ICT Hub evaluation

Final report of the independent evaluators
(Covering the whole project: July 2005 – March 2008)

Paul Ticher & Andrea Eaves, April 2008

What could have made the ICT Hub more useful to you?

"Finding out about it earlier.
I cannot believe that such a valuable resource
has lost its funding."

Survey respondent, March 2008

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Notes and acknowledgements

The ICT Hub programme was delivered between July 2005 and March 2008. The first 21 months (July 2005 to March 2007) were under the initial funding agreement, and are referred to in this report as Phase 1. The remaining 12 months were negotiated as an extension, with a heavily-revised business plan, and are referred to as Phase 2. In order to avoid confusion, the quarters of Phase 1 are numbered from Q1 to Q7, those in Phase 2 from Q8 to Q11. For reference, this gives:

Phase 1	Q1	July – September 2005
	Q2	October – December 2005
	Q3	January – March 2006
	Q4	April – June 2006
	Q5	July – September 2006
	Q6	October – December 2006
	Q7	January – March 2007
Phase 2	Q8	April – June 2007
	Q9	July – September 2007
	Q10	October – December 2007
	Q11	January – March 2008

The independent evaluation team was appointed in October 2005 and, from then on, delivered quarterly evaluation reports, as well as a considerable number of individual reports on events and other aspects of the programme. (See Appendix A.)

This report is the final one in the series of quarterly reports. While giving a special emphasis to the final quarter, Q11, it also attempts to sum up the whole project. A similar summary evaluation report was produced at the end of Phase 1.

The evaluation team would like to thank all the staff of the many agencies which delivered parts of the ICT Hub programme for their almost universal enthusiastic support of the evaluation process, and willingness to learn lessons from experience in order to improve their delivery. In particular we would like to thank them for their thoughtful, occasionally challenging, and always constructive comments on evaluation reports as they were produced.

Paul Ticher & Andrea Eaves
April 2008

Part 1 : Executive summary

This report marks the final quarter of the ICT Hub's existence, after nearly three years of effort. It finds that:

- Overall the ICT Hub made considerable progress towards meeting all of its six long-term objectives.
- The ICT Hub delivered the vast majority of its planned outputs, albeit not necessarily to the original timetable.
- Delays in agreeing the funding for Phase 1 meant that the planned 11-quarter programme was effectively delivered in just 9 quarters.
- The quality of the work was generally high, often very high, and with only a few lapses.
- The evaluation team is confident that the ICT Hub's work has had a significant impact on a large number of voluntary organisations throughout the country.
- When asked, over 80% of beneficiaries thought that the ICT Hub programme had been very valuable, worth having, or probably good but too soon to tell.
- The work of the ICT Hub achieved significant immediate benefits for particular organisations
- Many of the outputs contributed considerably to raising quality standards in the delivery of ICT support and information
- Take-up of the programme offered by the ICT Hub demonstrated the need for ICT support of many kinds throughout the country.
- The ICT Hub demonstrated a commendable willingness to take risks.
- The ICT Hub provided good models for the delivery of most of its outputs.
- The ICT Hub demonstrated the benefits (as well as some of the drawbacks) of partnership working
- The ICT Hub identified centres of excellence at both national and regional level.
- It is not possible to carry out a meaningful value for money assessment of the ICT Hub's work.

Among the lessons that can be drawn from the ICT Hub experience, the evaluation team would pick out:

- The delay in decision-making by funders, and the inconsistency and short-term nature of the ICT Hub's funding were serious obstacles to effective planning and diverted energy away from service delivery.
- The management of the ICT Hub was generally good, and the core partners worked hard – and successfully – at building fruitful working relationships.
- Some of the work which was commissioned from agencies outside the ICT Hub's core partners was poorly delivered and posed management problems for the ICT Hub. The reasons for the commissioning were sound, but the commissioning process and management of the commissions did not always succeed in keeping the delivery on track.
- The ICT Hub illuminated, without resolving, some key issues about the balance between local, regional and national ICT support.

Some specific aspects of the ICT Hub's work will clearly endure. Other pieces of work will continue, albeit at a significantly lower scale, while the key leadership role played by the ICT Hub and its central focus will be lost. Some of its impact – perhaps much of it – will be long term.

Part 2 : Main findings

The ICT Hub was a multi-million pound programme which lasted almost three years and was delivered by dozens of organisations and hundreds of staff throughout the country. This section is an attempt to sum up its main achievements, its legacy, and some of the key learning points from the experience.

The evaluation process attempted to look at four aspects of the ICT Hub's work:
- Whether or not it was meeting its long-term objectives.
- Whether or not it was delivering the outputs envisaged in the business plan.
- The quality of the programme, as perceived by participants at events and recipients of products and services.
- The impact of its work.

Objectives

The ICT Hub had six objectives:
1: To increase senior staff, trustees and operational managers' understanding and awareness of the strategic benefits of ICT and to plan its strategic use.
2: To ensure that VCOs have access to a range of national and sub national ICT advice, training and support services.
3: To provide access to different models of ICT support at a sub national level including circuit riders and pro bono initiatives.
4: To increase the range of relevant and affordable private sector products and services through increased understanding of the market place.
5: To ensure funders recognise the critical role and cost benefits of ICT.
6: To increase understanding and awareness of ICT's critical role in providing and receiving services for particular groups including people with disabilities and elderly people.

The summary report at the end of Phase 1 concluded that the ICT Hub was making progress on all six objectives, to a greater or lesser extent. Those on which the least progress had been made were Objectives 4 and 5. The business plan for Phase 2 kept the same objectives but restructured the programme based on lessons learned and gaps identified during Phase 1. The conclusion of the evaluation team therefore remains the same: the ICT Hub has made creditable progress on all its objectives, including, after Phase 2, Objectives 4 and 5.

Outputs

Outputs in Phase 2 are reported on in section 4.1, in terms of the six objectives, while those from Phase 1 are shown in Appendix A.

From these tables it can be seen that the ICT Hub delivered the vast majority of its planned outputs, albeit not necessarily to the original timetable. Where the full programme was not delivered, this was generally for one of three reasons:
- Planned events being cancelled for lack of take-up. In a few cases this could be partly attributed to short notice given by the ICT Hub.
- Changed circumstances requiring the business plan to be revised.
- Failure to deliver by some of the agencies commissioned to provide specific parts of the programme – despite the ICT Hub's best efforts to manage these pieces of work.

In a programme of this size it is inevitable that things will go wrong, and it is to the ICT Hub's credit that in fact so much of the programme was delivered exactly as originally envisaged.

Quality

The independent evaluation team was involved throughout the whole ICT Hub programme (with the exception of a few pieces of work right at the beginning) and, where possible, obtained information directly from beneficiaries. The quality of the work was generally high, often very high, and with only a few lapses. On the whole these were in the early days, lessons were learned, and the difficulties overcome. Quality is reported on throughout this report, where data is available.

Impact

It was acknowledged from the outset that the evaluation team would be hard pressed to verify the full impact of the ICT Hub's work. This is partly because the changes are likely to be slow – and many may still be in progress. It is also partly because there are so many potential steps in the chain, and so many other possible influences, that it is hard to say for certain exactly what contribution the ICT Hub made in many (though not all) cases. The effect of input from the ICT Hub may be large or small, crucial or contributory, and possibly conveyed by one or more intermediary organisations. It is likely that in many cases even the organisation itself would be unaware of how much impact the ICT Hub had had.

