look at the figures according to the size of the organisation, we find that once again size makes a big difference. Two thirds of the smallest organisations do not have any of the written documents; if they do have one it is most likely to be a data protection and/or confidentiality policy. For the large organisations, the most common were a budget, an acceptable use policy and a data protection/confidentiality policy, with over 80% in each case.

5. Which of the following written documents does your organisation have?

		Smallest	Small	Medium	Large	No reply
	248	12	40	143	47	6
ICT strategy	38%	8%	23%	38%	62%	
ICT budget	58%	8%	30%	62%	85%	50%
ICT security policy	42%	8%	30%	44%	57%	17%
Acceptable use policy	59%		25%	64%	89%	67%
Data Protection/ confidentiality policy	81%	25%	68%	89%	81%	83%
No reply	11%	67%	25%	6%	2%	17%

We also looked at how satisfied respondents were with their organisation's decision-making on ICT, and how confident they were about their own personal ICT decisions.

These measures have also moved modestly but consistently in the right direction. For our sample, while improvements are still possible, only one in eight have serious doubts about their personal decision-making (or didn't answer the question) and fewer than a quarter have serious concerns about their organisation's decision-making. This

might tie in with the likelihood that our respondents are more interested in ICT than average; others in the sector may well be less confident, but the trend is reassuring.

6. How satisfied are you with the way ICT decisions are made in your organisation?

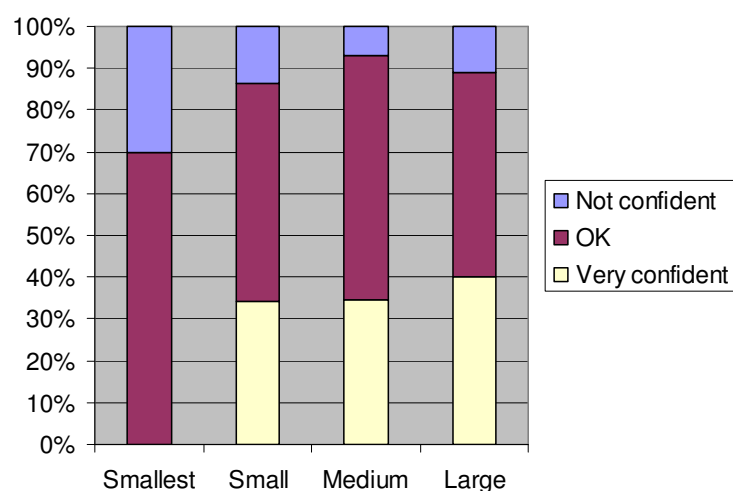
	2004	2007
Completely satisfied with organisation's ICT decision-making	16%	17%
Reasonably satisfied with organisation's ICT decision-making	53%	60%

How confident are you personally in making decisions about ICT (such as what to buy or whether to accept the advice you are getting)?

	2004	2007
Very confident about personal ICT decision-making	29%	32%
OK about personal ICT decision-making	49%	55%

On these questions, the link with organisational size is less marked. There is no obvious size-related pattern in how satisfied respondents are with their organisation's decision-making on ICT. In terms of their own personal confidence, those from the smallest organisations are much less confident — with no one rating themselves 'very confident'. Confidence then increases with the size of organisation, reaching 40% 'very confident' for those respondents from large organisations.

7. How confident are you personally in making decisions about ICT (such as what to buy or whether to accept the advice you are getting)?



But if size doesn't count for much, the existence of a written ICT strategy certainly does. In 2004, those respondents whose organisation had a strategy were also more likely to be satisfied with their organisation's ICT decision-making and more confident about their own personal ability to make ICT decisions. This is still true.

Whereas only 17% of respondents overall are 'completely satisfied' with their organisation's ICT decision-making, this figure rises to 28% for those whose organisation has a written ICT strategy. On personal confidence the figure also increases, from 32% overall to 49% in organisations with a strategy. So the link is

clearly positive, but it is not definitive. If we look at those respondents who are ‘completely satisfied’ with their organisation’s ICT decision-making, only 60% have a written strategy; the other 40% appear to be happy that they are making good decisions without a written strategy.

The other written policy where a clear link can be seen is an ICT security policy. Over half (53%) of those who are ‘completely satisfied’ with their organisation’s decision-making have a security policy, compared with just over a third (39%) of those who are ‘partly satisfied’ and none of those who are ‘not at all’ satisfied.

When we talk about a link (here and later in the report), this does not necessarily imply the direction of the link. Do organisations make better decisions because they have a strategy, or do they have a strategy because they make better decisions? Both might be true. We can say, however, that having a strategy does not automatically mean better decisions: a quarter of those who are ‘not at all’ satisfied with their organisation’s decision-making nevertheless have a written strategy.

Budget and spending

From the figures above, we see that over half (58%) of the organisations in our survey now have an ICT budget, compared with under half (47%) in 2004. This figure rises to three quarters (74%) of those with an ICT strategy.

Having a budget is linked — unsurprisingly — with spending money. In every category that was asked about, more of the organisations with a budget have recently spent money than in those without. Setting up or improving the web site was the spending category least dependent on having an ICT budget, possibly because the expenditure might not be counted as ICT. One in eleven (9%) of all respondents had not spent money in any of the categories, but this rose to one in six (17%) of those without a budget.

All the figures in 2007 were at or below the 2004 level, even though the proportion with a specific ICT budget had gone up in the meantime. The category seeing the biggest drop was ‘Installing or upgrading your internet connection’, down from 50% to 32%. This ties in with the finding (see page 30) that there are very few organisations in our survey that still rely on a pre-broadband internet connection, and therefore a decreasing need to spend money in this area.

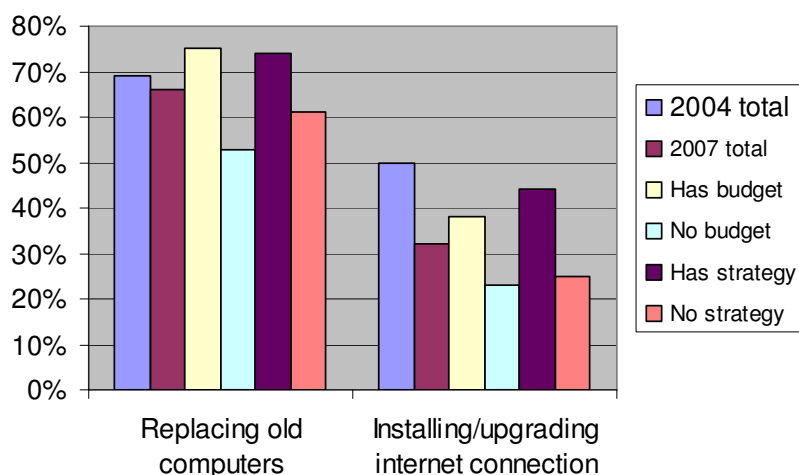
Evidence in the 2004 report suggested that as well as being linked to having a budget, levels of investment were linked to having a strategy — especially for smaller organisations. The 2007 figures support this: spending is even more closely linked to having a strategy than to having a budget, in almost every category.

In the following table, the figures show what proportion of respondents had undertaken which developments, according to whether or not they have a budget or strategy. In the first row, for example, we see that 75% of those with a budget and 74% of those with a strategy had replaced old computers, while only 53% of those without a budget and 61% of those without a strategy had done so.

8a. Which of the following did your organisation spend money on in the past year?

	2004 total	2007 total	Has budget	No budget	Has strategy	No strategy
Replacing old computers	69%	66%	75%	53%	74%	61%
Increasing the number of computers	64%	54%	58%	48%	62%	48%
Putting in or improving a network (including wireless networking)	52%	51%	56%	44%	65%	43%
Installing/upgrading internet connection (including Virtual Private Network)	50%	32%	38%	23%	44%	25%
Setting up or improving your web site	56%	55%	58%	52%	67%	48%
A big software project such as a client records system or contact database	24%	24%	28%	18%	34%	17%
Consultancy to give you advice or help with your ICT strategy or plans	22%	22%	26%	17%	30%	17%
None of the above	6%	9%	3%	17%	3%	13%

Illustrating just two of the categories above, the pattern is clear: having a budget and/or a strategy are linked with increased spending, while organisations spent money on fewer categories of ICT in 2007 than they had done in 2004 — for reasons which we have unfortunately not been able to explore.

8b. Which of the following did your organisation spend money on in the past year? (Selected categories)

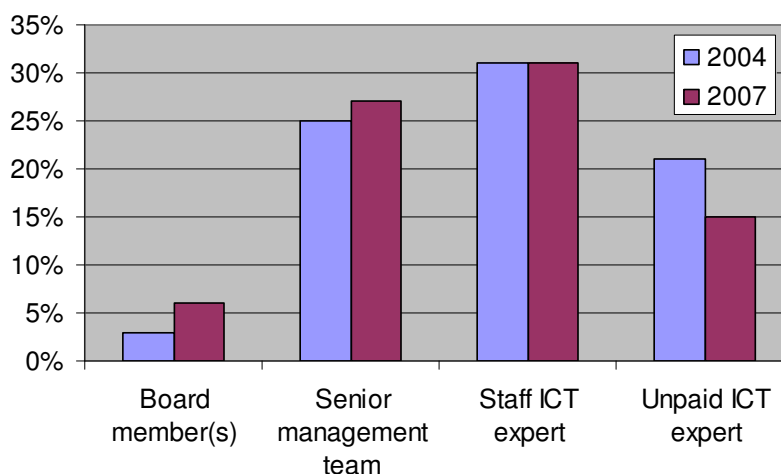
The conclusion, therefore, is that there is a slow movement towards having ICT budgets and strategies, and that this is linked both to the quality of decision-making (by organisations and individual managers) and to the likelihood that the organisation will spend money on ICT.

Internal sources of ICT expertise

We know from 2004 that expertise at the top of the organisation is clearly important. Here the change has been very slight — but still in the right direction. A few more organisations have ICT expertise on their board or senior management team, while

fewer are relying on unpaid ICT advisers. It is encouraging that nearly two thirds of respondents do have some internal source of strategic ICT knowledge. (In 2004 34% did not reply to the question, but they were not offered the option 'We do not have anyone with specific ICT expertise within the organisation'.

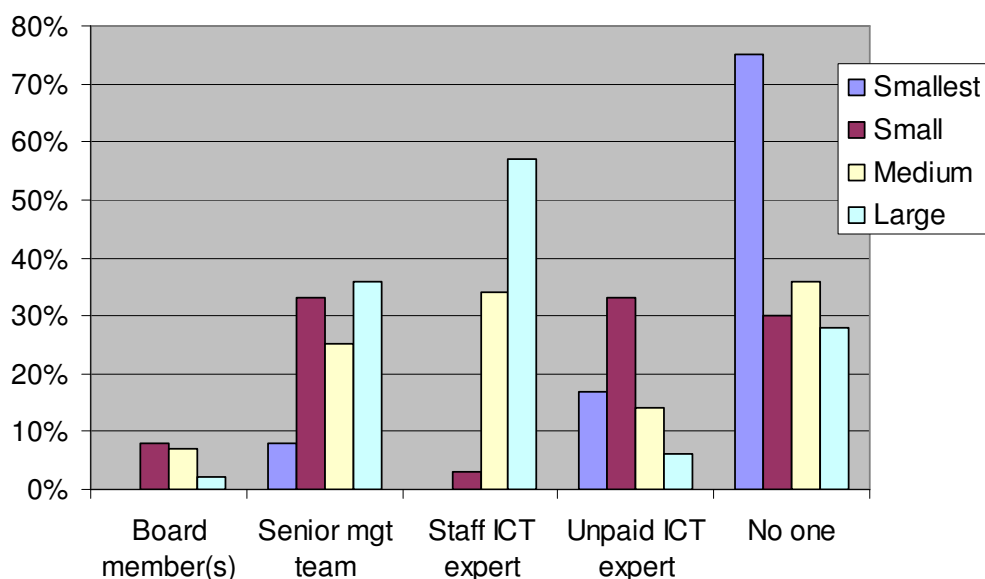
9. What internal sources of strategic ICT knowledge does your organisation have?



	2004	2007
Our board or management committee has people on it who were recruited for their ICT expertise	3%	6%
Our senior management team has one or more members with ICT expertise	25%	27%
We have an ICT expert on the staff who advises the senior management team and/or board	31%	31%
We have an unpaid ICT expert who advises the senior management team and/or board	21%	15%
We do not have anyone with specific ICT expertise within the organisation	Not asked	36%
(Percentages exceed 100% because multiple answers were permitted)		

There are clear trends based on the size of the organisation, and the patterns in each size band for sources of internal support are very different. Unsurprisingly, the smallest organisations have the fewest internal sources of expertise, by far, with three quarters saying that they have none. Large organisations are much more likely to have a paid ICT expert on the staff, while small organisations are more likely to have an unpaid ICT expert to advise them.

10. What internal sources of strategic ICT knowledge does your organisation have?

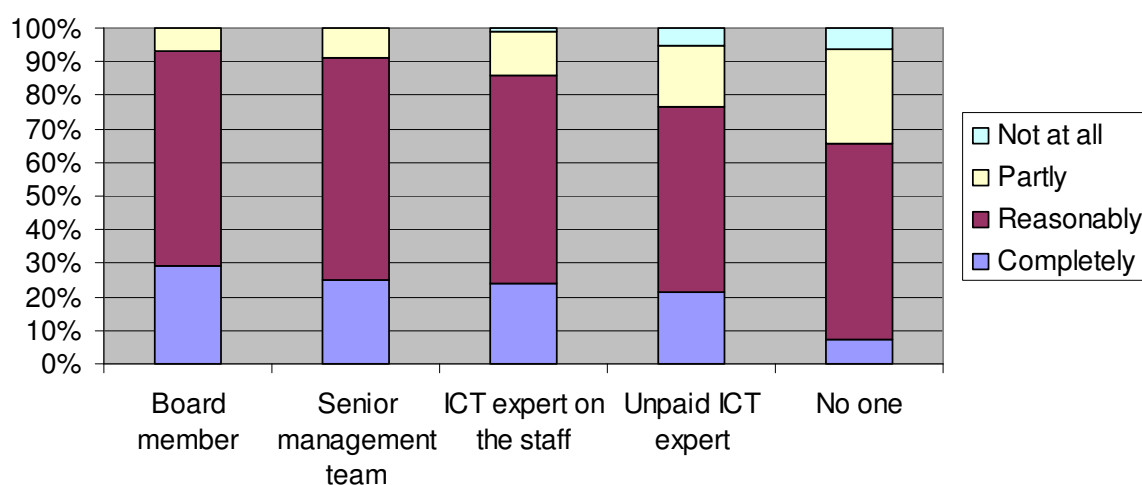


	Smallest	Small	Medium	Large
	12	40	143	47
Our board or management committee has people on it who were recruited for their ICT expertise		8%	7%	2%
Our senior management team has one or more members with ICT expertise	8%	33%	25%	36%
We have an ICT expert on the staff who advises the senior management team and/or board		3%	34%	57%
We have an unpaid ICT expert who advises the senior management team and/or board	17%	33%	14%	6%
We do not have anyone with specific ICT expertise within the organisation	75%	30%	36%	28%

In 2004 we found that those organisations with expertise on their board or senior management team were more likely to be completely satisfied with their organisation's decision-making. Those with an ICT expert on the staff were slightly less satisfied, those with an unpaid ICT expert less still.

In 2007 we find the same pattern. Those with no internal source of expertise are much more likely to be only 'partly' or 'not at all' satisfied with their organisation's ICT decision-making; over a third felt this level of dissatisfaction. At the other extreme, fewer than 10% were 'partly' satisfied where either the board or the senior management team has ICT expertise, with no one in either of these situations saying they felt completely unsatisfied.

11. How satisfied are you with the way ICT decisions are made in your organisation? (according to source of internal ICT expertise)



		Board member	Senior management team	ICT expert on the staff	Unpaid ICT expert	No one
	248	14	67	78	38	89
Completely	17%	29%	25%	24%	21%	7%
Reasonably	60%	64%	66%	62%	55%	58%
Partly	19%	7%	9%	13%	18%	28%
Not at all	3%			1%	5%	6%

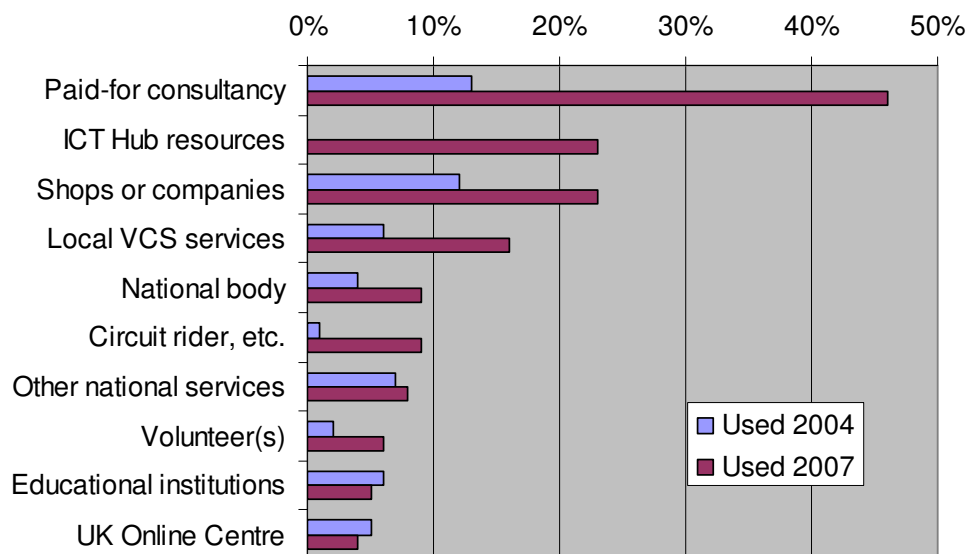
This indicates clearly that all organisations should be encouraged and assisted to develop their in-house ICT expertise — preferably at the level of the board or senior management team (or their equivalent in smaller organisations). An ICT expert on the staff is usually a good bet, with an unpaid ICT expert being considerably better than nothing. It would be interesting to find out more about the sources of dissatisfaction with decision-making where the expertise comes from a staff member or unpaid adviser.

External sources of ICT expertise

As well as looking at internal sources of ICT expertise, the survey looked at external sources of strategic information. Here, in 2004, there were two points of interest: that some sources of information are used more than others, and that some seem to be less well used, even if they are known about.

In 2007 the pattern is very similar, but the percentages have changed — dramatically in many cases. Use of paid-for consultancy has more than trebled, from 13% to 46% in the organisations responding to the survey. The use made of many of the other services listed has doubled or more, and only two have gone down slightly: educational institutions and UK Online centres (despite an increase in awareness for both).

12. What external sources of strategic ICT knowledge has your organisation recently used?



The level of use of the ICT Hub is worth noting, given that it had really only been in full operation for about a year at the time of the survey. The ICT Hub also came very high on awareness (see table below), with over half of respondents knowing about its services. Awareness of two of the types of provision the ICT Hub has been specifically promoting, ICT volunteers and circuit riders, has also increased substantially, in each case from a very low 3% to as much as 21% and 17% respectively. Usage of these has also increased at a faster rate than other provision.

On the other hand, it is perhaps disappointing that nearly half of our sample do not appear to have picked up on ICT Hub resources, despite all the publicity effort, and especially because our sample is likely to be more aware than average. Recruitment for the original survey in 2004 favoured those organisations which were already in touch with NCVO, and which are subsequently likely to have received copious amounts of ICT Hub publicity. Awareness and usage of ICT Hub resources are likely to be lower in the population of voluntary organisations at large.

It might be supposed that our sample are generally more ICT-savvy than average, and that this contributes to their awareness and use of the resources available to them. However, it turns out that in 2004 our respondents were actually slightly *less* aware than average. In the full survey, 17% said they were aware of national services aimed at the voluntary sector, for example, but only 14% of those who went on to complete the 2007 survey said they knew of this resource. Our figures do, therefore, seem to represent a genuine dramatic increase in awareness of what is available, at least among the part of the voluntary sector represented by our respondents.

13. What external sources of strategic ICT knowledge do you know are available to you, and which has your organisation recently used?

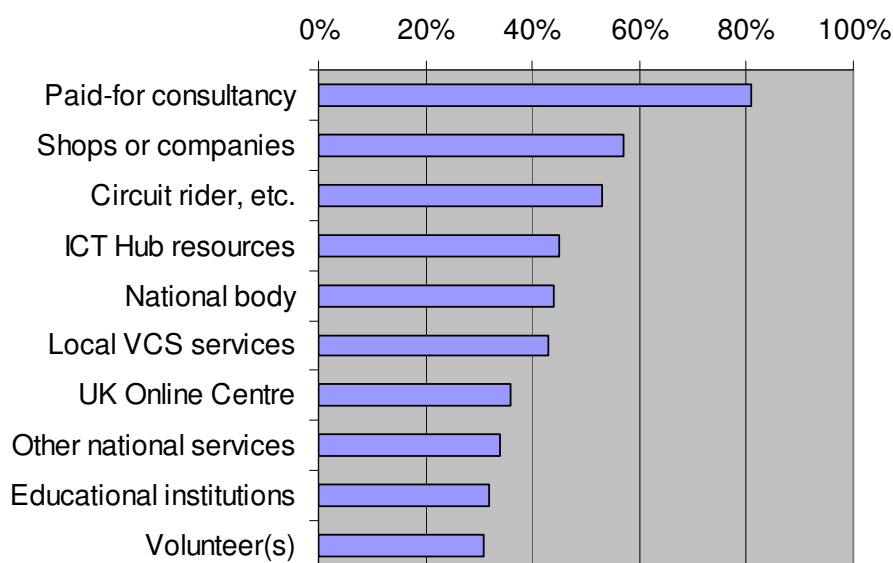
	Know 2004	Used 2004	Know 2007	Used 2007	Take-up 2007 *
Paid-for ICT consultancy	12%	13%	57%	47%	81%
ICT Hub resources (web site, helpline, training, publications, etc)	Not asked		52%	23%	45%
Shops or companies selling products as well as services	12%	12%	41%	23%	57%
Local services aimed specifically at the voluntary sector (such as a CVS)	14%	6%	36%	16%	43%
Your national body or parent organisation	8%	4%	21%	9%	44%
A circuit rider, or circuit riding team, or other local ICT support service	3%	1%	17%	9%	53%
Other national services aimed specifically at the voluntary sector (such as Netgain)	14%	7%	25%	8%	34%
Volunteer(s) from a recognised ICT volunteering programme (such as IT4C)	3%	2%	21%	6%	31%
Local colleges or other educational institutions	8%	6%	15%	5%	32%
A UK Online Centre	7%	5%	10%	4%	36%
* "Take-up" represents the respondents who said they had recently used a service, as a proportion of those saying that they knew of it.					

One other interesting measure is shown in the table above as "take-up". This shows that some services are less likely to be used, even where they are known about. Those with the highest take-up were paid-for ICT consultancy, shops and circuit riders. They were closely followed by the ICT Hub, national bodies and local services.

This suggests that it is not enough for a resource merely to be known about: it must also be perceived as relevant at the time and of good quality.

It is worth noting that two of the three services with the highest use and the highest take-up are paid for — consultancy and shops. This could be of interest to those seeking to establish sustainable models of ICT support. It is also notable circuit riders have one of the highest 'take-up' figures.

14. "Take-up" rates of external ICT resources



As one might expect, the use of external sources varies with the size of organisation. While the smallest organisations make very little use of external sources of support at all, the small organisations in the next band up are more likely than average to use cheap and nearby resources: local services aimed at the sector, volunteers and local educational institutions. Large organisations are much more likely to use paid-for resources (consultancy and shops), ICT Hub resources and circuit riders, but less likely than average to use the other resources.

15. What external sources of strategic ICT knowledge do you know are available to you, and which has your organisation recently used?

	Total	Smallest	Small	Medium	Large
	248	12	40	143	47
Paid-for ICT consultancy	47%		33%	50%	60%
ICT Hub resources	23%		5%	26%	32%
Shops or companies	23%	8%	20%	22%	32%
Local VCS services	16%	8%	25%	16%	9%
Your national body	9%		5%	12%	9%
A circuit rider, etc.	9%			11%	15%
Other national services	8%		3%	11%	6%
Volunteer(s)	6%	8%	13%	6%	4%
Local educational institutions	5%		13%	3%	4%
A UK Online Centre	4%			4%	2%

The final question to examine is how satisfied respondents are with the services they receive. Here there is a striking difference: those using circuit riders or 'other national services' are most likely to be completely satisfied with their decision-making.

In fact, they are twice as likely to be completely satisfied as those using shops, their national body or volunteers. Users of local colleges and paid-for ICT consultancy are near the average, while those using UK online centres, ICT Hub resources and local VCS services are more satisfied than average.

At the other end of the scale, those services which appear to be particularly associated with dissatisfaction with decision-making include volunteers, educational institutions, consultancy, shops and local VCS services.

16. How satisfied are respondents with their ICT decision-making, related to their external sources of expertise?

	Completely	Reasonably	Partly	Not at all
All respondents	17%	60%	19%	3%
A circuit rider, or circuit riding team, or other local ICT support service	30%	52%	17%	
Other national services aimed specifically at the voluntary sector (such as Netgain)	29%	57%	14%	
A UK Online Centre	22%	56%	22%	
ICT Hub resources (web site, helpline, training, publications, etc)	21%	66%	14%	
Local services aimed specifically at the voluntary sector (such as a CVS)	21%	59%	18%	3%
Local colleges or other educational institutions	17%	50%	33%	
Paid-for ICT consultancy	16%	59%	22%	3%
Shops or companies selling products as well as services	14%	60%	21%	5%
Your national body or parent organisation	13%	65%	22%	
Volunteer(s) from a recognised ICT volunteering programme (such as IT4Communities)	13%	50%	31%	6%

Note that this table does not ask respondents directly how satisfied they are with the services they receive. It relates their overall satisfaction with decision-making to the external sources they say they use. Many other factors (such as internal sources of expertise, as we have seen) may also affect their satisfaction with decision-making.

While these figures may not tell the whole story, they are certainly suggestive. It appears that many organisations are unaware of, or do not have access to, the external resources which would help them most with their strategic decision-making, and that the resources which are most used are not necessarily the most effective.

Volunteers appear to do particularly badly. Their use appears to be related to significant dissatisfaction with decision-making (whether they are seen as an internal or an external resource) and — from the data quoted earlier — we see that they are characterised by low “take-up”.

One caveat: while the question was careful to specify that we were asking about ‘volunteer(s) from a recognised ICT volunteering programme’ we cannot guarantee that respondents interpreted that narrowly. They may well have been thinking of the use of volunteers more generally.

Accessibility

The 2004 survey did not specifically examine measures to address inequalities in access to ICT. The 2007 survey did. It appears that there is a reasonable awareness of the selected key accessibility issues — around two thirds of respondents — but a disappointing follow-through: each of the measures had been taken by under half of respondents (and, as discussed previously, these are likely to be more ICT-savvy than average).

17. Which of the following steps has your organisation taken or thought about in order to improve the accessibility of its ICT?

	Taken	Thought about	Total
Getting advice on how to make computers more accessible	39%	23%	62%
Making modifications so that staff, volunteers or clients can use computers more easily	41%	20%	60%
Having the accessibility of your web site assessed	41%	26%	67%
Changing your web site to be more accessible	42%	27%	68%
Ensuring that people can access your services through a variety of methods	47%	28%	75%

There is a small but consistent tendency for organisations to be more likely to have both thought about these issues and taken action as they get larger. For example, the table below looks at one of the five areas:

18. Has your organisation had the accessibility of its web site assessed, or thought about having it done?

		Smallest	Small	Medium	Large
	248	12	40	143	47
Done	41%	8%	35%	44%	49%
Thought about it	27%		13%	29%	36%
No reply	33%	92%	53%	28%	17%

ICT facilities

The second range of indicators relates to ICT facilities. Here we would expect to see significant changes between 2004 and 2007, as the available technology changes.

Networking

The first few questions relate to networking and the links between computers. Given that this survey is aimed at ICT users, and it was inevitable that all or nearly respondents would be from organisations that use computers, the questions on this topic were slightly changed this time, to differentiate better between the locations of the computers used.

A key result from the 2004 study was the extent to which even small organisations operate from — and use computers at — more than one location. The overall results this time are similar — about half of the responding organisations have their office computers at one location, the other half have multiple locations.

19a. Where are your organisation's computers? (2004: Do you have any computers?)

	2004	2007
All our office computers are in one location	46%	50%
We have computers in more than one location	50%	
Our office computers are in more than one location		42%
We have laptop computers that get taken to different locations		63%
We use people's own home computers as well as office ones		25%

This time it is possible to see in more detail where the computers are; the significant finding is that laptop computers are reported to be used by nearly two thirds of the organisations, while only a quarter make use of people's own home computers. (A quarter is still a significant proportion — and raises the issue of whether all these organisations have taken into account the need for having a robust home working policy.)

The differences between organisations of different sizes are marked. As one might expect, the smallest organisations are most likely to make use of people's home computers, while the proportion using laptops and having multiple office locations increases with the size of the organisation. Even in small organisations, however, over a quarter have more than one office location, which reinforces the finding in 2004 that this is 'normal' situation and that support organisations should be prepared to meet the needs it implies.

19b. Where are your organisation's computers?

		Smallest	Small	Medium	Large
	248	12	40	143	47
All our office computers are in one location	50%	33%	53%	54%	38%
Our office computers are in more than one location	42%	8%	28%	42%	64%
We have laptop computers that get taken to different locations	63%	17%	38%	69%	74%
We use people's own home computers as well as office ones	25%	58%	30%	20%	26%

The 2004 report affirmed the importance of networking, and included it as an indicator of effective ICT use. Unless computers are linked together, users cannot share data and other resources effectively. With the even greater importance of the internet now, the extent to which computers are linked together is an even more crucial feature of any organisation's ICT infrastructure.

Here again we can see change, albeit slow. More organisations have networks, and more of these include all the computers used by the organisation.

20. How connected are your computers?

	2004	2007
All our computers are networked together	40%	44%
Most of our computers are networked together	27%	31%
Some of our computers are networked together	11%	12%
None of our computers are networked together	12%	7%
The question doesn't apply	7%	6%

However, there are still organisations where the network does not include all the computers that it could. Of those organisations that have all their office computers in one place — which is the easiest situation in which to provide a network — only 58% say that all their computers are networked together. When organisations have their computers in more than one office location this figure drops to 34%.

A more dramatic change is apparent when we look, not at the computers, but at the users. The proportion of organisations whose staff who can access the system at all times has increased by over half from its 2004 figure.

Adding together the first two figures in the table below suggests that in over three quarters of organisations at least all their office computers are on the network. Although there is still some way to go, at this rate of change it will not be that long before the question of networking within the office will be redundant, and the focus will switch to whether organisations are able to link in all those outside the office as well.

21. How connected are your staff?

	2004	2007
All our computer-using staff can access our network and e-mail system, even if working from home	18%	28%
All our computer-using staff can access our network and e-mail system, but only when in our office(s)	54%	48%
Some of our staff use computers that are not on the network and/or do not have e-mail access	12%	10%
Most or all of our staff use computers that are not on the network and/or do not have e-mail access	5%	2%
The question doesn't apply	8%	9%

Use and knowledge of specific technologies

Part of the reason for the increase in connectivity may be greater domestic access to the internet, via broadband, and the spread of virtual private networks (VPN). The use of broadband reported by our respondents has increased from under two thirds of organisations in 2004 (58%) to almost all (93%) in 2007, while the use of a VPN has more than doubled over the same period to over a quarter of the organisations.

The questionnaire also asked about a number of other specific technologies. (See Appendix A: Glossary for details of what the technologies involve.) Here again the change over less than three years is remarkable.

22. Thinking about the following technologies, please indicate which of these your organisation uses, which of them you know of, and which you are not sure that you could explain?

Linux or open source software

	2004 *	2007
Use	4%	11%
Know of	26%	46%
Unsure	40%	26%
No reply	31%	17%

Virtual Private Network

	2004 *	2007
Use	13%	28%
Know of	20%	30%
Unsure	37%	25%
No reply	33%	18%

E-mail server

	2004 *	2007
Use	58%	75%
Know of	30%	16%
Unsure	9%	4%
No reply	13%	7%

A broadband internet connection

	2004 *	2007
Use	58%	93%
Know of	34%	7%
Unsure	3%	2%
No reply	13%	2%

A wireless local area network

	2004 *	2007
Use	16%	44%
Know of	37%	40%
Unsure	21%	3%
No reply	28%	14%

Voice over IP (internet telephony)

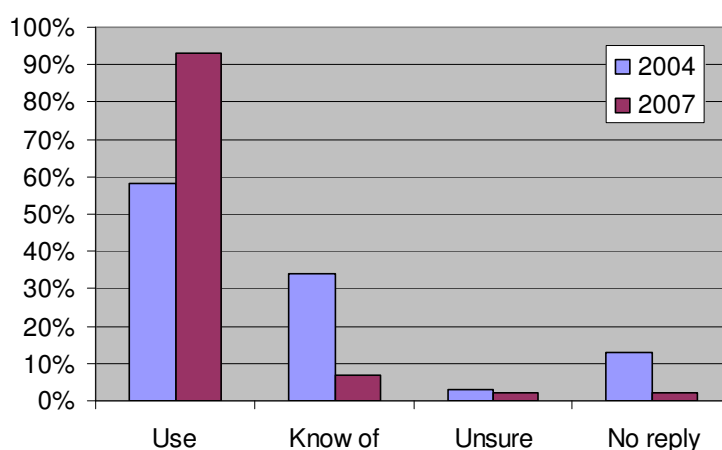
	2004 *	2007
Use	Not asked	11%
Know of		50%
Unsure		16%
No reply		22%

* For technical reasons, the 2004 data in these tables has had to be based on a recalculation of the full 2004 data set, not the responses of our 2007 respondents.

In all cases there has been an enormous increase in awareness of a range of up-and-coming technologies, as well as a large increase in their use. It would be hard to argue that this is unconnected with the ChangeUp programme in general and the work of the ICT Hub in particular. It can also be linked to the large increase in awareness of sources of information and support, discussed above.

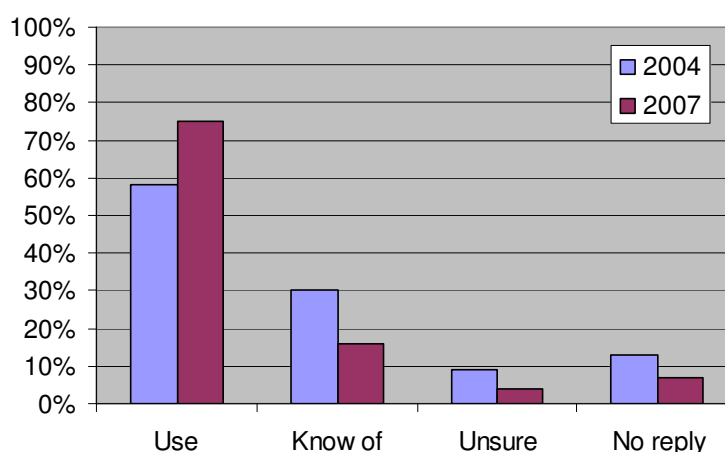
The most commonly-used of the technologies in 2004 were broadband and e-mail servers, each used by 58% of the organisations responding. By 2007 broadband was almost universal, being used by 93% of organisations and with almost no one saying they were unsure about it or failing to respond. This is highly significant, as it enables even the smallest organisations to make serious use of the internet.

23a. Specific technologies: Broadband internet connection



The use of e-mail servers has also increased, not quite to the same extent, but still reaching three quarters. Not all organisations will have a need for one — although many that currently use e-mail client software (such as Microsoft Outlook) to pick up e-mails individually for staff, and to send bulk e-mails, would benefit from an e-mail server, and again few respondents are unsure about the technology.