Despite this, participants at all events were asked to estimate what effect they felt the event would have on their organisation, and data on direct interventions provided by, or through the agency of, the ICT Hub was also considered. This information gives the evaluation team confidence that the ICT Hub's work has had a significant impact on a large number of voluntary organisations throughout the country.

Beneficiary views

As part of the evaluation programme, participants at some of the key events during Q11 were asked their views on the ICT Hub as a whole, in addition to their evaluation of the individual event. This feedback is from people who had chosen to participate in an event, and is likely to be heavily influenced by their impressions of that event; it is by no means an objective view of the ICT Hub programme as a whole. However, the responses are encouraging. From the total of 161 responses, the data is:

Now that the ICT Hub is nearing the end of its current work programme, what do you think of its contribution overall (including the web site, publications and other training as well as this event)?

Excellent, a very valuable programme 36%
A good programme, worth having 30%
Probably good, but it's really too soon to tell 16%
Some good bits, some not so good 6%
Probably not worth it, but it's too soon to tell 2%
A complete waste of money and effort 0%
Don't know 9%

Many of the additional comments they gave were also positive – including the one quoted at the head of this report, which is typical of many. This quick straw poll gives additional support to the overall view of the evaluation team that the ICT Hub was a valuable and worthwhile programme.

2.1 What was delivered

Despite numerous obstacles (discussed below), the ICT Hub delivered:

- **Conferences** – generally aimed at management, and covering a range of topics appropriate to the specific audience. Over 1,700 people attended 21 events.
- One-day or half-day briefings and training **events** on a range of specific ICT-related topics – 1,879 people at 77 events.
- A series of over 40 regional events, with more than 520 delegates.
- Printed **publications** (22 in total), distributed at no charge (and most also available to download as PDFs) on ICT management issues and on accessibility.
- A **web site** with publicity for ICT Hub activities, articles about ICT, and links to relevant other sites, including the ICT Hub Knowledgebase and Suppliers' Directory. This was supported by a monthly electronic **newsletter**, with 6,000 subscribers, mainly constructed around links to material on the web site.
- The **Knowledgebase** – a continually-growing and updated repository of answers to specific ICT questions, and longer articles.
- The **Suppliers' Directory**, containing details of suppliers recommended as having provided good service to voluntary sector organisations.
- An enhanced **volunteer matching** service from iT4 Communities, providing experts from the ICT industry to carry out *pro bono* work for some 300 voluntary organisations.
- A range of **accessibility** services from AbilityNet, raising awareness of how to make ICT more accessible and providing practical assistance.
- Promotion of the concept of **circuit riders**, direct support for active circuit riders and other local ICT support and development workers, and the beginnings of a debate on quality standards and training for this role.
- A limited programme of **small grants** to support local ICT initiatives identified as having significant spin-off benefits.
- A programme of **exchange visits** (31 in all) where managers with an ICT concern could obtain peer support from other voluntary organisations.
- A **research** programme which produced publications on a range of topics.
- **Regional** programmes for the development of support on accessibility and wider ICT issues. (These are discussed in more detail in a separate section below.)
- A range of **commissioned work** on open source, new media and with specialist infrastructure agencies such as with the Hospice movement and the Arts.

It should be noted that, although the ICT Hub programme technically lasted nearly three years (11 quarters), the funding package for Phase 1 was not agreed until October 2005. As a result the full complement of staff was not in post until January 2006 and these outputs were therefore delivered, effectively, in not much more than two years.

2.2 Achievements

Many of the outputs listed above achieved **significant immediate benefits for particular organisations**. This can be seen most clearly in those service delivered directly to a specific organisation, such as AbilityNet's accessibility services, the iT4C volunteers, or the exchange visits. However, evaluations of the conferences and training events, for example, also indicate that at many of them some people went away with the information, enthusiasm and inspiration they needed to make dramatic changes to the way their organisation uses and thinks about its ICT.

Many of the outputs contributed considerably to **raising quality standards** in the delivery of ICT support and information. The publications, for example, have been highly praised and widely distributed, and the Knowledgebase is also highly regarded. The work on circuit riders also appears likely to make a long-term contribution.

The take-up of the programme offered by the ICT Hub **demonstrated the need** for ICT support of many kinds throughout the country. Towards the end of the programme, most users contacted by the evaluation team indicated that the ICT Hub programme had been valuable, and that they would like to have seen it continue.

The ICT Hub demonstrated a commendable **willingness to take risks**. Two areas in particular show this: the regional champions (Accessibility Champions in Phase 1, Regional ICT Champions in Phase 2) and nurturing of small grass-roots innovations through the pump-priming fund and the unmet need fund. The lessons and outcomes deserve wider dissemination, whether they worked well or – as is the nature of risk-taking – whether they didn't.

The ICT Hub provided **good models** for the delivery of most of its outputs. Over the three years of the programme, lessons were learned and acted on, so that the quality of what was delivered, where this can be assessed, improved over the period. Many of the activities the ICT Hub undertook will be continued, albeit at a significantly lower level, either by ICT Hub partner organisations or by others, and it would be good to think that they would pick up on some of these lessons, rather than having to learn the same things over again.

In addition, the ICT Hub demonstrated the benefits (as well as some of the drawbacks – see below) of **partnership working** — in particular through the cross-fertilisation of ideas and expertise, and the ability to deliver a coordinated programme.

The ICT Hub identified **centres of excellence** at both national and regional level. Much of the programme was delivered by organisations with a specific expertise, and/or enthusiasm for ICT, and those that did well should continue to be promoted.

Value for money

It was the evaluation team's intention to attempt a value-for-money exercise on the key parts of the ICT Hub's work. However, after serious investigation this proved to be impossible for two reasons: lack of comparators for benchmarking, and the difficulty of identifying impact sufficiently clearly to place a value on it.

What the ICT Hub was attempting had no serious parallel in the voluntary sector. The breadth of its provision, and its ambition to change the way ICT is regarded in the sector had not been tried on anything like that scale before, or in such a concentrated way. The nearest comparator, which might have provided some potential for bench-marking, was the government's ICT support for small business. This, however, was delivered in such a different way that realistic benchmarking was not feasible.

As has been pointed out above, the evaluation team had identified from the outset that it would be almost impossible to attribute a causal link between many of the ICT Hub's outputs and the ultimate changes in the target voluntary organisations.

If it is impossible to identify the effects precisely, it is impossible even to begin putting a value on them, and therefore impossible to judge the value for money from the ICT Hub's input. However, it is worth pointing out that many thousands of voluntary organisations received some kind of benefit from the ICT Hub, and that the average cost of this support was in the low hundreds of pounds per organisation. Given that this would probably buy less than one day of a commercial consultant's time, the likelihood that it represents good value for money must be high.

2.3 Challenges and lessons

Most of the programme that was actually delivered was of at least satisfactory, and usually good or very good standard. There were, however, difficulties which led to a few parts of the planned programme not being delivered, and other aspects of the process which could have been improved.

While there are lessons here for any future attempt to replicate the work of the ICT Hub, it is worth pointing out that many of the problems were external and related in particular to the process by which funding decisions were made. It would be encouraging – although probably unduly optimistic – to feel that those entrusted with disbursing public funds could also learn lessons for the future from this experience.