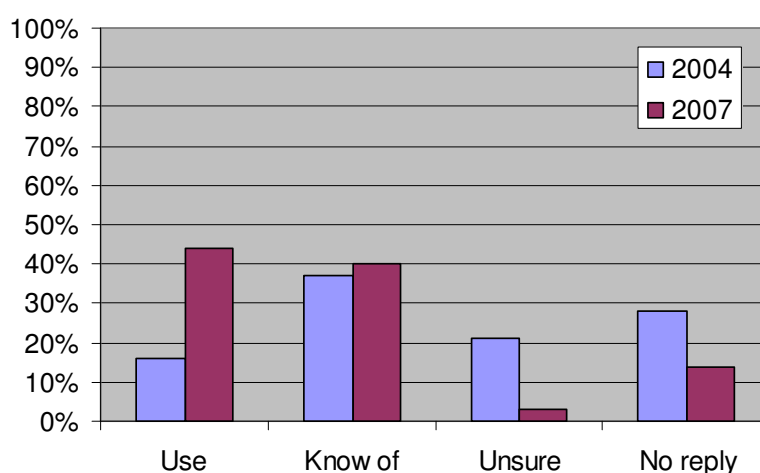
23b. Specific technologies: E-mail server



As in 2004, there is corroboration for the figure of 75% using an e-mail server, from the data in Figure 21, where 76% of staff have full access to the network and e-mail, at least while in the office.

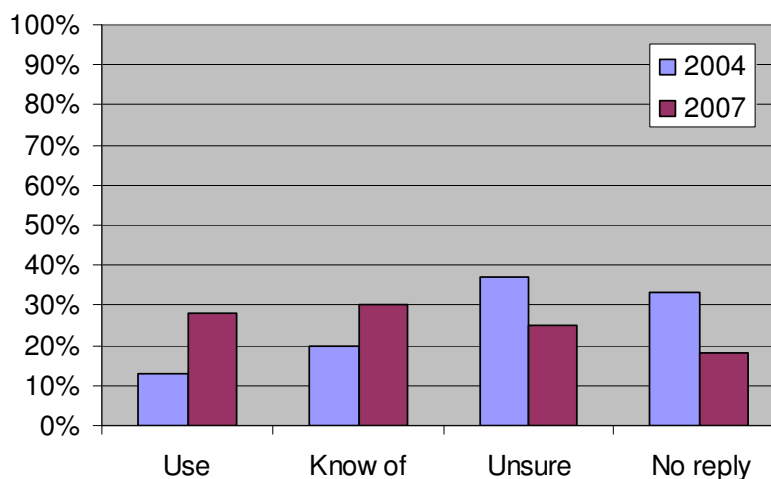
In 2004 the proportions of respondents using a VPN or wireless network were similar, but far fewer respondents said they understood what a VPN was. This situation remains true, although the use of both technologies has more than doubled in the meantime. Nearly half the respondents' organisations use a wireless network, and over a quarter use a VPN. Again, the picture is one of increased connectivity, through a greater variety of technologies, while far fewer respondents claim to be in the dark about what the technology means

23c. Specific technologies: Wireless network



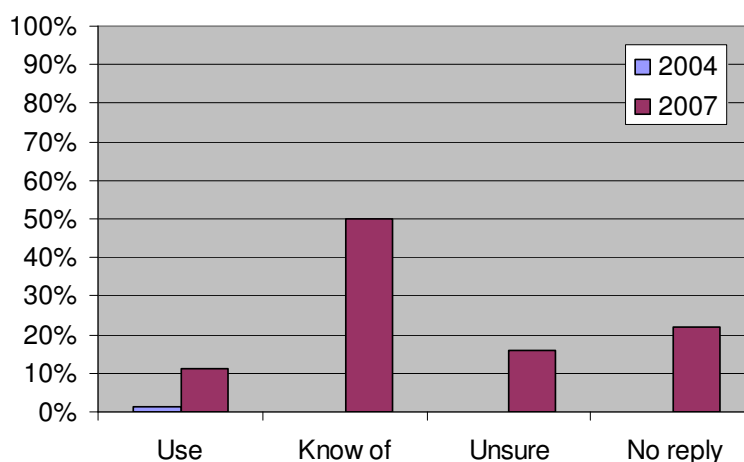
The virtual private network still has a significant proportion — a quarter — of respondents unsure about the technology, but this is a smaller proportion than in 2004. Given the number of organisations working from multiple locations, there are clearly opportunities to extend the knowledge and use of VPNs.

23d. Specific technologies: Virtual private network



As an indication of technological change, the final communications method that was in the 2007 questionnaire — Voice over IP — did not appear in 2004 in the same way. A question was asked about internet telephony, but found almost no one using it — only just over 1%. By 2007 11% of our respondents were using it, and half knew about it.

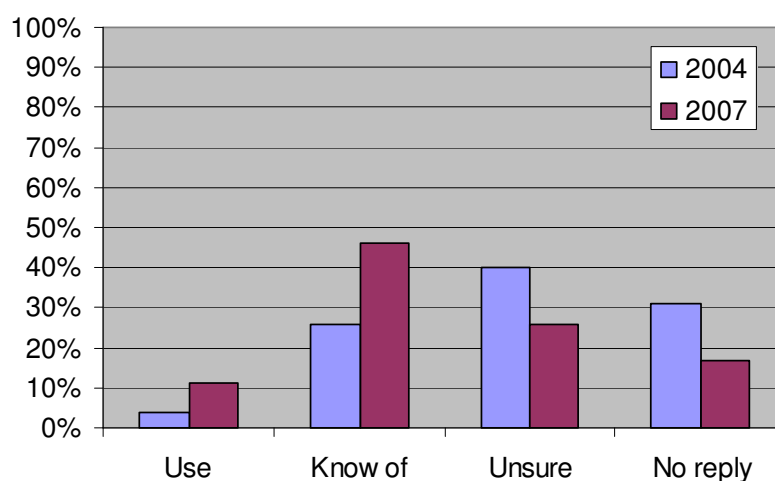
23e. *Specific technologies: Voice over IP*



Open source software

The sixth area of technology examined was open source — with a specific mention of the Linux operating system. The proportion of our respondents knowingly using Linux or open source software has almost trebled, from 4% to 11%, while those who know of it have almost doubled. (There is always a likelihood that some users are unaware that one or more of the programs they are using is open source, if it has been promoted to them just as a specific product.) There is still some educational work to be done here, as over a quarter of respondents were unsure that they could explain the technology, though this was down from 40% in 2004.

23f. *Specific technologies: Linux or open source software*



Security

One of the big disappointments in 2004 was the mismatch between the reliance of organisations on ICT and their attention to security.³

The key lesson here is that there has been a big improvement, but there are still some causes for concern. The use of firewalls has jumped to being almost as common as anti-virus software, while the implementation of back-up routines and staff training have seen useful increases.

24. Which of the following precautions do you take against possible computer problems?

Anti-virus protection on all your computers, updated every fortnight or more often

	2004	2007
Rigorously	64%	84%
Partially	23%	13%

Encryption of data on laptops that leave the office and other vulnerable machines

	2004	2007
Rigorously	3%	7%
Partially	15%	32%

A backup routine that runs at least every week

	2004	2007
Rigorously	45%	67%
Partially	24%	19%

A firewall to protect all machines that are connected to the internet

	2004	2007
Rigorously	48%	81%
Partially	16%	11%

Passwords that are changed regularly and cancelled when no longer needed

	2004	2007
Rigorously	22%	27%
Partially	31%	48%

Staff training in security and confidentiality

	2004	2007
Rigorously	23%	30%
Partially	28%	44%

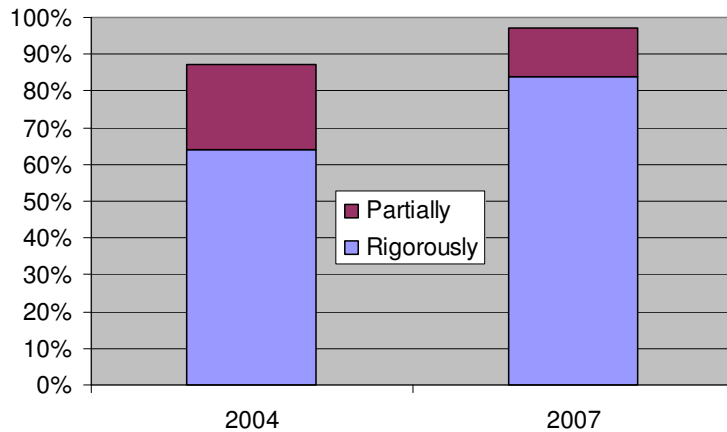
Having said that, there is still more work to be done. Anti-virus software and firewalls (a particularly essential provision where there is a broadband internet connection) are hard to avoid nowadays, as many computers and internet connections come with them pre-installed. Despite this, a minority of organisations appear not to make full use of them.

Whereas damage to voluntary organisations through intrusion to the system is not often reported, there are many case studies of problems that have arisen through inadequate backups when fire or some other disaster strikes. Backup routines should therefore be far more effectively used. Two thirds of organisations carrying out a backup weekly is not good enough; they should all be doing it weekly, and most should be doing backups every day.

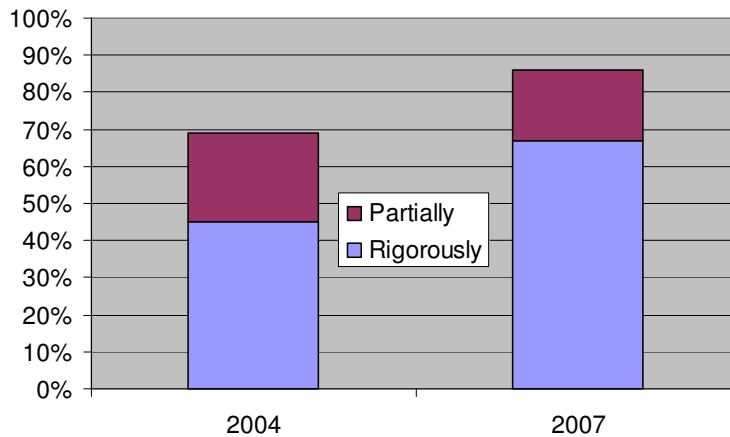
³ The data for this question suffers from the same technical problem as that for different technologies, and therefore the 2004 figures quoted are extracted from the whole survey, not our 2007 sample. Some of the figures differ from those quoted in the 2004 report; at least part of the reason for this is the inclusion of the additional responses which were not used in the 2004 analysis.

‘Soft’ security lapses such as passwords being used inappropriately and staff taking unnecessary risks, perhaps without even being aware of them, are still not adequately controlled. Because these require management commitment, and staff time, it is easy to see how they can be overlooked, or dispensed with; more work needs to be done here to convince organisations that the risk is serious enough to warrant action.

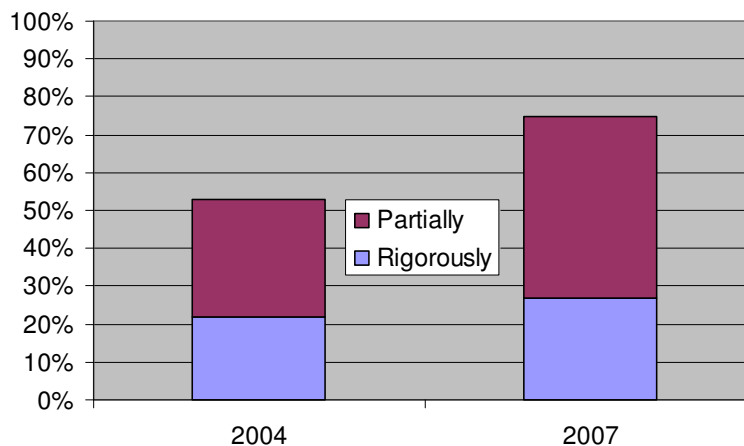
25a. Security precautions: anti-virus software



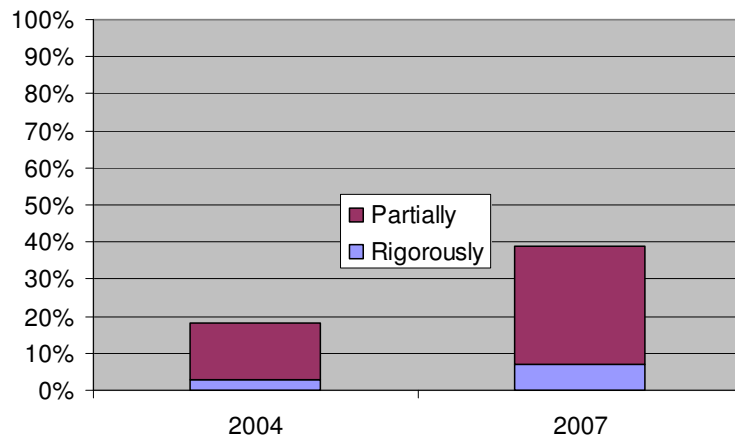
25b. Security precautions: weekly backup



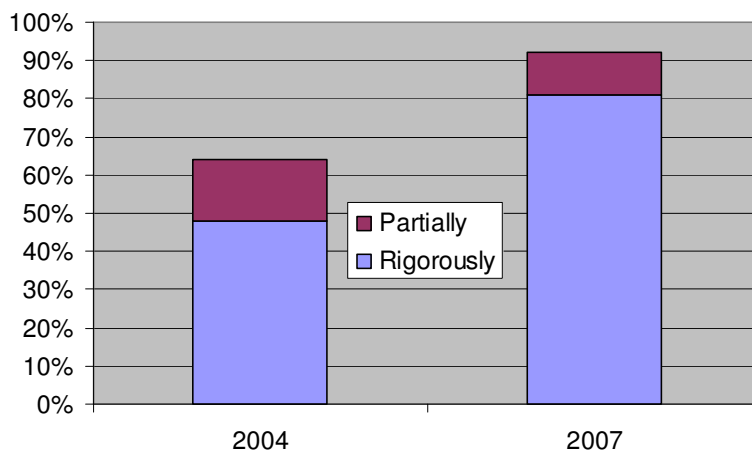
25c. Security precautions: passwords



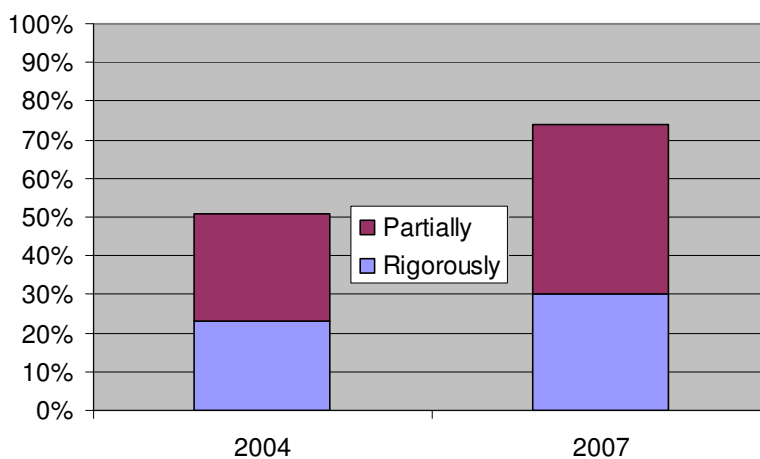
25d. Security precautions: encryption on vulnerable machines



25e. Security precautions: firewall



25f. Security precautions: staff training



ICT administration, support and training

The 2004 survey found an interesting mix of formal and informal technical support, with many organisations using more than one source of support.

In 2004 the most common source of technical support was an external person or organisation. Third highest was an internal support person. These would both be classed as formal support arrangements. Two informal arrangements also ranked highly: “the most ICT-literate member of staff” — a position often referred to as the “accidental techie” — and “staff fix their own problems”, which is perhaps acceptable as part of a strategy involving formal support, but is not satisfactory if it is the only or main source of support.

In 2007 the top items are the same, but there have been notable declines for some entries: the shop, the “accidental techie” and “staff fix their own problems”. These are all solutions which are appropriate in certain cases, but ideally should not normally be relied on. This suggests that the movement to develop a more strategic approach to ICT support is bearing fruit.

26. Who normally deals with your organisation's computer problems?

	2004	2007
An external person or organisation on a regular arrangement	42%	42%
Your most ICT-literate member of staff sorts it out	40%	32%
An internal support person, with ICT support in their job description	32%	30%
It depends on the situation and the nature of the problem	17%	21%
Staff usually try to fix their own computer problems	28%	10%
A volunteer	12%	11%
A management committee member or trustee		5%
The shop where you buy your computer(s)	10%	5%

The 2004 survey did not ask people how satisfied they were with their ICT support. The figures for 2007 suggest that there is room for improvement. Only a quarter of our respondents are ‘very satisfied’ with how their problems get dealt with.

27. How satisfied are you with the way computer problems get dealt with in your organisation?

	2007
Very satisfied	24%
Fairly satisfied	57%
Not very satisfied	16%
Not at all satisfied	2%

This allows us to see which of the sources of support people are most satisfied with. The sources of support which are declining in popularity — see above — are also those with which respondents are least satisfied. This suggests not only that organisations are learning from experience, but also that clear recommendations can confidently be made on the best options for making support arrangements.

28. How satisfied are you with the way computer problems get dealt with in your organisation? — by source of support

		The shop	An external person	An internal person	Accidental techie	Staff fix their own	A volunteer	A trustee	It depends
Very satisfied	25%	25%	24%	35%	18%	20%	19%	33%	18%
Fairly satisfied	57%	33%	63%	57%	57%	44%	63%	42%	67%
Not very satisfied	16%	42%	12%	8%	22%	32%	19%	17%	16%
Not at all satisfied	2%		1%		4%	4%		8%	

In the table above, the highlighted cells show figures which are significantly above average for their row. It is interesting to see that support from an internal person leads to the greatest satisfaction.

What kind of problems require support? Two thirds of our respondents described recent problems that they had not been able to deal with internally, and had therefore required external support — many of them listing several different issues. To give a flavour, the responses have been categorised below. It is worth noting the high proportion that are concerned with connectivity, rather than isolated hardware or software problems.

Hardware (42 responses)

Typical issues:

- Buying new computers
- Computers crashing
- Hardware upgrades

Printing (6 responses)

Typical issues:

- Printing over the network
- Installing new printers

Networking and connectivity (68 responses)

Typical issues:

- Wireless networking
- Installing/upgrading server software
- Virtual private network/linking remote offices to main system
- Network printing
- Maintenance/Unspecified network problems
- Extending the network

Backup (16 responses)

Typical issues:

- Tape drive problems
- Installing/configuring system

Security (12 responses)

Typical issues:

- Hacking/intrusion
- Virus incidents/Anti-virus software
- Spyware

E-mail (34 responses)

Typical issues:

- Spam
- Configuration/signatures/setting up accounts
- E-mail bouncing back/being blocked

Internet access (32 responses)

Typical issues:

- Establishing internet access
- Changing ISP and/or ADSL supplier
- Domain names
- Router problems

Web site (27 responses)

Typical issues:

- Setting up new web site
- Redesigning web site

Software (40 responses)

Typical issues:

- Purchasing and commissioning CRM databases
- Access database problems
- Installing software (on a network in many cases)
- Software not doing what it should/conflicting with other software
- Accounts packages
- Removing inappropriate software downloaded onto system

System & users (8 responses)

Typical issues:

- Moving to new offices
- Setting up phone systems
- Training

These results indicate that many organisations require external support, usually with very practical problems. Those organisations with internal ICT staff were just as likely to report problems they needed help with — but as we have seen, they are more likely to be satisfied with how their problems are resolved. The conclusion remains the same as in 2004: organisations need both internal and external ICT support in order to manage their systems satisfactorily.

Training

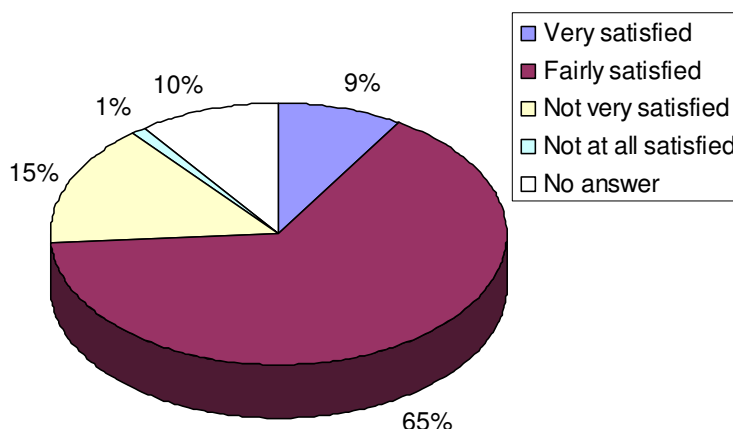
On training, the results are distinctly disappointing. The proportion of respondents' organisations taking a formal approach has dropped slightly, and the proportion taking an *ad hoc* approach or unable to prioritise ICT training has risen.

29. Which of the following best describes your approach to ICT skills?

	2004	2007
We expect staff to work towards a recognised standard, such as the European Computer Driving Licence	5%	4%
We carry out a regular training needs analysis and ensure it is acted on	29%	25%
We look at what training is available and decide whether to send anyone	43%	38%
We are unable to prioritise ICT training	28%	30%

Respondents were asked (in 2007, but not in 2004) how satisfied they were with their organisation's ICT skills.⁴ The responses are not very encouraging, and suggest that the *ad hoc*, under-funded approach to training is not working terribly well.

30. In general, how satisfied are you with the ICT skills of your staff and volunteers?



Two thirds of respondents are only 'fairly satisfied', and the proportion who are 'very satisfied' is smaller than the proportion who are 'not very or 'not at all' satisfied.

By using both questions we can make a very confident recommendation on the best approach to ICT training: a training needs analysis. Those whose organisations carry out a regular training needs analysis are at least three times as likely to be 'very satisfied' with the skills of their staff and volunteers as those who take any of the other approaches.

The ECDL does not come out particularly well, but the approach that has the greatest negative impact is failure to prioritise ICT training. All those who are 'not at all satisfied' do not prioritise training, and organisations that do not prioritise training

⁴ A printing error meant that the 50 or so respondents who used the paper version of the questionnaire were not offered the correct options. Their replies have been allocated to the most appropriate option, where this was possible.

(almost a third of the total) are twice as likely as average to be ‘not very satisfied’ with the ICT skills of their staff and volunteers.

31. Which of the following best describes your approach to ICT skills? — satisfaction with skills of staff and volunteers

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
Overall result	9%	65%	15%	1%
We expect staff to work towards a recognised standard, such as the ECDL		67%	11%	
We carry out a regular training needs analysis and ensure it is acted on	19%	73%	3%	
We look at what training is available and decide whether to send anyone	6%	71%	12%	
We are unable to prioritise ICT training	5%	50%	29%	4%

Health & safety

In 2007, unlike 2004, the survey asked about health and safety risk assessments. Over half say that they have carried out an assessment within the last two years, but a third say they have never carried one out, or that they don't know when one was last carried out. While it is understandable that such matters can easily get overlooked, it would be encouraging to see an improvement on these figures in future.

32. When did your organisation last carry out a health and safety risk assessment for all its computer users?

	2007
This year	14%
Last year	38%
Before that	14%
Never	17%
Don't know	16%

Effectiveness of ICT use

Our respondents are slightly less likely than they were in 2004 to say that they are using ICT ‘much more’ effectively now than two or three years ago. However, nearly half feel that they are using ICT ‘a bit more’ effectively. Only 9% feel there has been no change.

This suggests that the changes taking place at the moment are less dramatic — and also ties in with the finding discussed earlier that our respondents have spent money on fewer developments in the recent past than they had in 2004. The pattern could well be one of a general slow-down in investment and progress.

33. Do you think your organisation is using ICT more effectively now than two or three years ago?

	2004	2007
Yes, much more	58%	41%
Yes, a bit more	33%	48%
No, about the same	6%	9%
No, we are having more problems	0%	0%

If this finding is replicated across the voluntary sector, not just in our sample, it suggests that ChangeUp has a considerable way to go in terms of increasing the capacity of the sector. While our respondents are more aware of various technologies, and appear to be managing their ICT better in a number of small ways, there is no sign of a large boost in the sector's effectiveness.

When we look at progress alongside the sources of internal ICT strategic knowledge, we find that those with an ICT expert on the staff are much more likely to feel that they are using ICT 'much more' effectively, followed by those who have an unpaid ICT expert. Those organisations where no one provides internal knowledge are twice as likely to feel that they have made no progress.

34. Do you think your organisation is using ICT more effectively now than two or three years ago? — with source of internal strategic knowledge

	Board member	Senior management team	ICT expert on the staff	Unpaid ICT expert	No one
	14	67	78	38	89
Yes, much more	36%	40%	50%	47%	34%
Yes, a bit more	57%	54%	42%	47%	52%
No, about the same	7%	6%	6%	5%	13%

Qualitative interviews

Sixteen questionnaire respondents were contacted by telephone to explore in more detail the possible factors which contribute to effective ICT use. Those interviewed were a representative sample of the respondents (four small, seven medium-sized and five large — although two of the 'large' organisations have fewer staff than their financial size would suggest).

The general impression is that larger and richer organisations are more likely to have a systematic approach to managing ICT — which is consistent with the findings of the statistical survey — but the thing that makes the most difference in any size of organisation is having the right people, at the right time in the organisation's development, with time to devote to ICT, and with the right attitude.

The two largest organisations interviewed have quite formal structures for decision making, budgeting, maintenance and training, and use in-house IT staff, and the large organisations generally took a more professional approach. For example:

“We would not consider using volunteers given the strategic necessity of our ICT. We feel it is essential to have contractual responsibilities and obligations in place.”

“[We are] convinced of the cost-benefit of having an in-house ICT support person. We had previous experience with external support providers but did not feel they could be relied upon when the organisation was so dependent upon its ICT. [They were] too slow to respond and our contacts were always changing. While the in-house post is expensive, the cost is built into project funding, and [I] believe over the long-run is much more cost effective than pay as you go external maintenance and support”

“[I] came from a larger organisation where network access was expected, so set about upgrading our systems as a matter of course. The supplier chosen still maintains and operates the system. It’s expensive, but we feel it is necessary given the investment and dependence on our IT systems.”

“There is a small ICT training budget (about £3,000). ICT skills are part of the recruitment process, which includes IT testing for all candidates.”

At the other end of the spectrum, a much more informal and ad-hoc approach to ICT is apparent :

“We rely heavily on a variety of volunteers for their ICT support and advice. This is not acceptable and you cannot run a professional service in this way — we are very uncomfortable relying so heavily on others’ goodwill.”

“We have very limited internal resources ... [the manger] generally relies on the board, her sister (who works in IT) and occasional volunteers for support. We undertake very little IT training as it is hard to find the time and money.”

“We do not have an external maintenance contract – an IT volunteer comes in regularly for maintenance and troubleshooting. ... This arrangement has been moderately successful, although there are no contingency plans for when/if the volunteer leaves. We will cross that bridge when we come to it — like most things.”

For medium-sized organisations the picture, predictably, is mixed:

“Things get fixed when they go wrong, but there is no strategy. Because it is not urgent it is never a priority. The infrastructure is in place, so there is no pressure. We have a support contract. We used to have one for the database, but didn’t call on it very often so cut it as an economy measure. We considered cutting the server support contract in order to save money, but decided it was too risky.”

“The person who set [the system] up ... left (for personal reasons) [and] the post wasn’t filled because the funding for it had finished. The organisation isn’t big enough to support a dedicated ICT person and the money wasn’t there to make up a full post including ICT.”

Budgeting and funding

As we can see from some of the quotations above, lack of funds — and volatile funding patterns — are echoed time and again as constraints on effective use of ICT:

“The volatility of the funding arrangements generally makes decision-making and planning quite erratic. [We are] never certain how many people will be in post in the next year given the project nature of some of the work, so we are uncertain about whether we can or should invest in more IT.”

“There is no long or medium term ICT strategy — it’s all very ‘event-driven’ and reactive. This is a result of ... normal VCO resource constraints. Short-term funding confines decision-making to an operational viewpoint — you can’t think strategically if funding doesn’t go beyond the operational period.”

Where funding constraints are not a factor, even if the organisation is relatively small, a more professional approach to the management of ICT is possible. For example, both of the grant-making trusts interviewed, where there is a secure financial base (and no dependence on external funding or contracts), took a more structured and formal approach to ICT compared to other VCOs with similar staff numbers.

Therefore, it seems that a more professional approach to managing/planning ICT emerges when voluntary organisations reach a point where the financial base is more secure (i.e more long-term funding, larger reserves). This is often, but not always, related to size and turnover. In the private sector, that degree of ‘self-determination’ and forward planning is more likely to be there from the beginning.

“[The Director of Resources] convinced the Board to set up a capital fund for ongoing ICT expenditure which is primarily funded out of unrestricted funds and administrative overheads built into project costs. There is a replacement policy and budget to replace equipment every three years.” (large organisation)

There does seem to be a general shift in which funders are accepting that ICT should reasonably be included in basic administrative costs, but are still wary of directly funding the operating costs of ICT. Many groups can only fund their internal ICT developments by building ICT overheads into project funding.

“Core funders are becoming increasingly relaxed about using funds for ICT infrastructure, but it is still easier to secure funds for capital projects rather than internal costs such as IT.”

“While it is difficult to get funders to directly support ICT running costs, we are very up front about putting an ICT overhead into all funding applications, which goes to support the cost of our ICT support officer as well as capital replacement.”

Another interviewee gave an interesting perspective, believing that funders still prefer tangible one-off projects and are very shy of making any ongoing commitment to running costs, maintenance, etc. It is not the principle of supporting administration that bothers funders so much as the fear of getting stuck into a long-term obligation. However, some of their core funders, have allowed under-spends in other areas (such as staffing) to be diverted to IT costs – this represents a small shift.

At the smaller and poorer end of the spectrum, one organisation was struggling with even the most basic of IT costs:

“This has become much harder in the past couple of years, as funders are reluctant to support costs of upgraded equipment or software or ongoing maintenance of these things. Consequently, we’re stuck using an antiquated piece of accounting software (we) got funding for 5–6 years ago.”

See also the following section, looking at the survey responses on funders’ attitudes.

The influence of key individuals

Particularly in smaller organisations at earlier stages of development, it seems that success with ICT is likely to be down to the individual personality of the manager or another key individual. In the interviews, quite a difference in attitude emerged, for example, between two outwardly similar organisations — both very small, financially vulnerable groups. The organisation with the more forceful, determined and creative manager appeared to have managed to get further with its ICT than the other.

This leadership effect is particularly noticeable in medium-sized organisations, where the resources *could* perhaps be found, but only if they are sought by someone with the right attitude:

“The thing that made the difference was [me] having a small amount of time to think about what we needed. The organisation is good that way, and [I have] overall responsibility for ICT (though not in the job description) to make sure it gets done. We are small and have no ICT department, though we have had some support from our national organisation. We also used a volunteer from IT4C who was motivational — the free help worked well. Subsidised voluntary sector support is not very important. It’s a matter of the manager thinking things through, seeing ICT as an essential element of efficiency and seeing poor ICT as a waste of resources — like having dodgy boots but doing nothing about it. People glaze over if you make a big deal out of ICT; they just need a checklist of things to do.”

... and sometimes the circumstances just happen to be right:

“We recently got a permanent base — we used to be in a church hall which we had to vacate at weekends. We raised the funds to replace and upgrade all our hardware and software at the same time, because we wanted to upgrade.”

“ [My husband] has technical expertise and that made all the difference. He set up the new system and gave us advice. We probably wouldn’t have done it without his technical know-how; we wouldn’t have taken the chance.”

Using ICT more effectively

Interviewees seemed to feel that they were ‘using ICT much more effectively’ if they had recently experienced improved availability and access to ICT — regardless of their whether they are big or small. In every case this was linked to specific technical enhancements — primarily the installation of a network — rather than a change in the management, planning, budgeting, or training. The excerpt below was a fairly common theme:

“ We are definitely using ICT more effectively — generally due to improved availability of ICT to staff. Over the past couple of years we have invested in more PCs and in networking them together to provide much better access to internal resources and email/Internet. This has resulted in major improvements in efficiency and the way we can provide our services, particularly how we can communicate with remote offices.”

Those who indicated they were using ICT ‘about the same’ as three years ago had not seen any major technical changes or system enhancements.

Training & Skills

Only one of the organisations interviewed had a formal approach to IT training in that staff underwent a skills appraisal which led to specific training targets.

Most take up training on an ad-hoc basis as and when it is felt to be necessary or as and when an appropriate free course appears. There was a prevailing feeling that the time out required for external training courses was not cost effective. Many rely on internal informal methods such as hand-holding, super users or internally-written user guides.

There was quite a bit of emphasis on staff bringing skills with them and expectations that staff should have appropriate IT skill when they come to the job.

“ There is no external IT training, staff bring their own skills or are self-taught. There are no resources (time or money) to prioritise training. We are fortunate that, in most cases, our staff are early retirees coming from industry and commerce, so are generally quite IT literate.”

Funders' sympathy to ICT

One of the six objectives of the ICT Hub is to improve funders' responsiveness to ICT needs, in line with both the government's recognition of its importance and the current movement for full cost recovery.

In 2004 only one in five of survey respondents said that their funders were generally happy to accept both capital and running costs for ICT. The figures for 2007 show a slight improvement to one in four. However, the number saying that their funders are reluctant to give any money at all has also increased significantly, while the 'no pattern' and 'don't know' responses have declined. This does at least suggest that respondents are more aware of the issue and clearer about what their funders' approach is, but is disappointing overall.

35. How good are your funders at meeting your ICT needs?

	2004	2007
Most of our main funders are happy to accept ICT capital and running costs (including support) in our bids	20%	26%
Most of our main funders will give money for capital but are reluctant to fund ICT running costs	16%	18%
Most of our main funders are reluctant to give any money for ICT at all	13%	18%
Some of our funders are good, some are bad; there is no pattern	22%	16%
Don't know	18%	15%

Just under a sixth of respondents gave examples of good or bad practice displayed by funders. Several commented that they had no difficulty including ICT costs in their budgets, whereas others gave examples of ICT funding not being available, or being taken out of budgets when grants were offered. Good practice was reported from LloydsTSB, LSC, several foundations and other voluntary organisations (sharing resources, for example); there were examples of both good and bad practice from local authorities; the NHS and central government did not appear in many comments — when they did it was almost always as examples of bad practice.

Use of ICT in service delivery

Although the use of ICT in service delivery is important, it had been omitted from the evaluation criteria (see Section 3, above). It was therefore decided in 2004 that the baseline survey should not look at service delivery in detail. A few aspects of were explored, however, and these questions were repeated in the 2007 survey.

As before, the use of the internet features highly as a means of communication and service delivery. The proportion of organisations with a web site has crept up, from an already high level, but a fairly stubborn 4% still have no plans for one.

36. Does your organisation have a web site?

	2004	2007
Yes, we have our own web site	78%	85%
We don't, but information about us is on our parent organisation's web site or a community web site	5%	5%
No, but we plan to get one	11%	6%
No, and we have no plans	5%	4%

Despite all the talk of Web 2.0 and similar developments, these are still actually being used by a small minority of our sample. However, all categories of service delivery which depend on internet use have increased, at least slightly.