Funding

The history of the ICT Hub's funding is far to complex to go into in detail. However, several key factors stand out:

- For a programme of this size, the funding was much too short term. Many of the planned outcomes required, unavoidably, a long lead-in that involved building relationships between the partners and then detailed planning before delivery could begin. For some parts of the programme there was an additional stage of preparing tender documents and then commissioning a delivery agency. The initial two-year programme was barely long enough to allow this to take place, and the one-year extension was without question not long enough.
- In addition to this, the funding decisions for the first and second phases, as well as for a possible third phase, were delayed – in most cases beyond the putative start of the delivery programme.
- Not only were the decisions delayed, but also the criteria for funding changed – often several times – even while the decisions were being made. This required business plans to be redrawn, and prevented any meaningful advance planning. The change of emphasis between the first and second phases was particularly unfortunate, in that many existing programmes had to be dropped and new ones quickly put in their place because of the funders' demands. However good the new programmes, the lack of time to plan and deliver them detracted significantly from their effectiveness – a clear case of 'the best driving out the good'.
- The consequence of short-term funding and delayed decision-making was, inevitably, that the ICT Hub was faced with delivering a full programme in far less than the allotted time. The programme did suffer as a result, with work being inadequately completed, events being cancelled because there was not enough time to advertise them and attract attendance, and a large number of outputs (particularly events and publications) being delivered in a short time so that the potential impact of individual outputs was partially lost.

- A second consequence of the way funding was offered was the amount of time spent by ICT Hub staff in funding negotiations. This did not just involve managers but also, quite properly, those with direct front-line experience of service delivery. The time this required, and the uncertainty generated, took key people away from service delivery activities to far too great an extent.

Management

The management structure for the ICT Hub had to be established, more or less from scratch, once funding had been agreed. Each of the five core partners, and each of the commissioned agencies were responsible for the delivery of specific outputs, using their own internal management. There were three key coordinating and reporting mechanisms.

- The **Steering Group**, comprising senior managers of each of the five core partners and the secretariat, met at least quarterly throughout the project. This Group was responsible for strategic planning and overseeing the delivery of the work. Membership was stable in terms of posts, although the actual personnel attending did change on account of senior staff changes in of the core partners (iT4C just as the work programme was starting, AbilityNet mid-way through and NAVCA early in Phase 2).
- The **Operations Team** included programme delivery staff from the core partners and key commissioned agencies, and played an important coordinating role, especially where activities related to each other. The Team met ten times a year and attendance varied, depending on the demands of the work.
- The **Advisory Group**, met roughly quarterly, and was appointed by the ICT Hub to represent a range of views and regional interests. Membership fluctuated and attendance was not good. The **Chair** of the Advisory Group, however, played an important role in supporting the ICT Hub secretariat.

Most Steering Group and occasional Operations Team and Advisory Group meetings were observed by the evaluation team.

The first two of these structures worked extremely well. Despite coming from organisations with different backgrounds and priorities, the members of both groups did work as a partnership, and there was genuine team-work between staff of different organisations. Problems and disagreements that did, inevitably, arise were dealt with in a mature and constructive way. This demonstration of the potential for effective partnership working is an important outcome of the ICT Hub experience.

The Advisory Group did not work well. It was set up because of the insistence of the funders that unsuccessful bidders for the ICT Hub work should be involved in an advisory capacity. It was therefore inevitably affected by conflicts of interest, and there was a lack of supportive commitment by some members. Because the ICT Hub was committed by its funding agreement to deliver the outputs specified in its business plan, the potential effect of the Advisory Group on the current programme was always going to be small, and its input into future planning was undermined by the ever-changing funding position (discussed above). This meant that its views and recommendations were often over-taken by events before they could have an effect.

Objectives, planning & strategy

Much of the ICT Hub's Phase 1 programme was based around the expertise of the original core partners. Where the original strategy had identified needs which the

core partners did not have the skills or experience to meet, they recruited or commissioned additional organisations to fill the gaps.

This approach had a number of consequences, good, bad and neutral:
- Because the programme was largely based on existing expertise and activities, it was able to get off to a faster start than would have been the case if everything had had to be set up from scratch.
- Being delivered by established organisations, the programme had greater credibility from the start.
- However, this credibility derived largely from the specific partner organisation's reputation, and there was an understandable tension between building on this reputation and establishing a reputation for the ICT Hub as a separate entity. All the partners – with good reason, as events turned out – needed to retain their individual identity, in the event that the ICT Hub did not continue.
- Although the ICT Hub worked hard to establish its brand, it was some time before this was applied consistently to all its outputs, and most outputs (with the notable exception of the large conferences and the commissioned publications) were, in effect, provided *through* the ICT Hub, rather than *by* it.

By Phase 2, things had changed – partly in response to the expressed wishes of the funders – and the ICT Hub had also identified additional needs which its core members did not have the expertise to meet. A higher proportion of the Phase 2 work therefore had to be commissioned from other delivery agencies. Commissioning brought its own problems (discussed below), and the outcome was not wholly satisfactory.

This is a good illustration of how 'the best drives out the good'. The intention of delivering a more focused programme and filling additional gaps was admirable. However, the Phase 1 approach may very well have been preferable. Especially in view of the time pressures described above, a better outcome could arguably have been delivered by a continuation of the established programme in which the core partners were, by the end of Phase 1, increasingly demonstrating a very high level of competence.

Commissions

Experience in Phase 1 indicated that there were considerable challenges in delivering a consistent programme via commissioned delivery partners. While the core partners in the ICT Hub developed their relationship, resolved the inevitable differences, and then were able to pull in very much the same direction, it was not possible to draw the commissioned agencies into anything like a similar relationship.

Three major programmes in Phase 1 were commissioned from outside the core ICT Hub members. One of these was a substantial success; the other two were, frankly, disasters. Other, smaller, commissioned pieces of work (including training programmes, research and publications, for example) suffered from essentially similar problems and outcomes, although to a smaller extent: on the whole, small pieces of commissioned work were more likely to be successful (if often delivered late, partly because of delays in the commissioning process itself).

These disasters consisted of agencies not delivering on three counts:
- The quantity of work from some agencies fell short. Assignments were, in some cases, simply not completed.
- The quality of some of the work was poor, to the extent that in some cases the ICT Hub was completely unable to make use of it.
- Work was completed late, and only after considerable chasing.

These failures are wholly the responsibility of the delivery agents. The ICT Hub managers spent considerable amounts of time trying to manage the commissions in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome, but the underlying problem was that the commissioned agencies did not sufficiently share the ICT Hub's ethos and way of working to understand what was required of them or to be committed to delivering it effectively.

Instead of drawing the conclusion that commissioning was an ineffective way of delivering major pieces of work quickly, Phase 2 relied to an even greater extent on commissions. This was not a decision taken arbitrarily. It was partly based on the indications (supported by the results from one of the Phase 1 Unmet Need Fund projects) that working through existing, trusted infrastructure organisations was a better way to reach many groups that had otherwise proved hard to reach.

Again, performance with commissioned work was patchy. While some agencies delivered good pieces of work with acceptable punctuality, others were late and/or of poor quality or not actually delivered at all. The ICT Hub took the view that despite this, much of the commissioned work delivered substantial benefits, both to the infrastructure agencies that were enabled to get involved in ICT support for their constituency and for the groups that the ICT Hub was able to reach as a result.

The evaluation also suffered from the problems with the commissioning process, as the commissioned agencies did not appear to give the same priority to evaluation as the ICT Hub itself did. Much of the data which should have been provided for the evaluation was produced too late to be taken fully into account, and some was not produced at all. (The evaluation team also made a crucial error early in Phase 2, discussed in section 4.4 below, which exacerbated this problem.)