37. Does your organisation use e-mail and the internet in any of the following ways?

	2004	2007
Providing services to clients or users via e-mail	57%	60%
Using your web site to provide information to clients, service users and other people	72%	74%
Providing interactive services to clients or service users on your web site (such as discussion forums)	19%	21%
Buying things (for the business of your organisation) on the internet	64%	69%
Selling publications or products, taking bookings or fundraising on your web site	24%	27%
Communicating with trustees or management committee members by e-mail	81%	90%
Sharing information among your own staff and trustees by means of an intranet or e-group	45%	49%
Video conferencing	3%	4%
Instant messaging	9%	11%
Wikis, blogs or other online collaboration tools		8%

What makes an organisation decide to use the opportunities provided by the internet? There is a hint that it is related to the source of ICT expertise in the organisation. There is a clear pattern for organisations that rely on an unpaid ICT expert, or have no source of internal expertise to use each of the technologies below average, and for those with expertise from a board member, senior manager or paid ICT expert to use them more often — sometimes much more. For example, information is shared internally over an intranet by nearly two thirds (64%) of those organisations with expertise on the senior management team, but only one third (38%) of those with no source of expertise. Video conferencing is used by 14% where the expertise is on the board, compared with just 1% where there is no internal source of expertise.

38. Does your organisation use e-mail and the internet in any of the following ways? — by source of internal ICT expertise

		Board member	Senior management team	ICT expert on staff	Unpaid ICT expert	No one
	248	14	67	78	38	89
Providing services to clients or users via e-mail	60%	64%	72%	68%	55%	52%
Using your web site to provide information	74%	79%	90%	82%	63%	67%
Providing interactive services to clients on your web site	21%	29%	27%	26%	13%	16%
Buying things for your organisation on the internet	69%	64%	73%	68%	66%	71%
Selling, taking bookings or fundraising on your web site	27%	29%	36%	28%	24%	24%
Communicating with trustees by e-mail	91%	93%	99%	92%	87%	89%
Sharing information internally on an intranet or e-group	50%	50%	64%	71%	42%	38%
Video conferencing	4%	14%	7%	9%		1%
Instant messaging	11%	14%	16%	12%	11%	9%
Wikis, blogs or other online collaboration tools	8%	7%	12%	10%	3%	6%

There is a clear trend for organisations to be more likely to use any of the technologies list above, the larger they are. (For example, 10% of small organisations, but 19% of large ones provide interactive client services on their web site.) However, the relationship to the source of expertise holds true, even if we look just at medium-sized and large organisations.

The case has been made before, but this does seem to be evidence of the importance of having an internal source of ICT expertise — and preferably at the highest level in the organisation — for an organisation really to get to grips with the potential of ICT.

In other applications, surprisingly perhaps, specific uses of ICT seem to have stayed static or declined — apart from a jump in the use of shared diaries and calendars. There is no obvious reason for this, but it does reinforce the impression discussed above that the past three years have not been ones in which the bulk of the voluntary sector has made great innovatory strides in its use of ICT.

This is especially true when we consider two other factors: our self-selected sample are more likely to be ICT-savvy than average, and they have not been standing completely still — their use of some technologies (firewalls, for example) has increased significantly. They can invest and adopt new technologies; the conclusion must be that in the areas looked at in this section they are not ready to, either because of lack of funds or because they are not yet convinced that the time is right for them.

39. Does your organisation use computers in any of the following ways?

	2004	2007
Shared diaries, calendars or booking system	34%	43%
Client information delivered by computer	16%	14%
Face to face services that use computers	22%	24%
Providing ICT training or facilities for clients or the public	24%	23%
Producing reports and statistics for your funders and trustees	88%	84%
Computer-based learning by staff	28%	27%

5. Literature review: Key research and developments in ICT in the voluntary sector 2004 – 2007

This section of the report reviews research that has been carried out on a range of ICT issues since 2004, picking up where the previous literature review left off. The aim is to draw together key findings from this research in order to share knowledge and learning, and to provide a central reference point on developments on ICT in the voluntary sector to date. It also provides an important backdrop against which the results of the follow-up baseline study can be viewed.

The authors have tried to identify as many research resources as possible using the ICT Hub web site and contacting known researchers as well as subscribers to the e-mail groups ictHubopsteam and ukriders.

The research covered in this report generally falls into two categories — research into the actual use and management of ICT by the voluntary and community groups; and reports on initiatives to support the development of ICT in the sector. The review is structured accordingly. For detailed references, see Appendix B: References.

Use and management of ICT in the voluntary sector

Research since 2004, unsurprisingly, confirms the growing importance of ICT to the work of most voluntary and community groups. In the 2004 Baseline report, 85% of respondents rated computers as ‘vital’. More recent research supports the finding discussed above that the value of ICT for both administration and service delivery has only increased.

In 2006, research by the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists (WCIT) for the ICT Hub found that 97% of VCS⁵ organisations said IT was ‘very important’ to their administration, finance and communications, with 83% claiming it as ‘very important’ to their core activities and service delivery. This is consistent with recent research in the States where 95% of social organisations felt that technology is important or essential to achieving their mission (DotOrganise, 2005).

According to *Virtual Promise*, a fascinating and detailed look at the use of Internet technology in the voluntary sector, 67% of charities⁶ agreed that “the internet has changed the way we work with our clients or beneficiaries”. Although respondents to these studies are self-selected and therefore more likely to be interested in ICT, it seems clear that ICT is recognised as an essential tool by the sector.

That being so, what does the literature tell us about the current state of ICT in the voluntary sector? Fortunately there has been a range of research undertaken in the past few years covering a variety of topics including networking, software, accessibility and new media.

⁵ VCS = Voluntary and Community Sector; VCO = Voluntary and/or Community Organisation

⁶ in those with an annual turnover of less than £1m

Most of the research tends to focus on the following questions, which form the overall structure of the following discussion:

- What ICT facilities does the sector have?
- How is ICT being used to improve efficiency and effectiveness?
- How is it being planned and paid for?
- How is it being managed and maintained?

ICT facilities and resources

This section looks at what recent research tells us about ICT facilities in the voluntary sector — hardware, software, networks, and internet access — as this is a basic indicator of how well the sector is doing. According to the research, levels of access and ownership are up, and a large majority of VCOs are now improving their ICT facilities — upgrading equipment, standardising software and moving to network-based systems.

The *Charity Finance Voluntary Sector IT Survey* summarises the situation in its 2006 report: “while some charities are making use of podcasts, 3G and developments in VOIP, (for most), the focus is on core issues such as integrating databases, web sites and networks, and the use of technology to support remote working and collaboration.”

This is borne out by several studies. According to a survey of VCOs undertaken by YouthNet in late 2005, almost three quarters of organisations had IT investment planned in 2006. In the majority of cases, this was an investment in hardware, most commonly servers and networks, followed by new/upgraded software (14%); web development (8%), Internet connection (7%), and new/improved database (7%). Research in Northern Ireland reports a similar pattern, with the bulk of expenditure in their study being spent on improving ICT infrastructure, while the more strategic aspects of ICT expenditure (software projects or use of a consultant for strategic planning) were much less prevalent.

Networking / Connectivity

In the 2004 Baseline study, we found that 20% of organisations had no network, while just 40% reported that all of their computers were networked. As the existence of a basic network is a key indicator of ‘ICT success’ (see our evaluation framework, page 9), it is interesting to examine what has been happening on this front since 2004.

Encouragingly, the YouthNet research revealed that only 10% of the organisations they surveyed didn’t have a network, while 57% were using a server-based LAN, 20% a peer-to-peer LAN, and 8% a WAN. Also, two-thirds of respondents expected the number of networked computers to increase in the next 2–3 years. More recently, research in Northern Ireland reported that 80% of respondents claimed all relevant staff can access network resources and e-mail when in the workplace, while only 3% said that staff couldn’t access a network or e-mail. This represents significant progress when compared to the situation outlined by Hall Aitkin six years ago where only 28% of those surveyed had, or planned to have, a network.

According to YouthNet, all of the organisations in their study reported having some form of internet connection, (although they make the point that as it was an online survey, this result may not be entirely representative). However, it can be safely assumed that internet/e-mail access is almost universal for the voluntary sector, even if from a home office. What is interesting to explore is how internet and e-mail access are delivered and managed, and how groups are using this technology.

Compared to 70% in the 2004 Baseline survey, YouthNet found that 88% of respondents had broadband access in at least one branch, although several organisations used a variety of connection types at their various branches. Only 7% used dial-up exclusively, while 18% used dial-up in one or more of their offices.

This leads to another issue related to networking. Well over half of voluntary and community groups work in more than one location — with all the inherent problems of ‘connecting up’ different sites. (NI & Baseline 2004) Of those with multiple locations, the Northern Ireland study found that in only half the cases were they all networked, indicating that this is still an area of difficulty for voluntary groups. This is echoed by the YouthNet research in which half of organisations reported no remote networking capability, although importantly, this is set to decrease significantly in 2–3 years with only 20% expecting to have no remote networking capabilities by then. This projection is consistent with findings from the annual *Charity Finance* survey where remote access to networks increased from 46% in 2005, to 56% in 2006.

Although the studies referred to above are all different and cannot be directly compared, the overall indication is that the application of networking and remote access in the voluntary sector appears to be on the increase for all but the smallest groups.

Web sites

Figures about web sites are varying, with between 75% and 90% of organisations reportedly having a web presence. The ICT Hub’s accessibility research found that only 10% of respondents did not have a web site, although when analysed by size this varied from 28% of those with less than £10,000 not having a web site compared to just 7% of those between £100,000 and £1 million.

According to *Virtual Promise*, web site development and maintenance costs are slowly being absorbed into the general voluntary sector infrastructure. 78% of charities now say they have a dedicated web site budget (40% of smaller organisations), and more full-time staff now work on web sites than in previous years. An impressive 75% of charities claim to update their web sites at least daily.

While having a web site is a basic indicator of ICT maturity, it is much more instructive to examine how voluntary organisations are using their web presence and whether web sites are having an impact on service delivery. There has been a substantial amount of research on this topic which is covered in more detail on page 55.

Software

Some studies have looked in particular at what software is being used by the voluntary sector. Unsurprisingly, the research indicates that by far the largest platform is the Microsoft environment: users are familiar with it and support is readily available. YouthNet reported that Microsoft dominates desktop operating systems and office software with 90% of organisations using these products exclusively. According to respondents, this was not expected to change significantly in the next 2–3 years (although Mac OS and Linux were both mentioned as possible alternatives by a few organisations and 4% are considering switching to Open Office). These findings are also supported by the ICT Hub’s accessibility research which found that 95% use MS Windows for their operating system and 93% used MS Office for desktop software.

While there are few specific findings about levels of software standardisation, another key indicator, the research suggests that awareness about standardisation is high, but practicality of maintaining standardised software is still elusive to many. The WCIT reported that most organisations “wanted to run the most up-to-date software and to standardise on software ... and expressed dissatisfaction at running several different versions within an organisation.” (WCIT) Yet, a study of voluntary organisations in Lambeth found that software licensing was a major issue for nearly a third of organisations, most reporting that they could not afford new licences and they still used different versions of old systems which were difficult to support. (Lambeth)

Open Source software

‘Open Source’ is often promoted as an alternative to these licensing problems for the voluntary sector. There has been much written about Open Source Software (OSS) in the past few years and there are very strong advocates in the voluntary sector. However, despite being the subject of much discussion and debate (see the ICT Hub’s Knowledgebase), the research concludes that Open Source hasn’t made much headway since 2004. *Charity Finance* reported that 6% of their respondents were using and 7% considering OSS in 2005, changing very slightly to 8% using it and 5% considering it in 2006. The ICT Hub’s accessibility research also revealed OSS use to be marginal. Interestingly, however, they reported that although 58% of respondents were not even aware of OSS, the smallest organisations (under £10,000) appeared to be more aware of open source software than the two larger size bands.

In their 2006 report, *Charity Finance* put the poor uptake of OSS down to the aggressive pricing policies of commercial suppliers such as Microsoft. “While cheap licensed solutions are available, OSS is always going to find it hard to get a foothold, whatever the benefits are in terms of flexibility.” Another barrier to implementing Open Source regularly cited in the literature is the hidden cost of training and support for these products. However, in a recent article on the ICT Hub’s Knowledgebase, ‘No More Open Source’, Ed Downs of the National Computing Centre argues that discussions about Open Source as a generic principle are unhelpful in understanding what is happening in the market.

“There's no such thing as 'open source'. Open source is not a noun, it's not a thing. It describes a type of software. We need to move beyond this term to

help everyone understand the role different categories of open source software can play in their business ... A statement such as 'open source requires extensive user training' clearly only applies when there are many users interacting with the product, and not when dealing with open source infrastructure. This does not help us to see if and how open source software has a role in making effective use of IT in the UK."

This debate is set to continue and the National Computing Centre has recently undertaken research for the ICT Hub into attitudes towards and use of Open Source software in the voluntary sector, and OSS products and support services currently available to the sector. (This research was unavailable at the time this report was prepared, but has since been published by the ICT Hub.)

The *Charity Finance* annual surveys also provide a detailed picture of software use in the voluntary sector, with particular emphasis on accounting and finance packages. In 2006, they found an array of different software packages in use — 49 accounting, 39 fundraising, and 58 membership solutions. However, despite this variety, there were clear market leaders in most categories with 49% of respondents using Sage for accounting, 32% using Raisers Edge for fundraising, and 19% using MS Access for membership management. This research also provides interesting feedback on levels of satisfaction with a range of accounting, finance and membership packages.

The ICT Hub have also recently carried out a survey with both VCOs and suppliers covering the range of ICT products currently available to and being used by the voluntary sector. When published later this year, it will provide insight into which products the sector finds most effective, and where there are gaps.

Size matters ... again

Clearly the research on ICT facilities presents an encouraging picture of progress in the sector — there appears to be a general shift from basic access to more mature developments in networking and connectivity. However, several of these studies reveal significant disparity when analysed by size of organization, with smaller groups still being less well equipped and spending far less on improving their infrastructure.

For example, WCIT found that many organisations surveyed had a rolling programme of upgrade and standardisation in place, with current longevity of a PC in the sector around 3–4 years and only very few running PCs older than this. However, in Lambeth, where the survey included smaller community based groups, only 68% had new equipment, whilst 32% were using second-hand, mostly donated, equipment. Alarming, although 90% of these respondents said ICT was either 'very important' or 'essential' to their day to day functioning, 50% said their computers and printers were generally unreliable. 72% believed they needed to improve their ICT resources — more computers, faster computers and more up to date applications.

Progress in networking technology is also less impressive when examined by size. Although *Charity Finance* found that access to remote networks existed in 56% of organisations generally, this total hides the fact that up to 80% of large organisations provide some form of remote access compared to only 30% of smaller ones.

That size matters is not particularly surprising — this has been a common theme in much of the research and indeed a key outcome of the Baseline Research carried out in 2004. There is clear evidence that smaller organisations are slower and less rigorous adopters of ICT, but that does not imply they cannot use ICT to good effect. To take this into account, the 2004 Baseline Research presented an evaluation framework consisting of a “model of ICT effectiveness” for organisations of different sizes. By looking at the key indicators for a particular size band, an organisation’s (or group of organisations’) ICT effectiveness can be measured and benchmarked.

In their supplementary report to the baseline study on the ICT needs of the Community Sector, CSC argue that, in fact, the Community Sector is a ‘functionally and structurally distinct’ component of the overall voluntary sector which is largely based on unpaid activity. They suggest that although usually ‘small’, Community Sector groups are not ‘early-stage’ versions of large service-providing organisations. As they are not on a predictable growth continuum, they may require different indicators for ICT effectiveness.

Despite these nuances, the literature broadly suggests that although there is disparity between large well-resourced organisations and small financially-challenged ones, there is general movement up the ICT curve for the sector as a whole. However, to really assess whether the sector is maturing, we need to look at what the research says about how ICT is being used to improve the sector’s effectiveness.

How the sector uses ICT: Service delivery, campaigning and collaboration

Fortunately, most of the research in the past few years has gone beyond mapping what equipment and applications the sector has, into looking at how ICT is being used to ‘do things better’ and ‘do better things’, with a particular emphasis on developments in online capacity.

Internet/e-mail

There is a general consensus that the sector’s approach to online technology is currently quite simplistic but evolving. According to the results of the 2005 *Virtual Promise* survey, the three most popular uses of the internet for organisations with less than £1 million income were: finding information/research; e-mail for staff; and purchasing goods online. However, more sophisticated uses including market research, staff intranets, and extranets for volunteers and trustees have all shown significant increases in the past few years, albeit primarily amongst larger groups.

A slightly more pessimistic view is taken by other research here and in the US, revealing that a surprising number of VCOs are not taking advantage of basic online techniques such as collecting e-mail addresses, sending out bulk e-mails, providing materials for download, and processing orders online. Clearly statistics for more mature web development such as online discussion groups, e-newsletters, searchable databases, and online fundraising are indeed low (generally less than 30%), but

apparently growing. Having monitored online developments in the sector for the past seven years, the *Virtual Promise* team firmly believes “charities have entered a second phase...moving from asking ‘should we have a web site?’ to ‘now that we have one, how can we make it better?’”.

Online Collaboration

One of the buzzwords in recent research is ‘collaboration’, and much has been written about the opportunity online technologies provide for greater collaboration in the voluntary sector. There has been an explosion of low-cost and free ‘collaborative tools’ available to the VCS (blogs, wiki, podcasting, instant messaging, online forums) and the accessibility of ‘always on’ broadband has made it possible to collaborate more easily than ever before.

Yet, despite the proliferation of accessible tools and the apparent cultural fit of a more collaborative approach, research has concluded that online collaboration is still rare in the voluntary sector. Research carried out by Netgain in 2005/06 found only 35% using online forums, 16% using online diaries, and 14% using online group working applications.

Several recent studies have explored this topic with interesting conclusions. For example, *I-See-T: Exploring ICT for collaboration in the voluntary and community sector* provides a thorough account of a year long project carried out by Ruralnet. The project was action research based and involved a variety of seminars and workshops demonstrating collaborative tools. The primary purpose was to explore what the barriers to online collaboration are and how these can be overcome.