2.4 National/regional/local

An important issue for the ICT Hub was the interplay between national, regional and local activity. This was illuminated, but not really resolved, during the course of the project.

The ICT Hub view was that national infrastructure should only provide information and support if that was the only way to enable it to happen or if it made sense because of economies of scale. This philosophy was not necessarily accepted at regional and local level. What was also an issue was the interplay between regional and local infrastructure and the support between the two levels of infrastructure.

There was a clear determination, from the start, that the ICT Hub programme should be delivered equitably around England, not concentrated in London. There was also a commitment to supporting the development of local ICT initiatives, especially on the Circuit Rider model. The issue was whether outputs should ever be delivered locally

by national organisations, or whether local or regional organisations should always take the lead.

During Phase 1, one of the most visible parts of the programme consisted of training events and conferences delivered in every region, mainly by national organisations. These generally used staff with specialist expertise, and were well received. Because they formed part of a continuing programme, any mistakes made in early events could be ironed out for later ones, so that the quality of the output showed measurable improvements over time.

However, established local and regional agencies made the understandable case that their expertise and breadth of contact locally and in their region was being over-looked and not being taken full advantage of. The regional ICT Hub conferences did make use of local resources where possible, and this illustrates part of the dilemma: the quality of workshops delivered by local organisations was far more variable than for those delivered by national ones. Which is better: to bring in national experts, who then leave, or to use local people who may be (but by no means always are) less polished, but who stay around to build on the contacts and relationships made at the event?

Some outputs clearly ought to be done at the national level. For reasons of economies of scale it is only worth funding one Knowledgebase, one Suppliers' Directory, one set of top quality nationally-available publications on specialist ICT topics. Equally clearly, where a centre of excellence exists, its expertise should be made available nationally: AbilityNet, iT4C, the Media Trust and the Telephone Helplines Association, for example, have all earned the right to be regarded as centres of excellence – but with it goes a responsibility to extend their services as broadly as possible. The ICT Hub made a significant contribution in this direction.

For Phase 2, the emphasis changed. In addition to the proportion of commissioned work increasing, a prominent set of commissions was the network of Regional ICT Champions. This programme experienced some of the same performance, reporting and monitoring problems of other commissioned work, as well as challenging the ICT Hub to accept a larger degree of autonomy from the Regional Champions than in other parts of the programme. As with any national/local relationship, local accountability and responsiveness comes at the potential cost of a loss of consistency from region to region.

2.5 Legacy

Some aspects of the ICT Hub's work will clearly endure: the publications and research will continue to be valuable for years, for example, while the input made by iT4C volunteers, pump priming and other specific support has also made a lasting difference in specific organisations.

Other pieces of work will continue, albeit at a significantly lower scale, either under different funding or by reverting to their previous incarnation, before becoming part of the work of the ICT Hub: this includes much of the work being carried out by Lasa on circuit riders, Knowledgebase and the Suppliers' Directory, the work of iT4C and AbilityNet, and the work of Regional ICT Champions, now being funded through

NAVCA. (See details below.) All of these have received a considerable boost through their involvement with the ICT Hub, whose influence will therefore continue to be felt.

Some of the 'soft' outputs will also leave their mark: the contribution made by the ICT Hub to increased awareness and confidence among managers wanting their organisations to make the best possible use of ICT, the quality standards, and the cross-fertilisation of ideas.

However, what appears likely to be lost is the central focus which the ICT Hub has started to provide: a forum for discussion on where ICT is going in the voluntary sector, an opportunity to introduce new concepts – the work on Web 2.0 and open source, for example – to a much wider audience, and a trusted link between non-technical people and the world of specialist ICT knowledge.

Details

As has been discussed above, much of the ICT Hub's output built on successful work previously undertaken by the core partners. In general, these will revert back to their originating organisation, while some other ICT Hub services will also continue:

- NCVO will have a small ICT service, offering:
    - A web site, with the current content and functionality, rebranded from 1 July 2008 as an NCVO resource. All ICT Hub addresses and links in publications will continue to work as they do now, until at least 1 October 2008, redirected as necessary. From October, if NCVO is unable to maintain them, Lasa will have first refusal on the relevant domains.
    - The e-newsletter.
    - An annual ICT conference.
    - Three ICT seminars per year.
    - The ICT Hub HelpDesk, since the number has been widely publicised, for at least a year. However, calls will be signposted to the NCVO HelpDesk.
    - The majority of the publications, free to download, but with a charge for printed versions of those for which NCVO was responsible.
    - Reports on the commissioned work and evaluation, on the new web site.
    - Campaigns on ICT issues.
    - A paid-for service to funders.

- Lasa will offer:
    - The Knowledgebase, at least until 30 June 2008, with a new web address. If resources allow, the Knowledgebase will be continued indefinitely.
    - The Suppliers' Directory, also at least until 30 June 2008, with a new web address.
    - Support for Circuit Rider training and accreditation, and development of the Circuit Rider concept, which has been funded for three years under a Big Lottery Basis grant, for work in London. The lessons learned will be disseminated widely.
    - An annual Circuit Rider conference.

- iT4C will continue to provide volunteer matching, supported by the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists. It is not clear whether funding will allow the service to be provided at its current level after the end of 2008.

- AbilityNet will continue to distribute its guides, and the kit it provided to Accessibility Champions is still available in the regions. Its main voluntary sector activity will be a regional programme, working through community partners, to assist individuals in voluntary organisations, funded by the Big Lottery.

- NAVCA has received funding to continue the Regional ICT Champion programme for three years, albeit at a lower level.

Part 3 : Final quarter (January – March 2008) summary

This quarter saw a considerable delivery programme as the planning that had been carried out in the previous two quarters finally came to fruition. Outputs included:

- The third national ICT Hub conference
- The third national Circuit Rider conference
- Four sectoral conferences
- Ten training seminars on telephony
- Over forty regional events, many in collaboration with umbrella groups in 'hard to reach' fields
- Five new publications
- Seven exchange visits
- Five Unmet Need Fund project completions
- Fourteen Pump Priming Fund completions

plus the continuation of existing programmes including provision from iT4C (volunteer matching), AbilityNet (web accessibility testing), Lasa (Circuit Rider training and accreditation, Knowledgebase and Suppliers' Directory), and NCVO (web site, e-mail newsletter and publications distribution).

Much of the work was commissioned and, while the rationale for this has already been discussed, it did mean that delivery was crammed into a much shorter time than would have been ideal. Also, relationships had to be built between the ICT Hub and the infrastructure organisations through which 'hard to reach' groups were in fact reached, before concrete planning could take place. This process took somewhat longer than had been anticipated.

It is a tribute to the hard work of all involved that so much was achieved. Nonetheless, delivery did fall short in a number of areas. The Open Source work was the most obvious casualty, while several of the events programmes succeeded in running fewer events than planned, due to lack of take-up. The pressure of time, because of the need to complete all the work before the end of March, may well have contributed to some events being insufficiently publicised or organised at too-short notice.

Much of the energy of the ICT Hub Steering Group during the quarter was absorbed, firstly with the uncertainty over future funding, and whether there would be any funded wind-down period, and then with organising the smoothest possible transition to the post-Hub world. Thanks to some considerable effort, a relatively high proportion of the ICT Hub's activities will be able to continue in some form, although generally with reduced and uncertain funding.