They found that overall awareness about existing tools is very low, but once demonstrated there was significant interest amongst most participants. The major barriers to adoption weren’t technological or cost oriented. The rapid change in types of tools and potential overlap in functionality was found to be a major barrier to uptake, as well as the time investment required to embed a new way of working. “Finding the right tool for the right job requires an awareness of what is available and a way of evaluating the tool and seeing how it fits into an organisation’s (ICT) strategy – these areas are both lacking in the VCS”.

As a result of this project, an online resource has been developed where much of the materials and learning from the project are available — including detailed information on a range of tools and several case studies outlining innovative uses of collaborative technology. (www.i-see-t.org.uk)

Collaboration and data integration

Databases and data integration have also been a prevalent theme in much of the research. One of the most interesting studies, *Online Technology for Social Change: from struggle to strategy* looked at how voluntary and community groups in the US are using contact management, communication and online organising tools for social change. The results provide fascinating insight into why voluntary organisations may be struggling with some of the online technologies outlined above.

The study involving over 400 organisations revealed that although enthusiasm for online technology is high in the sector, organisations are really struggling to master both standard and emerging technology to integrate data and communicate with stakeholders. For example, they point out a comprehensive and flexible list of supporters is a core tool for ‘social organising’, yet this basic tool remains elusive for many. When asked how long it would take to assemble a clean list of constituents, only 34% of those in the study could do this in under an hour, with 65% requiring five or more hours to compile such a list!

They found that most organisations, regardless of size, are struggling to keep their user databases in order, and as a result have difficulty embracing and benefiting from new and emerging technologies (such as, blogs, social networking, SMS/text messaging, GIS mapping, and wikis). This is clearly supported by the findings from UK research mentioned above.

The researchers believe that ‘data disarray’ lies at the heart of the problem. More than half the respondents reported using a combination of slips of paper, spreadsheets, and personal address books to manage organisational data, and only 7% said that their systems could share data easily. These findings are supported by research in the UK where NetGain, for example, found that although 68% of respondents had a membership database, only a quarter of these were able to share this internally. It is therefore unsurprising that data integration has emerged as both the key obstacle and solution to more effective use of collaborative technology for social organisations.

The authors of *Online Technology for Social Change* believe the ability to share data across platforms and between applications more efficiently is fundamental to increasing the social impact of the sector.

Although the picture appears discouraging at the moment, they claim the environment is right for a step-change. Awareness of online potential in the sector, and trends in web-based and on-demand software have created an ideal climate for collaboration and innovation. “A promising convergence is now on the horizon, as organisers embrace online technology and those technologies gain the diversity and flexibility needed to support this sector.”

Their report concludes with a series of initiatives for improving online capacity – many similar to what is being undertaken by ICT Hub, and other capacity building projects in the UK.

Consultation, campaigning and social networking

Two recent reports by NCVO’s Third Sector Foresight Panel provide a more academic discussion on the potential for, and barriers to, full engagement with online collaborative technologies.

The first report, *ICT Foresight: Campaigning and consultation in the age of participatory media*, is based on desk research and a survey of almost 300 senior managers in the voluntary and community sector. It looks at how ICT is changing the

campaigning and consultation roles within the sector, including an analysis of recent developments and case studies of current use.

The second report, *ICT Foresight: How online communities can make the net work for the VCS*, reviews the history of online communities and social networks from the earliest e-mail lists and bulletin boards, to the blogs, wikis and social networking sites which have grown so rapidly in the past couple of years. It examines the resulting changes in behaviours and modes of communication and the strategic opportunities and challenges these present to the voluntary sector.

Both reports conclude that the most significant strategic challenges for VCOs in engaging effectively with collaborative technology are cultural ones.

“... ICTs have ushered in new modes of communication and have changed individuals’ expectations of their interaction with organisations. Individuals, whether they are members, customers or just casual supporters, are increasingly expecting dissemination to be supplemented by opportunities for dialogue. As such, the ‘culture of engagement’ presents more of a challenge than the technology”

The report makes the insightful argument that for many VCOs, collaborative technology has the potential to be very ‘disruptive’. According to the researchers, participatory media has the potential to change the model upon which many VCOs are based, allowing power to be shifted away from top-down hierarchical organizations to more fluid social networks where there is less need for a centralised ‘bricks and mortar’ base.

The panel concludes that, if properly managed, the opportunities that online collaboration and social networking present should outweigh the risks. However, they caution against adopting technology haphazardly and just ‘bolting on’ new tools to existing web sites. To reach out effectively to the consumers of these cultural changes, VCOs will have to make a serious effort to strategically integrate the new tools into their ‘ways and means’ of working.

While there is plenty to be optimistic about and the research indicates that many organisations in the sector are (or will be) utilising technology in more mature ways, there is also evidence to suggest that some perennial problems still exist – funding for the total cost of ownership, access to reliable ICT support and advice, and lack of skills to get the most from ICT. These themes dominate much of the research and provide a valuable benchmark against the results of the extended Baseline survey.

Management Issues

Planning budgeting for ICT

According to the Charity Finance Review, there is an ‘emerging realism about budgetary requirements of IT projects’ and evidence to suggest the voluntary sector is embracing the need to invest in IT and ‘not do it on the cheap’.

However, other research indicates that planning and budgeting for ICT is still a problem, at least for the smaller groups. The YouthNet research found that only 51% of VCOs had a specific budget for ICT despite the fact that 75% intended to make investments in ICT in the coming year. In Northern Ireland, only 40% of their respondents claimed to have a budget for ICT/internet. (As perhaps would be expected the larger organisations were more likely to have an ICT budget.)

Although *Charity Finance* found that overall two-thirds of VCOs incorporate IT in their strategic planning, this figure falls to 50% for smaller charities — which is consistent with other research findings. While there appears to be growing recognition that having a formal strategy is an important factor in obtaining funding and getting the most out of ICT, ‘many smaller organisations feel they just don’t have the time, money, knowledge or resources’ to undertake this exercise. This suggests that many small to medium VCOs trying to get a foothold on the ICT ladder are still stuck in a ‘catch-22’.

Funding

In its *IT Funding for Charities Survey 2006*, WCIT found that lack of funding is still a key factor in not making better use of technology, with 88% saying their planned spending would be inadequate for their needs. This is probably not surprising given that 63% of VCOs in the YouthNet study, for example, had an ICT budget of less than £5,000.

The WCIT report concludes that it is still far easier to get funding for visible IT — such as equipment for client use — rather than back-office infrastructure and running costs. In their study, funders are quoted as looking more favourably upon bids with a distinct ‘end purpose’ rather than upgrading and replacing administrative systems. This has left many capital-intensive projects such as drop-in centres and community training suites without the means to run and support the facilities successfully procured through funding.

According to the WCIT research, most funding for IT comes from core costs. It is still common practice to include funding for a PC with most project bids which, even if successful, often leaves an organisation with many generations of equipment that hasn’t been implemented in a strategic or holistic way.

The *Charity Finance* survey concurs that obtaining appropriate funding for ICT remains an issue. They suggest that part of the problem may be that funders also lack the technical expertise to evaluate and make decisions about proposals. Therefore, they propose that “IT staff need to learn the language of finance, fundraising and membership so that they can explain the potential of new technology in terms which make sense to funders.”

This point is also highlighted in the WCIT funding research:

“It can be concluded that obtaining money for IT will always be a problem for those with a lack of expertise in the subject. In many cases they are relying on

advice from others outside of the organisation who may talk in very technical terms without properly explaining requirements and outcomes....people brought in from outside may only be giving reactive or piecemeal advice rather than thinking strategically about the long-term needs of the organisation. The fact that any advice or pricing they give may be driven by profit-motive further compounds the problem. Ultimately this will always be an obstacle if funding applicants cannot articulate the true costs, benefits and impact of ICT for their organisation."

While there is some indication that awareness about the benefit of planning and budgeting is growing amongst managers, there has been discouragingly little practical progress in this area. The literature suggests that volatility in funding affects long-term planning and decision-making and that obtaining finance for ICT continues to be a barrier to its effective use.

ICT support and maintenance

It is difficult to get a clear picture of how the voluntary sector is being supported, as definitions about what constitutes 'ICT support' and 'ICT expertise' vary dramatically. The WCIT found that about a quarter of respondents had some kind of internal IT support – whether 'accidental techie' for simple problem solving or a skilled dedicated IT worker. The remainder relied on external companies or pro-bono schemes, with lower income groups heavily dependent on friends and family and the goodwill of volunteers and local companies.

Similarly, YouthNet concluded that about 36% had access to some internal IT support, and two-thirds used external paid support. Not surprisingly, given the often ad hoc nature of funding in the sector, most support received was on an ad hoc rather than on a regular basis.

Actually, the picture is much more complex, with often a combination of support measures in place. For example, day-to-day troubleshooting may be left to the most IT literate member of staff or volunteer, while support for specialist systems (networks, website, databases, etc.) might be outsourced.

The *Charity Finance* surveys specifically review the growing role of outsourcing, revealing that outsourcing all or part of ICT is increasingly popular in the sector. Comparing results from 2005 to those in 2006, charities outsourcing their software or hardware increased from 49% to 52%, and networks increased from 37% to 44%.

The authors see the potential for outsourcing as 'a means of making specialist skilled resources available at a time when it is increasingly difficult to match only occasional demand for these resources with economic availability'. The report presents the perceived advantages and disadvantages. Key benefits are identified as 'access to a pool of experienced IT professionals' and access to the latest skills, but the key disadvantages were 'external staff do not understand our needs' and 'not cost efficient'.

While statistics about different types of support being used are interesting, the more important question is how *effective* is the support being provided to the sector. Unfortunately, there is inconclusive evidence on this point. Anecdotally, the message

is that VCOs are struggling with unsatisfactory support arrangements and are still finding it difficult to finance the total cost of ownership; yet some survey results show surprisingly high ‘satisfaction’ levels. For example, the YouthNet survey reported that 71% of respondents found their support to be of ‘good quality’.

As the report does not cross reference satisfaction with type of support, it difficult to draw firm conclusions as to which model — ‘in-house’ or ‘outsourced’ — is best. Clearly, there is no one-size fits all and, as already discussed, the majority of organisations are likely to use both approaches in different combinations and with varying degrees of success. As systems become more ingrained and increasingly complex, further research will be required to monitor this.

Security and business continuity

One indicator into how well organisations are being supported is the stringency of their security practices. According to *Charity Finance*, although increasing numbers of organisations are implementing security measures, including firewalls and filters for email and spam content, security is still not taken seriously enough.

Their 2006 survey revealed a mismatch between charities’ perception of whether security is adequately dealt with and the actual measures taken to ensure this. While 90% feel it is ‘adequately dealt with’, only 30% have regular security audits yet 38% claim to have experienced a virus attack. These findings are consistent with results in Northern Ireland where only 27% claim to have security policies and procedures. There appears to be room for further education and awareness raising on this front.

Training

Training continues to be a fundamental issue for most organisations, with two-thirds of VCOs telling *Charity Finance* in 2005 that staff skills are a barrier to improving use of IT. The WCIT research revealed that many in the sector feel their staff are not sufficiently IT literate and that continuous training at many different skill levels was required. However, time and money are regularly cited as barriers to training.

“Even if we had sufficient resources to develop the IT infrastructure I still think that there will continue to be a problem with finding sufficient and ongoing resources to develop the capacity of staff to use the software well.” (YouthNet)

Where respondents are aware of free or low cost training resources, they say they cannot afford the staff time to attend training, despite knowing how crucial it is.

As would be expected, things improve with size and maturity. 30% of larger organisations (over £500,000) carry out regular ICT training needs analysis compared to just 9% of smaller groups (under £100,000). *Charity Finance* also found that organisations with over 1,000 staff spend over 30% of their IT budget on training, against 10% for organisations with 0 –10 staff.

Making ICT accessible

As the use of ICT has grown throughout society, there has been increasing interest and emphasis on the need to make ICT facilities and websites accessible for all —

regardless of age and disability. According to AbilityNet, in the UK there are estimated to be 1.6 million registered blind people, 1.5 million with cognitive difficulties, a further 3.4 million people who are otherwise IT disabled and 6 million that have dyslexia. The total spending power of this group is now estimated at £120 billion a year.

The ICT Hub identified accessibility as one of their key objectives, and carried out research with AbilityNet in 2005 to identify current attitudes and approaches to ICT accessibility in the voluntary and community sector. They found that overall awareness about accessibility issues was low. Fewer than half of respondents had an accessibility policy in place, and very few were using any kind of non-standard adaptive hardware or software.

Further research on the accessibility of websites revealed that awareness about 'web accessibility' was higher, but still only half had websites conforming to W3C accessibility guidelines. (*Virtual Promise* 2004) Increasingly, services are only available at all, or offered at a discounted rate, on the Internet. According to AbilityNet, if a website doesn't meet a basic level of accessibility, it will be impossible or difficult for a large number of disabled visitors to use it. In its *State of the eNation* review of 10 charity websites, only one satisfied their criteria for 'very accessible', while seven were deemed to be 'very inaccessible'. While it is unlikely that this is intentional, many website providers are either not aware of the problem, or don't know what to do to address it.

Clearly this research indicates that accessibility was an area requiring attention and support. It will be interesting to discover whether there has been improvement on this front following the concerted effort by the ICT Hub and others to address this topic.

Conclusions

The research covered in this survey is remarkably consistent. The overall conclusion is that there improvements in ICT facilities and infrastructure are continuing, with the majority of VCOs now having networks, internet connection and a web presence. However at the smaller end of the spectrum these basics can still be a struggle.

While there are exciting new developments in the marketplace, the majority of VCOs are still conservative in their use of online technology. The more interactive and collaborative solutions (which are often cheap or free) are not yet being fully grasped by the sector, but are predicted to grow as awareness increases. However, most feel that even basic networking, email and websites have had a major impact on the way they work and deliver their services.

Awareness about the strategic benefits of ICT and the need to plan and budget for ICT is increasing; there is evidence that ICT costs including upgrade, replacement, and maintenance are becoming embedded in the overall infrastructure costs of organisations. However, this most often occurs as organisations grow in size and maturity — with smaller groups still managing ICT in an unstructured, piecemeal way.

Part 2: Developments in ICT support & infrastructure

Background

The past three years have seen an explosion in initiatives to support the development of ICT capacity in the voluntary sector. This has primarily been a result of government investment, but also the growing awareness at ground level that ICT is a core issue for modern voluntary organisations. What has emerged is a myriad of support services at national, regional and local level — some government funded, some locally funded, and some commercial or social enterprises. While it is impossible to provide a comprehensive picture of developments over the past three years, what follows is a brief summary of the main programmes and models of support that have evolved.

In response to *HM Treasury's 2002 Cross Cutting Review*, the Home Office published 'ChangeUp' in 2004, its capacity building and infrastructure framework for the voluntary and community sector. ChangeUp is an £80 million investment programme which aims to improve and modernise the support available to voluntary and community organisations in order to improve the sector's sustainability, quality and reach.

Following consultation with the sector, ChangeUp identified six key programme areas where investment would be targeted, including ICT. (Finance, Governance, Performance, Volunteering and Workforce make up the other five). A fundamental principle of ChangeUp was that there should be a balance between support delivered nationally and at a local level. Therefore, 65% of the investment for these programme areas was directed at regional and local VCS activities, with the remaining 35% being used to develop national 'Hubs' of expertise. The aim of the Hubs is to reduce the confusion in the sector about where to go for advice and support, providing a gateway where VCOs can access a range of new and existing support and development services in each of the six areas.

The ICT Hub

In 2005, the contract to run the ICT Hub was awarded to the then 'ICT Consortium', a partnership of voluntary and community organisations with five core partners: AbilityNet, IT4Communities, Lasa, NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) and NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations).

Between July 2005 and March 2007, the ICT Hub developed a huge range of ICT services and resources for the sector, including an information website with a Knowledgebase and ICT Suppliers Directory; a national HelpDesk used by 800 VCOs; a monthly newsletter to over 5,000 subscribers; and a programme of 134 events attended by over 3,500 people. The ICT Hub's programme has also included key strands on promoting accessibility, new media, free and open source software, and development of regional models of support including circuit-riders and ICT volunteers.

Full details about the ICT Hub's services and projects can be found at <http://www.ictHub.org.uk/>

Net:Gain

Another national initiative funded by ChangeUp is the Net:Gain programme which aims to help VCO senior managers develop an ICT strategy through a national network of training and support centres. It is based on a social enterprise model whereby participants subscribe to the service for 12 months, giving access to workshops, personal guidance, signposting, online support and materials. NetGain centres are run by VCOs who are members of the UK Online network and which specialise in ICT training, access and other services. The project is in its third round, and to date has 40 centres and 550 delegates participating in the programme.

As part of the ChangeUp programme, Net:Gain liaises with the ICT Hub and regional consortia in developing its activities. Further information can be found on <http://ruralnet.typepad.com/netgain>.

Other national ICT support services

In the past few years, other non-ChangeUp national ICT support services have also emerged, one of the most prominent being CITRA, the Charity IT Resource Alliance. CITRA is the 'collaborative technology alliance formed between eight key charity sector bodies to help improve access to relevant and trusted IT information, people and resources for their combined membership of over 40,000 individuals and organisations'. The founding partners of CITRA are the Institute of Fundraising, Charity Technology Trust, CCitDG, Association of Charitable Foundations, Charity Finance Directors Group, Charity Logistics, SmartChange, and Community Network. Paid membership of CITRA provides access to the online resources of the CITRA website, monthly newsletter, events and networking meetings.

Further information can be found at <http://www.citra.org.uk/>.

ICT Support in the Regions

As indicated above, the majority of the government's investment in developing ICT capacity has been at the regional and local level. ChangeUp in the regions has been managed through the nine Government Offices, who in turn have devolved the management of certain aspects of the programme to various voluntary and community sector agencies. Consortia in each region were responsible for developing Infrastructure Plans addressing each of the six themes identified by ChangeUp. The role of ICT and development of local ICT services under the infrastructure plans depended somewhat on priorities, experience and capacity in each region. Therefore, the existence of ICT support at this level varies from region to region.