Given all this, it is unsurprising that generating evaluation data was not high on most people's priorities. Most of the data did eventually arrive, but some very much at the last minute. This report is based on all the information to hand at the time of writing.

Part 4 : Evaluation of outputs

4.1 Overview of activities & outputs

This quarter saw delivery of almost the whole year's programme of events and other commissioned activities, as well as a continuation of the work of Regional Champions and the established programmes from Lasa, iT4C and AbilityNet.

The main impression has been of a commitment to deliver as many of the planned outputs as possible, even though much of the work was having to be crammed into a far shorter time than originally intended. There is no evidence that the quality of output suffered as a result, although attendance at events was generally lower than the target (and some events were cancelled because of low take-up). Where commissioned work failed to be delivered, it is possible that this could have been remedied if more time had been available to the programme managers, although it does seem in some cases – the open source work being one of the main examples – that no amount of management attention would have succeeded in producing the desired outcomes.

The situation at the end of Q11 relating to Phase 2 activities is shown below, to the best knowledge of the evaluation team. For Phase 1 details see Appendix A.

Objective 1: To increase senior staff, trustees and operational managers' understanding and awareness of the strategic benefits of ICT and to plan its strategic use

		Outputs during Q11 and/or position at end of Q11	
1	national ICT Hub Conference	This was held on 11 March and has been separately evaluated	NCVO
4	sub sectoral ICT Hub Conferences	Three conferences – all separately evaluated – took place, for organisations working in the field of: • Older people's services (22 November) • Arts (13 February) • Mental Health (22 February) A planned youth event was cancelled due to low bookings	NCVO
3	specialist infrastructure Conferences	All 3 events took place in Q11: • Rural (5 Mar) • BME (28 Jan & 26 Feb)	NCVO
8	articles in sector press demonstrating value of ICT	7 articles published	NCVO
12	ICT Hub newsletters	Total 10 newsletters, including 2 this quarter 6061 subscribers at end Q11	NCVO
4	bursaries for vcos	1 took place in Phase 2	NCVO
8	case studies demonstrating learning and benefits of ICT	Case studies completed and on ICT Hub web site	NCVO
	Promoting ICT as a workforce development issue	Promotion at the launch of the research in November 2007	NCVO
1	hub web site / discussion forums	Core web site has received 24,103 visits this quarter, and an average of 6,271 unique visitors/month.	NCVO
1	Good ICT Governance Guide	Published in March & distributed at National Conference	NCVO
1	ICT Good management Guide	Print version published Q9. Online version now available on website	NCVO
4	Foresight reports	4th report published, 'ICT Foresight: How ICT is Shaping the Future Design and Delivery of Public Services'. All available on website.	NCVO
	Marketing and promotional materials	Complete	NCVO

Objective 2: To ensure that VCOs have access to a range of national and sub national ICT advice, training and support services

4 Training events reaching 40 generalist infrastructure agencies	35 delegates attended 4 workshops	NAVCA
Working in partnership with infrastructure agencies to further develop the Suppliers Directory	Ongoing through Regional Champions' sub-regional events, backed by flyers available from NAVCA. Validation process still in progress – staff turnover makes future of this task uncertain.	NAVCA
Advice and guidance for new providers of ICT support and pump priming fund	Total of 14 projects in all 9 regions funded through Pump Priming project. (£45,000) 11 projects have submitted final reports – details in section 4.9	NAVCA
Unmet need fund	21 applications received with 5 successful projects awarded funding. - SPAN Virtual Local Group Project £10,170 - Future Prospects £9,050 - Digital Umbrella £13,972 - Age Concern Stockport £5,519 - VOSCUR £10,216 All projects completed and reports submitted – details in section 4.11	NAVCA
Regional ICT Champions	From 1 April 2008, the Regional Champions project will continue to be managed by NAVCA, but funded directly by Capacitybuilders. Exercise completed to assess all Regional Champions' progress reports against original objectives; One network meeting held this quarter, in March. *Selected achievements from their Q11 reports are listed below.*	NAVCA
• North East	- The Circuit Riders project started on 1 March 2008. - A new website was launched. - A new on-line regional suppliers directory has been launched. - E-bulletins have been revamped. - A great ICT training survey has been undertaken.	VONNE
• North West	- Collaboration with 5 Counties to include evidenced ICT needs of the VCS within the strategic plan for the region. - Work with national organisations and excluded groups. - Train the Trainer courses for experienced ICT Workers to enable them to deliver "What to tell groups about ICT" courses in their localities.	GMCVO
• Yorkshire & the Humber	- Maintained connected position within the region – already being asked to do personal mentoring on ICT for senior managers in Regional positions. - The blog was further developed as a springboard for ICT in the VCS and the basis for presentations. It is updated on a daily basis. - Related work was integrated with champion work – e.g. Corporate day, Faiths Conference, Social Enterprise Research.	Electro-ville

•	West Midlands	• Case made for including a Champion role in the region's business plan and strategies for 2008-11. • CRM database group has grown in interest, with Regional Champion support. • Nine accidental techie type sessions delivered, one per sub region. • National hub events publicised and attended where possible • ICT Support and advice to frontline organisations is playing an increasing part of the ICT Champion role as more promotion is carried out.	Com-munity First
•	East Midlands	• Recruitment of IT Development Role in Lincs • Input of ICT needs into Regional Meta Plan • Funding secured and commitment from East Midlands Single Platform to provide administration • Co-ordinating a region-wide IT development work bid to Capacity Builders' Improving Reach programme	High Peak CVS
•	East of England	• Able to visit various consortia throughout region. • Working with 2 sub regional groups on setting up of ICT support projects (Beds and Herts) • Joint working with other regional champions sharing resources and knowledge	Advice For Life
•	London	• Commissioned to deliver workshops on ICT Hub resources to BMER, Arts, Homelessness, and Hospices infrastructure conferences • Engaged with new national support services at Capacity Builders 'Joined Up' conversation event (among other events attended) • Held first network meeting of London circuit riders • 25 blog posts, 3,026 page views from 1,358 unique visitors	Lasa
•	South East	• ICT Strategy prepared and consultation started • Workshops run in various locations • More work with consortium coordinators about priorities • Databases workshop well attended	SCIP
•	South West	• Draft regional ICT strategy is now being produced following workshops and IDP meeting. • All 11 sub-regions now included in mapping exercise and revisits planned for next quarter. • Connecting SW meetings have influenced regional ICT research being carried out by SWRDA to ensure inclusion of third sector in research. • Rural ICT conference was a great success with good representation from the region.	Cosmic
9	exchange visits for specialist ICT infrastructure	Visits are based on recommendations from the Regional Champions. See details in report below. Seven visits took place this quarter Total of 14 visits have taken place in Phase 2.	NAVCA
1	ICT Hub HelpDesk	46 e-mails and 179 calls in Q11 Total enquiries to date Phase 2: 722	NCVO
	Funding Directory	Being updated and developed – available in June.	NCVO
	Suppliers Directory	All regions have supplier entries. All technology and service categories are covered. See section 4.3.	Lasa
	Knowledgebase of good practice materials – 50 new articles	6 new articles published this quarter and 10 revised (checked & amended). Total of 62 new articles in Phase 2. For other statistics see section 4.3.	Lasa
	Accreditation system for suppliers	Accreditation standards for suppliers complete and published on Lasa web site. More comprehensive reference requests now in place and operating.	Lasa