Local projects vary from IT maintenance and support services, IT training, strategic planning, equipment procurement, and development of website and database systems. To further complicate matters, alongside projects funded through ChangeUp, are numerous other voluntary sector, social enterprise and commercial ICT support services aimed at the voluntary sector.

The ICT Hub, as part of its remit, has worked over the past 18 months to identify and support local and regional ICT projects. In collaboration with the Voluntary Sector Forum in each region they have established networks of ICT support organisations who are working together to plan the ICT services, support and training events throughout a region. As a result of further ChangeUp funding, this work is now being co-ordinated by a Regional ICT Champion in each region.

Further information about Regional ICT support can be found at:

http://www.ictHub.co.uk/how_we_can_help/Regional_Infrastructure_03.html

<http://www.changeup.org.uk/regions/index.asp>

Models of ICT Support

As a result of some early pilot projects and more recent experience gained through ChangeUp initiatives, various models of ICT support have evolved including ‘circuit riders’, IT volunteering, social enterprise and commercial ICT support services. Unfortunately, there are no hard and fast definitions for any of these models and many services include variations on all of these.

Circuit Riding

Circuit Riding has become a popular term, but is a broad concept that means different things to different people. According to Lasa’s *Guide to Circuit Riding*, a circuit rider “is a mobile worker who provides ICT support and development to a caseload of small voluntary organisations and who works in collaboration with other circuit riders”. They engage in technical support, strategic advice, signposting, and training in an effort to make the organisations they work with become self-reliant in their use of ICT enabling the circuit rider to move on and help other organisations.

Circuit Riding in the UK has been promoted and pioneered by Lasa, which has now run two separate Circuit Riding projects, the first between 2002 and 2004, and the second between 2005 and 2007. There have been other successful Circuit Riding schemes which are reviewed in the *Guide to Circuit Riding*, including London Superhighways, CapacITy, Community IT Academy and Cambridge Advice and Information Centre.

Much of the benefit of circuit riders comes from the ethos that informs their work, their attitude to clients and their aims in working with organisations. As indicated in *Circuit Riders 2.0*, the circuit rider movement is currently considering whether the development of an ethos statement, introduction of standards and a logo may help to highlight the concept and improve the recognition and benefit to the sector of circuit riders. There are also plans to set up a training and accreditation scheme.

The Lasa Circuit Rider projects have been fully funded with no charge to participating groups; however there are other funding models for circuit riders including charging for services, albeit at subsidized rates.

Both Lasa projects have been evaluated, with reports published to share experience and lessons (see bibliography). Clearly these provide valuable insight for anyone considering setting up a circuit rider scheme but also for the wider debate around the sustainability of ICT support projects.

Pro-bono support and ICT volunteering

Another model of support involves the use of volunteers or IT professionals working on a pro-bono basis. Again, there are several variations on this theme, from informal ad-hoc arrangements to professional volunteering schemes run by brokers such as IT4C and Business in the Community.

IT4Communities is the leading national IT volunteering programme, and according to their research, the total value delivered between 2002 and 2006 by IT4Communities and its volunteers is £2.08 million. (*Results of survey of volunteering effort 2005-2006, IT4C*) This calculation is based on earlier report for IT4C on the value of pro bono ICT advice, consultancy and support which reviewed ICT salaries and payment scales to come up with a working daily rate for professional IT volunteers.

This figure does not take into account the value of all of the other IT volunteering being delivered in the sector, indicating that pro-bono support is clearly an important component in the ICT support mix. As other research regularly reports, reliance upon volunteers is still significant in the voluntary sector, particularly at the smaller end of the scale. According to the research, this can be a very beneficial support model, but when approached in an unprofessional manner by either party can result in problems and disappointment. It is part of IT4C's objectives not only to promote their scheme to individuals, charities and companies, but also to develop best practice guidelines in volunteering for the sector as a whole.

Sustainability

One of the key findings of Paul Ticher's review of an ICT support programme in the London Borough of Newham (the Where IT's @ project) was that engagement with a group of agencies over a relatively long term (four years) was an important factor in the success of the project. The sustainability of any support programme is therefore a crucial issue.

Whether provided through paid circuit-riders, development workers or pro-bono IT professionals, there is quite a lot of debate currently about how ICT support should be funded and sustained in the long term.

In their report for CACVS (Cumbria Association of Councils for Voluntary Service) on 'Sustainable Technical Support', GMCVO (Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation) review several existing voluntary sector ICT support services including Sussex Community Internet Project, Superhighways, VAL (Voluntary Action Leicester) – Trading for Change, Manchester Community Information Network, Cosmic (based in Devon) and Lasa as well as private sector companies. The report observes that most organisations providing ICT support in the voluntary sector do so

on a heavily subsidised basis from time limited grants and ChangeUp funding. They conclude that 'no single VCS organisation within England has a truly sustainable model of technical support provision. However, there are several interesting models, some of which have the potential to be sustainable in the long term if the voluntary sector could get a handle on costs and charges.'

This report and others such as 'Exploring the Social Enterprise Potential of Superhighways' raises key questions which are currently being debated about the role of the voluntary sector in improving ICT capacity of voluntary groups.

According to the CACVS report, one of the questions which needs to be answered is, "Should strategic ICT development support be a part of the core services offered by infrastructure organisations such as CVSs and if so, should it be fully grant funded in the same way as other development support?" Others argue that in the long-term, providing a free service means organisations do not learn to budget or include technology in the planning process.

The second question revolves around the difference between strategic ICT development and technical support. "Should technical support be left to the market place and/or social entrepreneurs?" If the answer to this is yes, how do infrastructure organisations support the setting up of social enterprises? Do they set up separate companies or do they support other, perhaps more appropriate organisations, to do this? How does the VCS minimise risk? How can tensions around the equilibrium between social and business aims be managed?

Future Development

This debate is set to continue as further experience is gained from the myriad of support projects operating and currently being developed. In spring of 2008, the current ChangeUp funding will expire and a new funding structure will be put in place.

Following a review of the Hubs in mid 2006, the government has decided to approach the recommissioning of national support services in a different way. Capacity Builders, the agency which manages the ChangeUp programme, issued a 'Draft Framework for National Support Services 2008/2011' which was under consultation at the time of writing.

Although ICT will continue to be funded and developed, it is suggested that it should now fall under 'Performance', one of four broad strategic themes identified in the report — the others being Finance, Voice and Workforce. Over the summer of 2007 Capacity Builders will undertake a tender exercise to identify delivery organisations to manage and deliver one or more of the strategic themes. Detailed negotiations with successful bidders will take place towards the end of the year. It is unclear what the future of many of the existing programmes such as the Hubs will be, although certainly there be desire to build upon the momentum and achievements of the past two years.

Appendix A: Glossary

- ADSL** – Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, the most common form of **broadband**, which makes its connection over normal telephone lines.
- Anti-virus software** – software which monitors a computer system for the presence of computer viruses and removes them if possible.
- Broadband** – any of the various means of connecting a computer to the internet which enables information to be transferred significantly faster than a dial-up connection. The most common means are **ADSL** and cable (i.e. provided along with cable TV), with wireless and satellite less common.
- Client-server network** – a **network** in which one computer has a special role as the server, storing files and documents, controlling printers and other equipment, collecting and distributing e-mail and providing the single connection to the internet. In larger networks these tasks may be shared among several servers. The computers at which people work are known as clients or **workstations**.
- Domain** – the part of an internet address which identifies where e-mail should be sent to, or where a web site can be found (in an e-mail address, the part after the “@” sign). Organisations (or individuals) can purchase their own domain name (such as *ncvo-vol.org.uk*), or can be addressed through their **internet service provider**, so that their domain name includes the ISP name.
- E-mail server** — a piece of software running on the **network** (almost always on the **server**) which collects all the e-mail for a particular **domain** and distributes it among the various users at their **workstations**.
- European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)** — a basic qualification in the use of a broad range of office ICT applications.
- Firewall** – a piece of hardware or software used to prevent unauthorised access to a computer or group of computers.
- ICT** – Information and Communications Technology
- Internet** – the global network connecting millions of computers. The World Wide Web is part of the internet and e-mail is transmitted over the internet
- Internet Service Provider** – a company which provides the means of accessing the internet and transmitting e-mail, and usually offers related services, such as “hosting” an organisation’s web site and domain name.
- ISP** – see **internet Service Provider**
- Network** – an interconnected system of computers which are attached to each other by physical cable or by **wireless** connection. Networks enable users to share information more easily and to share resources such as printers and internet connections.
- Online** – a term that has commonly come to mean “connected to the **internet**”. It is also used to refer to materials stored on a computer (such as an on-line newsletter) or to a device like a printer that is ready to accept commands from a computer.
- Open source** – any software whose code is available for users to look at and modify freely. Linux is the best-known example; others include Apache, the dominant software for servers that provide access to web sites.

Virtual Private Network (VPN) – a hardware and software arrangement used to connect two or more computers or systems securely via an **internet** connection. Can be used to allow home workers to dial into the office system and use it as though they were in the office.

Web site – a collection of web pages (documents) available via the internet. A web site is a means of electronic publishing, allowing individuals and organisations to share resources and information irrespective of geographical location and technical knowledge. Web sites are attached to ‘domain names’ which provides the electronic address of the site, for example www.itshere.org.uk

Wireless network – a network connection without physical cabling, normally using short-range radio.

Workstation – may be used to describe client computers in a **client-server network**.

Appendix B: References

In order to assist in the development of a bibliographical archive on ICT in the voluntary sector, documents referenced in the 2004 report — all of which are still believed to be available — are listed here as well as those covered in the 2007 literature review above.

Sources used in the 2007 report

AbilityNet, **ICT Hub State of the eNation Report**, (April 2006)

AbilityNet/ERS, **ICT Hub Accessibility Research**, (March 2006)

ADP Consultancy, **Circuit Rider Evaluation Project**, (March 2007)

Baker, Pauline, **Sustainable Technical Support Research**, GMCVO, (Jan 2007)

Capacity Builders, **Draft Framework for National Support Services 2008/2011** (June 2007)

Central London CVS Network, **London ChangeUp ICT Project: ICT support to voluntary and community groups by the Central London CVS - Final Report**, (May 2006)

Chisnal, Harriet, **Exploring the Social Enterprise Potential for Superhighways**, Kingston Voluntary Action (2004/2005)

Commtech, **ICT Survey of Lambeth Voluntary and Community Organisations**, (May 2006)

Community Sector Coalition, **The Community Sector and ICT: A Supplementary Report to The ICT Consortium's "Report on Baseline Research and Evaluation Framework"**, (Oct 2006)

Cropper, Karen, **Sources of Funding for ICT projects and other initiatives**, ICT Hub, (Jan 2007)

DotOrganize, **Online Technology for Social Change: from struggle to strategy**, (Sept 2006)

Henderson, Paul, **I-See-T: Exploring ICT for collaboration in the voluntary and community sector**, Ruralnet, (Nov 2006)

LASA, **Circuit Riders 2.0: The evolution of ICT development and support for the voluntary sector** (Dec 2006),

National Computing Centre /ICT Hub, **Sampling Survey of Free & Open Source Software (FOSS)**, (Summer 2006)

NCVO Third Sector Foresight, **ICT Foresight: Campaigning & Consultation in the Age of Participatory Media**, (Aug 2006)

NCVO Third Sector Foresight, **ICT Foresight: How online communities can make the net work for the VCS**, (Feb 2007)

nfpSynergy, **Virtual Promise 2005: The power of the internet for charities**, (August 2005)

Service Tec/Charity Finance Director Group, **Charity Finance Voluntary Sector IT survey 2005**, (May 2005)

Service Tec/Charity Finance Director Group, **Charity Finance Voluntary Sector IT survey 2006**, (May 2006)

Ticher, Paul, **Report to iT4Communities on the value of pro-bono ICT advice, consultancy and support**, (Oct 2005)

Ticher, Paul, **Making a difference for Newham People: Evaluation of the Social Regeneration Unit's Where IT's @ project**, (September 2006)

Ticher, Paul & Andrea Eaves, **ICT Consortium Report on Baseline Research and Evaluation Framework**, (Sept 2004)

WCIT / ICT Hub, **IT Funding for Charities Survey**, (Mar 2006)

Williams, Glen, **Results of survey of volunteering effort 2005-2006**, IT4Communities (Nov 2006)

YouthNet, **IT Infrastructure in the Voluntary and Community Sector**, (2006)

Early national research (2004)

The following citations refer to national research surveys examining the use and effectiveness of ICT in the UK voluntary and community sector.

Future Foundation, **Virtual Promise: Are charities making the most of the internet revolution?** 2000.

Active Community Unit, **E-enabling the Voluntary & Community Sectors**, Nov 2001.

Baring Foundation & WCIT, **Leading the Way to ICT Success**, March 2002.

NCVO, **NCVO Report on IT in the Voluntary Sector**, Nov 2002.

VSNTO, **Future Skills**, 2003.

Government infrastructure reports (2004)

Following are the various government reports which have highlighted and addressed the need for improvements in ICT capacity in the sector as part of overall infrastructure development.

HM Treasury, **The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review**, September 2002

ACU-Home Office, **Voluntary & Community Infrastructure – A consultation document**, September 2003.

ACU-Home Office , **Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Final Report**, March 2004.

ACU-Home Office , **ChangeUp - Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector**, 2004.

Local ICT mapping & feasibility studies (2004)

Following is a list of research recently conducted as a result of the government's proposals to improve ICT capacity of the voluntary and community sector. The studies have been carried out at local and sub-regional level, and are generally of two types. Several have undertaken ICT mapping with a view to assessing the feasibility for the development of specialist support services. A few others have evaluated pilot support service projects to assess future development.

Northamptonshire: Evaluation Report of ICT Support Service for Voluntary Groups in Rural Areas, CVS Northamptonshire/ACRE, March 2004.

Hampshire ICT Project, Winchester Area Community Action, May 2004.

Survey of ICT in the VCS in Merseyside (Chris Lovell) June 2004.

Proposals for development of ICT services for Greater London VCS, LASA, June 2004.

Hereford & Worcester Voluntary & Community Sector ICT Research, Hereford In Touch, July 2004.

Is Derbyshire Doing IT?, High Peaks CVS, July 2004.

Voluntary & Community Sector ICT: Resources & Needs, Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action, August 2004.

The Development of ICT Support Services for Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations in Nottinghamshire, Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council, August 2004.

LASA Circuit Rider Project Evaluation, LASA, August 2004.

ITSNY - An IT Support Service for North Yorkshire, North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Originations (NYFVO) September 2004.

Other references (2004)

DTI, **Business in the Information Age: The International Benchmarking Study 2003**.

nfpSynergy, **Touch & Go -New Technology Briefing**, (Joe Saxton) July 2004.

Flood, G, **IT Systems: Computer Overhaul**, *Third Sector* July 2004

Allsop, I, **Voluntary Sector IT Survey 2004**, *Charity Finance*, 2004.

Appendix C: Methodology

Survey

Respondents were excluded from the follow-up survey if they had opted out or if they had provided neither an e-mail nor a postal address. Those who had given an e-mail address were contacted, in the first place, by e-mail, and invited to complete the survey on line. Any who had given a postal address but no e-mail address were contacted by post and sent a printed version of the questionnaire, with a reply-paid envelope. Several dozen e-mails were returned undeliverable; if a postal address was available these organisations were then contacted by post.

As the deadline for replies approached, non-respondents to the e-mail were sent a second e-mail invitation to participate. Finally, a sample of non-respondents whose e-mail address was generic (info@organisation.etc rather than an individual's name) were contacted by post. The final total of usable replies was 250, made up as follows:

		Responses	Rate
Total 2004 respondents	1038		
Opted out of further contact	77		
No/insufficient contact details	48		
Contacted by e-mail	858	198	(23%)
Contacted only by post	55	27	(49%)
Contacted by post when e-mail bounced	55	21	(38%)
Contacted by post after no response to e-mail	76	10	(13%)
Postal response from unidentified mailing		1	
Total contacted	913	257	(28%)
Responses which could not be used *		7	
* Two duplicates (see discussion below), three returned uncompleted with note that organisation had closed, two returned too late.			

The overall response rate of 28% is very encouraging, given the lack of time in which non-responses could have been followed up by post. It is interesting to see that the rate of response by post was higher than that from e-mail contact. This data raises interesting issues for future researchers; on line surveys are far quicker and cheaper to conduct (since they remove the costs of printing, postage and data entry), but they may be a false economy if the response rate is significantly lower than those where the recipient actually has a piece of paper land on their desk and finds it harder to ignore.

Two organisations managed to respond twice. In one case both responses were from the same person. They were — naturally — very similar, but a few questions had been answered in one version but not the other. They were amalgamated into a single response and the duplicate discarded.

In the other case, two people had responded quite differently. In this case, in order to make the best use of the replies, the one from the person who had also completed the 2004 survey was retained, and the other response discarded.

Quality of data

This second case is a salutary reminder to treat all these results with caution. They represent the views of the respondents, but may not be agreed with by others in the organisation. (For example, the two respondents disagreed about factual matters such as the size of the organisation as well as about other, more subjective, issues.)

It is likely that the survey was completed hurriedly and without an enormous amount of thought. Several telephone interviewees couldn't remember completing the survey a few weeks earlier, and suggested that this was because they complete so many. Equally, when anomalies were pointed out (one of the criteria on which telephone interviewees were selected) a typical response was along the lines of "did I really say that; maybe I should have said ... instead".

Another check on the reliability of the data comes from a comparison of respondents' answers to the question: "What is your organisation's approximate total annual expenditure (on everything, not just ICT)?" Despite the careful wording of this question, several respondents clearly read this as asking about their ICT expenditure, not their total expenditure.

Anomalies were highlighted by comparing responses from 2004 and 2007, and in 13 cases internet research (mainly using Guidestar) clearly indicated that the 2007 result should be changed to reflect the organisation's overall expenditure. Since so much of the detailed analysis is based on organisation size, it was felt appropriate to make these changes.