Commissioned work on telephony			NCVO
	Report on existing telephony options	Completed	NCVO
8	regional Telephony sessions for VCO managers	Seven events ran during January 2008	NCVO
	Target 30 telephony suppliers for Directory	All delegates from training programmes are being informed of the Suppliers Directory and the application process	NCVO
2	'Train the Trainers' for Regional Champions	These events did not run	NCVO
3	Good Telephony Guides (VCOs, Suppliers, Funders)	Published in March 2008	NCVO
	Case Studies	4 Case studies incorporated in Telephony Guide.	NCVO
8	Training events for IT Support Workers – 16 participants each	Delivered training to Circuit Riders through Circuit Rider Conference in February 2008. Nine regional events scheduled: three ran, during January 2008.	NCVO
Commissioned work on FOSS (Free & Open Source Software)		Entire project delayed due to capacity/personnel issues at partner delivery agent. Reviewed by ICT Hub and most deliverables dropped from project.	NCVO
	Mapping FOSS network & LUGs	10 groups identified nationally and in constant discussion through project wiki. Lists of suppliers & user groups produced	NCVO
1	article/month in Regional Newsletters	Some, but not all, articles submitted	
1	article/month in Hub newsletter	Some, but not all, articles submitted	
	Increased OS suppliers/Linux experts on Suppliers' Directory	10 successfully added out of 25 submissions to Lasa.	
9	Regional training sessions for IT Support workers	These events were not delivered	
	FOSS certification scheme	Not completed	
	FOSS training toolkit	Not completed	
	FOSS discussion forum & wiki	Wiki set up and well used as a store for documentation and discussion. Has since been removed as was primarily a promotional tool at start of project.	
	Linux qualification for techies	Not completed	
	Foss Business Case / leaflet	Published March 2008	
2	FOSS Case Studies	Case studies submitted	
Commissioned work on New Media			NCVO
	Online Advice Service	Discussion forum actively used, with 117 visitors to date	
	New Media Discussion forum	As above	
12	Case studies	Produced and collated in the 'How to use new media' guide, published in March 2008	
6	Good Practice Briefings	Completed	

4	Hub Newsletter articles	Articles submitted around ICT Hub's marketing themes each month, and also sent to Regional Champions	
	New Media .pdf booklet	Completed and published in March 2008.	
	New Media suppliers in directory	Directory promoted at over 100 events in Phase 2, with delegates from all training events receiving hub flyer.	
Commissioned work on reaching hardest to reach groups • Dissemination of ICT Hub materials • Workshops • New Briefing & Info sheets • 2x Case studies			NCVO
	Arts	Repackaging and distribution of materials completed; new briefing sheets completed; 16 half day events run	
	LGBT	Consultation completed; 5 one day events run	NCVO
	Hospices	Survey and consultation completed; 4 one day events run	NCVO
	Homeless	Survey and consultation completed; 3 one day events run	NCVO
	Faith	Consultation and networking carried out by Regional Champions in six regions; at least 8 one day events run	NCVO
	BME	Survey and consultation completed; 4 one day events run	NCVO

Objective 3: To provide access to different models of ICT support at a sub national level including circuit riders and pro bono initiatives

	Development of circuit rider standards through 6 publications	Advisory Group met in November 2007. Draft publication on circuit rider standards received in April, with publication now expected for May. Circuit Rider principles developed and agreed. Individuals and organisations continue to sign up (number unknown).	Lasa
	Development of accredited training for circuit riders (modules for accidental techies)	Circuit Rider training for 18 refugee and asylum seekers (6 ½-day sessions over 6 weeks in November and December). Reran training for 10 more asylum seekers in January. Held 'Effective Technology Advising' training session 1 March – 21 booked, 15 attended – and ran sessions at CR Conference on training & skills with LVSC. Attended meeting of London CR Forum	Lasa
1	national circuit rider conference	Conference held in Birmingham, 28–29 February 2008 with 71 delegates (target 75)	Lasa
12	circuit rider mentoring sessions	Training/mentoring of 28 refugee/asylum seeker trainees completed.	Lasa
4	circuit rider news digest	Fifth issue circulated March.	Lasa

123	organisations assisted by an IT volunteer	Total projects completed Q11: 35 against target of 36
		
		    Year to date (FY 07-08) 114 against target of 123.
		
		New projects started in Q11: 65 against target of 47.
		
		    Year to date (FY 07-08) 188 against target of 157.
			IT4C

608	opportunities for IT Volunteers registered	New volunteer opportunities in Q11: 173 against target of 173. Year to date (FY 07-08) 579 against target of 608.	IT4C
746	registrations by new IT volunteers	New volunteers registered in Q11: 216 against target of 237. Year to date (FY 07-08) 702 against target of 747. Total of 5,079 volunteers registered with iT4C.	IT4C
12	companies working activity to promote IT volunteering	12 in total (inc: Ford, Barclays, Microsoft, Betfair, Serco, Vocalink, Bruce Clay, WIT, BCS, Erudine, CPHC, Girl Geeks)	IT4C
8	volunteering case studies	22 Case studies in total for 07 – 08 (avail on IT4C website)	IT4C
	Training materials on IT volunteering for other agencies	Full workshop materials available online http://www.it4communities.org.uk/it4c/open/charity/resources/mbufis.html	IT4C
	Updated good practice including risk management	Website materials up to date (and under review)	IT4C

Objective 4: To increase the range of relevant and affordable private sector products and services through increased understanding of the market place

3	corporate involvement seminars/ briefings for corporate sector	2 events ran in Q11	NCVO
	Shared systems infrastructure report	This has been finalised and will be available on the web.	NCVO
5	reports on products that assist VCOs in their work	Full report published March	NCVO

Objective 5: To ensure funders recognise the critical role and cost benefits of ICT

	Pilot service for funders	Research carried out, findings being collated and will be used to inform further work in future	NCVO

Objective 6: To increase understanding and awareness of ICT's critical role in providing and receiving services for particular groups including people with disabilities and elderly people

2	ICT Hub accessibility champions networking events	This is complete and was reported on in Q9.	AbNet
	Support of accessibility champions April 07 to Sept 07	This is complete and has been evaluated.	AbNet
	Support of ICT Hub champions Oct 07 to March 07	All champions have been offered support, training and demonstration of remote facilities.	AbNet
	40 Web site accessibility overviews (10 per quarter)	40 have been completed .	AbNet

ICT Hub summary statistics from July 2005

	Q1 – Q7*	Q8 – Q10	Q11	Total
Hub conferences				
Number of events	13	1	7 +	21
Delegates	1,310 +	35	356 +	1,701
Hub networking meetings				
Number of events	24	6	+	30 +
Delegates	388 +			388 +
Hub training seminars				
Number of events	62	5	10	77
Delegates	1,709	107 +	81	1,879
Regional events				
Number of events			41 +	41 +
Delegates			522 +	522 +
Hub Web site: Total visitors	64,025	77,247	24,103	165,375
Unique visitors/month			6,271	
Knowledgebase: Total visits	110,434	245,887	92,197	448,518
Unique Visitors/month			27,576	
Hub HelpDesk Users	811	497	225	1,533
Hub Newsletter subscribers	5,598	5,925	6,061	6,061
Publications & research reports issued	13	4	5	22
Ukriders e-mail list registered users	366	370		370
Exchange Visits	18 visits / 38 orgs	6 visits / 12 orgs	7 visits 14 orgs	31 64 orgs
Pump priming fund			14 projects	14 projects
Unmet need fund			5 projects	5 projects
Volunteer opportunities	453	410	173	1,036
ICT Volunteers registered	1,369	518	216	2,103
Volunteer projects complete	172	80	35	287
Web accessibility testing	152	38	2	192
* For more detailed data on Phase 1 see the report issued at the end of Q7.				

Note that definitive data for some events – and some other activities – that took place in Q11 could not be obtained by the evaluation team in time to be included in this report. The data is reported here as accurately as it has been possible to make it within the time available. Where data is (or may be) missing this is indicated; no estimate of the missing data has been made.

4.2 The events programme

Delivery of programme

From famine to feast. After three quarters in which very few events were delivered, Q11 saw a massive programme throughout the country, much of it delivered under commissions.

A total of six conferences and at least 44 other events was held. Unfortunately, the programme was condensed into such a short time that a number of problems arose:
- Some events had to be cancelled because of low take-up.
- Some events that did run attracted disappointingly few participants.

- Some events were organised at such short notice that it was not possible to issue evaluation forms for them.
- Much of the programme was exceedingly fluid until very late in the day, so that evaluation forms were issued for events which then had their dates and/or venues changed.
- The naming of events was also fluid, so that it was sometimes difficult to keep track of which event related to which programme.
- Many event organisers were late in returning their evaluation forms, and often did not report additional information such as the total number of attendees.
- Many event organisers did not return evaluations at all, and it is not known whether evaluation forms were used or not.

In addition, because most events were run by commissioned agencies, some had their own preferences for evaluation and either neglected to use the ICT Hub forms at all or ran their own as well, which appears to have reduced the response rate.

As far as can be ascertained, the data is as follows:

Event or programme	Number planned	Number held	Attendance (delegates)	Number evaluated
National conference	1	1	117	1
Circuit rider conference (2 days)	1	1	71	1
Sector conferences	4	3	117	1
Rural infrastructure conference	1	1	51	0
BME infrastructure conferences	2	3		0
Arts regional events (½ days)	N/s	16	150	8*
BME regional events	N/s	4	55	0
Regional faith events (North East)	4	3	23	3
Regional faith events (East of England)	N/s	1	11	0
Regional faith events (Yorks & Humber)	N/s	1	15	0
Regional faith events (other)	N/s	4	N/k	0
Homelessness regional events	N/s	3	21 + 16 + ?	2
Hospices regional events	N/s	4	140	2
LBGT regional events	N/s	5	91	5
Regional ICT Champion events	N/s	N/k	N/k	12
Talking telephony training	8	7	56	6
Supporting VCOs with telephony	8	3	25	3
Training for generalist infrastructure agencies	4	4	35	0
Telephony training for Regional Champions	2	0		0
Regional FOSS training for ICT support workers	9	0		0
Corporate involvement seminars	3	2	60	0

* Since there was a large overlap between people attending the morning and afternoon sessions, a single evaluation form was used for the whole day at each venue. In effect all these events were evaluated.

'Number planned' is taken from the table in section 4.1. In the case of the regional and 'hard to reach' events, no number of workshops is specified in the business plan. 'Number held' is as reported by the ICT Hub staff member responsible for delivery or overseeing the relevant commission. It is possible that additional unreported events took place. 'Attendance' is based on reports by the organisers or attendance sheets or lists, whichever is available. Where no figure is available, but evaluation forms have been received, the number of evaluation forms is given (in *italics*). Additional

evaluation forms were received from several events, but where the format did not allow comparison with the standard ICT Hub data, these have not been analysed.

The result of all this is that it has so far been impossible to produce a guaranteed accurate tally of the number of events, let alone the number of participants or their views on the events. The data below is provided for those events where evaluation forms were returned, using the ICT Hub format which allows comparisons to be made between events.

Levels of attendance

Levels of attendance had been showing a slight declining trend over the life of the ICT Hub. This continued in Q11, with conferences staying at 70% of target (compared with over 100% in Phase 1. No target attendance was given in the business plan for many of the Phase 2 training events, and the data on some of these events is so incomplete that no realistic calculation is possible. However, there were a number of events cancelled for lack of interest, and several that did go ahead but with participation as low as single figures. This suggests that the pressure to organise and deliver events in too much of a rush did reduce the number of people able to benefit. Many events, however, achieved very respectable attendance rates. A few examples of events where the data is available show the range:

Q11 selected events where firm attendance data is available

Type of event	Number	Attendance range	Average attendance
Hospices regional events	4	20 – 65	35.0
Arts regional events (both parts of the day)	8	N/k – 43	19.6
LBGT regional events	5	8 – 27	18.2
BME events	4	11 – 19	13.8
Regional faith events	5	6 – 15	9.8
Telephony events	10	4 – 14	8.1

Attendance as a proportion of the business plan minimum target (where known)

	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
Conferences	100%*	190%	158%	137%	107%			70%	70%
Training events	85%	101%	91%	87%	69%	76%	84%	65%	N/k

* The conference in Q3 would have exceeded its target if it had not reached the venue's capacity limit.

Quality and impact of events

For those events where evaluation data is available, the indications are that the quality was perhaps slightly below, but generally in line with that from previous ICT Hub events. The rating of nearly 21% 'Exceptional' is similar to that in previous quarters where a similar number of events was run. The first three quarters of Phase 2 (Q8 – Q10) were anomalous, as relatively few events took place. During Q11 the circuit rider conference and the homelessness and arts regional events stand out as having been particularly highly rated.

Overall assessments of events in Q11 (and one conference from Q10)

Event	Events evaluated	Exceptional	Good	OK	Not very good
National conference	1	18%	44%	33%	4%
Circuit rider conference	1	34%	63%		3%
Older people sector conference (Q10)	1	5%	74%	16%	5%
Arts sector conference	1	16%	79%	5%	
Mental health sector conference	1	18%	53%	29%	
Talking telephony	6	18%	83%		
Supporting VCOs with telephony	3	10%	75%	15%	
Faith events in the North-East	3	25%	63%	13%	
Homelessness regional events	2	38%	59%	3%	
Hospices regional events	2	4%	81%	15%	
LBGT regional events	5	12%	74%	12%	1%
Arts regional events	8	34%	53%	11%	2%
Regional ICT Champion events	12	12%	76%	11%	
Total/Average	46	21%	66%	12%	1%

Best and worst event ratings, by quarter

	Exceptional	Less than OK
Q3	6.8%	9 (6.9%)
Q4	15.2%	2 (0.6%)
Q5	23.2%	4 (1.0%)
Q6	23.1%	1 (0.2%)
Q7	21.1%	8 (1.7%)
Q8	31.7%	Zero
Q9	29.4%	Zero
Q10	23.1%	1 (3.8%)
Q11	20.8%	8 (1.3%)

4.3 Web site Knowledgebase and Suppliers' Directory

Figures from this quarter and the results of our user survey reveal that, although the web site is meeting a need for a certain audience it has not achieved the usage levels envisaged. Whether this is result of the actual content, the design or a lack of awareness among potential users is still unclear, and would need to be investigated further.

Core web site

Traffic picked up in January after a dramatic drop in visits and unique visitors in December, but has started to decline again over the past two months as the table below indicates. Average time spent on site has been steadily decreasing over the past few months and is now at just over 2 minutes.