However, there was not enough time to check all 250 responses. Responses where the difference was no more than one, or in some cases two, bands either way were felt to be reasonably likely, and not examined. There was also felt to be no practical way of retrospectively checking the 2004 responses, and altering them would also introduce discrepancies between the 2004 figures in this report and in the original report. They have therefore been left unchanged. This means that the two responses, for example, where the 2007 size was over £1 million but the 2004 response was under £10,000 probably represent incorrect reporting in 2004. The numbers are small and should not affect the overall impression, but the analysis should be read with this possible source of inaccuracy in mind.

The table below shows the resulting distribution of answers. Shaded cells indicate no change in size between 2004 and 2007. Those below the shaded cells have apparently increased in size over the period. Those above the shaded cells have apparently decreased in size. The fact that there are more respondents below the line than above it — and therefore larger than they were rather than smaller — suggests that the figures are reasonably reliable.

Response in 2007	Response in 2004							
		Under £10K	£10K–£25K	£25K–£100K	£100K–£500K	£500K–£1 mil.	Over £1 mil.	No reply
	250	20	11	38	106	30	39	6
Under £10,000	14	13						1
£10,000–£25,000	8	4	3	1				
£25,000–£100,000	32	1	7	19	5			
£100,000–£500,000	103		1	17	78	5		2
£500,000–£1,000,000	40			1	19	15	5	
Over £1,000,000	47	2			1	9	33	2
No reply	6				3	1	1	1

Volatility of the sector

Another finding from the methodology concerns the volatility of the sector. Out of the 913 organisations contacted, three postal questionnaires were returned ‘gone away’ and 55 e-mails bounced (although 21 of these did respond subsequently by post). A proportion of those who failed to respond at all must also have been organisations that had closed or moved away.

In addition, although both the e-mails and postal contacts were addressed to the specific person who had responded to the 2004 survey, at least 37 responses came from someone else in the same organisation. (Others may have done so, but where a woman had the same first name but a different surname as the initial respondent this was not counted as a different person, since it was possible that the name change had been a result of marriage.) These figures mean that at least 15%, and probably more, people had changed jobs in two and a half years

The 2004 survey

The 2004 report was commissioned in June 2004. Potential respondents were identified from the contact lists of the ICT Hub (then the ICT Consortium) members. Where an e-mail address was available, this was used in preference. This resulted in an initial list of around 3,000 organisations for whom an e-mail address was not available, and who therefore needed to receive a postal questionnaire.

The size of the questionnaire was deliberately restricted to four printed pages, in order to encourage the maximum response, and a freepost envelope was also included in the mailing. Owing to the very restricted time scale, it was not possible to pilot the questionnaire.

After weeding out organisations which were not voluntary or not in England, and therefore outside the Consortium's remit, some 2,500 questionnaires were sent out in mid-July 2004, with replies accepted up to the end of August.

Meanwhile a virtually identical questionnaire was put on the ICT Consortium web site, using the NCVO on-line consultation tool. Alongside this was the facility to download and print off a paper version of the questionnaire, which could then be returned to the freepost address.

About 6,000 potential respondents were notified about the questionnaire by e-mail. Because of the greater difficulty in identifying ineligible organisations on the e-mail lists, it is likely that some of these were inadvertently sent the notification.

All told, 434 responses were received on paper (including those downloaded and printed off) and 526 electronically, making a total of 960.

Technical disparities between the software tool used for analysing the paper questionnaires and the format in which the on-line data was presented meant that a few questions could not be amalgamated in order to permit cross-tabulation.

Several dozen potential telephone interviewees were identified from responses, on the basis that they appeared to have recently made significant ICT investments, and it was felt useful to explore in more detail how they had gone about this. Despite the difficulty of getting hold of the appropriate people over the holiday period about a dozen interviews were carried out, and these — together with comments made spontaneously on the questionnaires — have added context to many of the findings.

Literature review

Data for the literature review was collected by trawling all the documents listed as resources on the ICT Hub web site, followed up by requests to the ukriders e-mail list for anyone involved with, or knowing of, relevant research to pass on the details. This gave access, in particular, to local and regional work. The authors' own personal contacts with other researchers produced additional material. Several of the studies were at the final draft stage (often due to the timing of funding), but in many cases the authors were able to provide advance copies so that their conclusions could be covered.

Appendix D: Profile of respondents' organisations, in comparison with 2004

In the 2004 survey, respondents were asked to categorise their organisation in a number of ways. In order to simplify the completion of the 2007 survey, and obtain the highest possible response rate, it was assumed that the general characteristics of the organisations would not have changed. These questions were therefore not repeated, with the exception of that asking for the organisation's turnover.

This exposed some unreliable data: organisations which appeared to have changed in size significantly between the two dates — especially if they had shrunk — were checked on Guidestar. This revealed several where the respondent appeared to have misread the question, and given the size of the organisation's ICT budget rather than its overall budget. Where the authors were confident that it was safe to do so, the response was altered in line with the size indicated by Guidestar. The sizes given in the 2007 responses are therefore more reliable than those for 2004. It was not possible, either at the time or retrospectively, to check or correct the 2004 responses.

Having done that, we can compare the profile of respondents against the national population, as given in *The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac*. Since the data in the almanac runs two years behind, the 2004 edition gave figures for 2002, and that for 2006 gave figures for 2004. In the table below, the survey respondents are compared with the edition of the almanac available at the time, with an additional row giving the 2004 size of just those organisations that also responded in 2007.

Very small Under £10,000	Small £10,000 – £100,000	Medium-sized £100,000 – £1,000,000	Large Over £1,000,000
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National population 2002 (just over 150,000 organisations)			
59%	29%	10%	2%
2004 ICT Consortium survey — all respondents (no data on 4% of respondents)			
6%	25%	48%	17%
2004 ICT Consortium survey — 2007 respondents (no data on 2% of respondents)			
8%	20%	54%	16%

National population 2004 (nearly 170,000 organisations)			
57%	29%	11%	3%
2007 ICT Hub baseline extension survey (no data on 2% of respondents)			
6%	16%	57%	19%

Other characteristics of the 2007 respondents (based on their 2004 answers) are as follows:

How wide an area do you serve?

<i>The whole of England</i>	61	(25%)
<i>A region of England</i>	15	(6%)
<i>A county or metropolitan area</i>	34	(14%)
<i>Several districts or boroughs</i>	36	(15%)
<i>One city, town, district or borough</i>	78	(32%)
<i>A village or small neighbourhood</i>	21	(9%)

What type of area do you serve?

<i>Rural</i>	28	(11%)
<i>Urban</i>	101	(41%)
<i>Mixed</i>	117	(48%)

Do you work with disabled people?

<i>Yes, main role</i>	38	(15%)
<i>Yes to some extent</i>	73	(30%)
<i>Not specifically</i>	135	(55%)

Do you work with black or minority ethnic people?

<i>Yes, main role</i>	14	(6%)
<i>Yes to some extent</i>	70	(29%)
<i>Not specifically</i>	161	(66%)

These figures have not been compared with any general profile of the voluntary sector, to assess how representative they are. However, it is clear that those organisations working in rural areas and/or with disabled people or black and ethnic minority people do feature in the sample.



Appendix E: Questionnaire

Information & Communications Technology (ICT) baseline survey extension 2007

We would be very grateful if you could return this questionnaire by Thursday 8th February
(see covering letter for explanation and back page of survey for return details)

A. About your organisation and the importance of ICT

1. Organisation reference number from 2004 survey:

2. What is your organisation's approximate annual expenditure? *(Please tick one)*

- ₍₁₎ Under £10,000
 ₍₃₎ £25,000 – £100,000
 ₍₅₎ £500,000 – £1,000,000
₍₂₎ £10,000 – £25,000
 ₍₄₎ £100,000 – £500,000
 ₍₆₎ over £1,000,000

3. How important are computers in general and the internet/e-mail in particular to your organisation's work?
(Please tick one box in each row)

	Vital	Fairly important	Not very important	Not at all important	Not used
Computers	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₁₎	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₂₎	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₃₎	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₄₎	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₅₎
Internet/e-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₁₎	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₂₎	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₃₎	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₄₎	<input type="checkbox"/> ₍₅₎

If you answered 'not used' to both parts of Question 4 please jump straight to Section F.

B. ICT financing and funding

4. Does your organisation have a specific budget for ICT and/or the internet? ₍₁₎ Yes ₍₂₎ No

5. Which of the following did your organisation spend money on in the past year? *(Please tick all that apply)*

- ₍₁₎ Replacing old computers
₍₂₎ Increasing the number of computers
₍₃₎ Putting in or improving a network (including wireless networking)
₍₄₎ Installing or upgrading an internet connection (including Virtual Private network)
₍₅₎ Setting up or improving your web site
₍₆₎ A big software project such as a client records system or contact database
₍₇₎ Consultancy to give you advice or to help with your ICT strategy or plans
₍₈₎ None of the above
₍₉₎ Don't know

6. How good, in general, are your main funders at meeting your needs for ICT? *(Please tick one)*

- ₍₁₎ Most of our main funders are happy to accept ICT capital and running costs (including support) in our bids
₍₂₎ Most of our main funders will give money for capital but are reluctant to fund ICT running costs
₍₃₎ Most of our main funders are very reluctant to give any money for ICT at all
₍₄₎ Some of our funders are good, some are bad; there is no pattern
₍₅₎ Don't know

7. Are there any examples of particularly good or bad practice from your funders that you can tell us about?

C. ICT decision-making, advice & support

8. Which of the following written documents does your organisation have? *(Please tick all that apply)*
- ₍₁₎ ICT strategy, or ICT component of the organisation's business plan
 - ₍₂₎ ICT security policy and/or written security procedures
 - ₍₃₎ Policy on acceptable use by staff of ICT, e-mail and internet facilities
 - ₍₄₎ Policy on Data Protection and/or confidentiality
9. What internal sources of **strategic** ICT knowledge does your organisation have? *(Please tick all that apply)*
- ₍₁₎ Our board or management committee has people on it who were recruited for their ICT expertise
 - ₍₂₎ Our senior management team has one or more members with ICT expertise
 - ₍₃₎ We have an ICT expert on the staff who advises the senior management team and/or board
 - ₍₄₎ We have an unpaid ICT expert who advises the senior management team and/or board
 - ₍₅₎ We do not have anyone with specific ICT expertise within the organisation
10. What external sources of **strategic** ICT knowledge do you know are available to you, and which has your organisation recently used? *(Please tick all that apply)*
- | Know of | Used | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₁₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₁₎ | ICT Hub resources (web site, helpline, training, publications, etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₂₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₂₎ | Other national services aimed specifically at the voluntary sector (such as Netgain) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₃₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₃₎ | Local services aimed specifically at the voluntary sector (such as a CVS) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₄₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₄₎ | A UK Online Centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₅₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₅₎ | Your national body or parent organisation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₆₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₆₎ | Local colleges or other educational institutions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₇₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₇₎ | Volunteer(s) from a recognised ICT volunteering programme (such as IT4Communities) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₈₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₈₎ | A circuit rider, or circuit riding team, or other local ICT support service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₉₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₉₎ | Paid-for ICT consultancy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₁₀₎ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₍₁₀₎ | Shops or companies selling products as well as services |
11. How satisfied are you with the way ICT decisions are made in your organisation? *(Please tick one)*
- ₍₁₎ Completely ₍₂₎ Reasonably ₍₃₎ Partly ₍₄₎ Not at all
12. How confident are you personally in making decisions about ICT (such as what to buy or whether to accept the advice you are getting)? *(Please tick one)*
- ₍₁₎ Not confident ₍₂₎ OK ₍₃₎ Very confident ₍₄₎ Not applicable or not relevant to my job
13. Who normally deals with your organisation's computer problems? *(Please tick the most important one or two)*
- ₍₁₎ The shop where you buy your computer(s)
 - ₍₂₎ An external person or organisation on an annual contract or other regular arrangement
 - ₍₃₎ An internal support person, with ICT support in their job description
 - ₍₄₎ Your most ICT-literate member of staff sorts it out
 - ₍₅₎ Staff usually try to fix their own computer problems
 - ₍₆₎ A volunteer
 - ₍₇₎ A management committee member or trustee
 - ₍₈₎ It depends on the situation and the nature of the problem
14. How satisfied are you with the way computer problems get dealt with in your organisation? *(Please tick one)*
- ₍₁₎ Very satisfied ₍₂₎ Fairly satisfied ₍₃₎ Not very satisfied ₍₄₎ Not at all satisfied
15. What issues have you recently needed external advice or technical support on? *(Please describe briefly)*

D. Your organisation's computers and what they are used for

16. Where are your organisation's computers? *(Please tick all that apply)*
- ₍₁₎ All our office computers are in one location
 - ₍₂₎ Our office computers are in more than one location
 - ₍₃₎ We have laptop computers that get taken to different locations
 - ₍₄₎ We use people's own home computers as well as office ones
17. How connected are your computers? *(Please tick the statement below that best describes your situation)*
- ₍₁₎ All our computers are networked together (even those located away from the main office, if any)
 - ₍₂₎ Most of our computers are networked together
 - ₍₃₎ Some of our computers are networked together
 - ₍₄₎ None of our computers are networked together
 - ₍₅₎ The question doesn't apply
18. How connected are your staff? *(Please tick the statement below that best describes your situation)*
- ₍₁₎ All our computer-using staff can access our network and e-mail system even if working from home
 - ₍₂₎ All our computer-using staff can access our network and e-mail system, but only when in our office(s)
 - ₍₃₎ Some of our staff use computers that are not on the network and/or do not have e-mail access
 - ₍₄₎ Most or all of our staff use computers that are not on the network and/or do not have e-mail access
 - ₍₅₎ The question doesn't apply
19. Does your organisation have a web site? *(Please tick one)*
- ₍₁₎ Yes, we have our own web site *(Please give the address)*
 - ₍₂₎ We don't, but information about us is on our parent organisation's web site or a community web site
 - ₍₃₎ No, but we plan to get a web site
 - ₍₄₎ No, and we have no plans for a web site
20. Does your organisation use computers in any of the following ways? *(Please tick all that apply)*
- ₍₁₎ Shared electronic diaries, shared calendars and/or a central booking system for meetings or resources
 - ₍₂₎ Client information delivered by computer (such as a self-service information kiosk)
 - ₍₃₎ Face to face client services that make use of computers (such as debt counselling, information or advice that has to be looked up on CD or on the internet)
 - ₍₄₎ Providing ICT training or computer facilities for clients or members of the public
 - ₍₅₎ Producing reports and statistics for your funders and/or trustees
 - ₍₆₎ Computer-based learning by staff
21. Does your organisation use e-mail and the internet in any of the following ways? *(Please tick all that apply)*
- ₍₁₎ Providing services to clients or service users via e-mail
 - ₍₂₎ Using your web site to provide information to clients, service users and other people
 - ₍₃₎ Providing interactive services to clients or service users on your web site (such as discussion forums)
 - ₍₄₎ Buying things (for the business of your organisation) on the internet
 - ₍₅₎ Selling publications or products, taking bookings, or fundraising on your web site
 - ₍₆₎ Communicating with trustees or management committee members by e-mail
 - ₍₇₎ Sharing information among your own staff and trustees by means of an intranet or e-group
 - ₍₈₎ Video conferencing
 - ₍₉₎ Instant messaging
 - ₍₁₀₎ Wikis, blogs or other online collaboration tools
22. Which of the following best describes your approach to ICT skills? *(Please tick the most important one or two)*
- ₍₁₎ We expect staff to work towards a recognised standard, such as the European Computer Driving Licence
 - ₍₂₎ We carry out a regular training needs analysis and ensure it is acted on
 - ₍₃₎ We look at what training is available and decide whether to send anyone
 - ₍₄₎ We are unable to prioritise ICT training
23. In general, how satisfied are you with the ICT skills of your staff and volunteers?
- ₍₁₎ Very satisfied
 - ₍₂₎ Fairly satisfied
 - ₍₃₎ Not very satisfied
 - ₍₄₎ Not at all satisfied

24. Do you think your organisation is using ICT more effectively now than it was two or three years ago?
 (1) Yes, much more (2) Yes, a bit more (3) No, about the same (4) No, we're having more problems

E. Technical issues

25. Thinking about the following technologies, please indicate which of these your organisation uses, which of them you know of, and which you are not sure that you could explain? *(Please tick all that apply)*

Use	Know of	Unsure	
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Linux or open source software
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	An e-mail server
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	A wireless local area network
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	A virtual private network
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	A broadband internet connection (of any kind)
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Voice over IP (or internet telephony)

26. Which of the following precautions do you take against possible computer problems? *(Please tick all that apply)*

Rigorously	Partially	
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Anti-virus protection on all your computers, updated every fortnight or more often
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	A backup routine that runs at least every week
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Passwords that are changed regularly and cancelled when no longer needed
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Encryption of data on laptops that leave the office and other vulnerable machines
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	A firewall to protect all machines that are connected to the internet
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Staff training in security and confidentiality

27. Which of the following steps has your organisation taken or thought about in order to improve the accessibility of its ICT? *(Please tick all that apply)*

Taken	Thought about	
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Getting advice on how to make computers more accessible
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Making modifications so that staff, volunteers or clients can use computers more easily
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Having the accessibility of your web site assessed
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Changing your web site to be more accessible
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Ensuring that people can access your services through a variety of methods
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Other <i>(please describe)</i> :

28. When did your organisation last carry out a health and safety risk assessment for all its computer users?
 (1) This year (2) Last year (3) Before that (4) Never (5) Don't know

F. Contact details

Thank you very much for putting the time and effort into answering these questions.

Please provide the details below so that we can be certain we have correctly matched this reply with your previous one, and so that we can contact you if we need to check any of your answers. We may be able to repeat this survey in another three years or so. If you would prefer NOT to be contacted again, please tick this box:

Organisation:

Contact name:

Phone:

E-mail:

Address:

Please return the questionnaire to: Questionnaire, 22 Stoughton Drive North, Leicester LE5 5UB
 For your replies to be included in our analysis and report we need it back no later than Thursday 8th February 2007.