Core ICT Hub web site users, from October 2006

Month	Unique visitors	Visits	Pages	Average time on site
October (2006)	2,779	5,843	29,279	356 sec
November	2,625	6,522	23,231	393 sec
December	2,920	8,509	23,552	423 sec

January (2007)	4,774	9,210	30,076	325 sec
February	4,685	10,549	29,665	339 sec
March	5,181	10,019	28,920	242 sec
April	4,797	7,437	29,987	248 sec
May	6,319	9,178	28,442	235 sec
June	5,787	8,186	23,955	236 sec
July	6,131	8,826	26,795	208 sec
August	5,055	7,618	29,778	249 sec
September	7,146	11,551	34,212	217 sec
October	6,797	11,241	35,803	219 sec
November	6,017	7,538	19,030	134 sec
December	4,446	5,674	14,812	140 sec
January (2008)	6,647	8,806	24,105	138 sec
February	6,407	8,092	22,128	136 sec
March	5,760	7,205	19,361	129 sec

In Q11, the most popular pages following the home page were:
- Jobs Board (1,131)
- Events (763)
- Article: The Great Web Office Experiment (631)
- Publications home page (614)

The jobs board, individual articles and events have been consistently the most popular pages throughout this year. Encouragingly, the site is being used to access and download publications and resources with the 'How to Cost & Fund' being downloaded over 513 times this quarter. The conclusion therefore stands, that the site is being actively used for the purposes intended, but it does now seem to be at a significantly lower level than expected.

Survey into web site use
As part of the second survey of newsletter subscribers, brief questions about the ICT Hub web site were also included. As only 117 out of 6,061 users responded, the sample is insufficient to draw any very firm conclusions, but can be used to gain some insight into current attitudes among those that were interested enough to respond.

The full results of the newsletter and web site survey are reported in a separate document, but a brief summary is provided here. One of the most interesting findings from the survey was that although respondents generally rate the web site highly, with 66% finding it an 'Excellent' or 'Good' resource and fewer than 1% finding it 'Disappointing', a huge majority of participants (81%) claim to use the web site at most only once or twice a month. While this may seem a disappointing result for the ICT Hub, it may also simply reflect the realistic needs of users – managers and occasional techies who get value from the site when they have a specific question, problem or project rather than as an everyday management tool.

Half of the respondents find the web site 'Very well' (12%) or 'Well' (38%) presented with just over 1% finding it difficult or badly designed. Under normal circumstances, the web site team would want to work on improving this figure and this may be something to take into account when the web site is rebranded.

The web site and newsletter have definitely acted as a launch pad to other ICT Hub services, with 48% of survey respondents visiting the Knowledgebase, 27% the Suppliers Directory and 36% a conference or event as a result of visiting the web site.

Comments about the web site and newsletter were on the whole supportive, although there were a few that were less impressed:

"Please find a way to keep it live.. groups in my rural area are beginning to use it more and more as a resource for accessing information and support"

"Excellent web site, but I feel it is under promoted"

"Can be difficult to find information on the web site, once found the information is really useful"

"Generally a very poor and ill conceived resource with information more cogently and coherently presented in the Knowledgebase."

Knowledgebase

The Knowledgebase was evaluated through a questionnaire around the turn of the year and a separate report has been produced. This found that Knowledgebase is performing a useful role, is reaching its target audiences, and is highly regarded by many users, who comprise people both with and without a technical background. Although it regularly receives up to 30,000 visits a month, its core audience is probably between 6,000 and 12,000 people, mainly from the UK, who either use the site regularly or are referred from other sites they have specifically chosen.

The survey attracted a reasonable 135 responses. Half of the respondents find the information irreplaceable or very useful, with a further third finding it useful. This is not entirely surprising, since those who use the Knowledgebase once and find it unhelpful are not likely to return, and the main way in which the survey was advertised was on the Knowledgebase itself. However, the high proportion giving one of the top two ratings is encouraging.

How useful is the information in Knowledgebase?

	Responses	% of valid responses
Irreplaceable - not available, or really hard to find, anywhere else	20	17%
Very useful - may be available, but not so conveniently	38	32%
Useful - solid and reliable, as one source among several	40	34%
Somewhat useful - handy for checking things occasionally	18	15%
Not very useful - only as a last resort	2	2%
None of the above/don't know/no answer	17	

In further confirmation that the Knowledgebase is successfully addressing its target audience, those most likely to rate it 'irreplaceable' or 'very useful' are respondents from voluntary organisations, while statutory and commercial staff, and individuals, are more likely to give lower ratings.

Many users express the hope that the Knowledgebase will continue to be available, following the dissolution of the ICT Hub.

Monthly figures have been reported in previous quarterly reports, and the final tally up to March 2008 is given here for completeness. Note that the reporting tool was

changed from September 2007, and that figures from then onwards for time on site are not comparable with the earlier data.

Usage figures are remarkably consistent from month to month, with average users spending around two minutes on the site (but data not shown in the table indicates that returning visitors – the more regular users – spend much longer on the site).

Knowledgebase usage, July 2006 – March 2008

Month	Unique Visitors	Visits	Average time on site
July 2006	3,810	4,901	276 sec
August	4,676	5,879	269 sec
September	5,783	7,721	239 sec
October	6,384	8,726	283 sec
November	6,860	9,766	279 sec
December	8,847	12,641	271 sec
January 2007	11,938	17,768	273 sec
February	13,562	19,963	251 sec
March	14,726	23,067	258 sec
April	15,626	22,928	245 sec
May	19,262	28,469	221 sec
June	18,826	28,431	252 sec
July	19,865	28,910	245 sec
August	18,300	20,407	276 sec
September	24,547	27,459	114 sec
October	27,833	31,333	120 sec
November	30,219	33,841	116 sec
December	21,711	24,109	113 sec
January 2008	29,260	32,518	110 sec
February	26,128	29,175	116 sec
March	27,341	30,504	111 sec

Separate figures are available for the Discussion Forums. These show a fairly constant pattern of use, with around 800 unique visitors in a typical month. After an understandable dip in December, usage regained its previous level in Q11. Page hits were high for the first six months of 2007, then settled down to around 2,000 – 3,000 a month.

Discussion forum usage, November 2006 – March 2008

Month	Unique visitors	Visits	Pages
November 2006	76	101	404
December	429	623	3,201
January 2007	958	1,358	5,986
February	868	1,344	6,142
March	1,295	2,095	7,714
April	737	1,151	6,029
May	726	1,330	5,601
June	934	1,615	6,417
July	971	1,717	5,100
August	495	654	2,310
September	778	974	2,391
October	839	1,034	3,505
November	816	960	2,411
December	526	605	1,488
January 2008	848	998	2,629
February	824	987	2,857
March	605	698	1,950

Suppliers' directory

Work continues to populate the directory and approve suppliers. All regions have supplier entries and all technology and service categories are covered. However, at the end of Q11, the number of suppliers had fallen to 99 and the number of services to 181. The main reason for this appears to be that all listed providers were required to renew their entry after a year, and many either failed to do so or have not yet completed the process.

Usage has remained high, and apparently growing. However, the lack of renewals does suggest that suppliers may not be getting the response they hoped for – a likelihood supported by the decline in the number of e-mails sent to suppliers via the Directory.

Suppliers' directory key statistics

	Q7 [a]	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
Total live providers	135	161	183	193	99
Total number of services		287	317	413	181
New providers this quarter		22	21	10	12 [c]
Visitor sessions	12,723	8,500	6,159	6,999	5,933
Provider detail page			684	3,867 [b]	5,166 [c]
Web click-throughs	626	580	370	2,837 [b]	3,630 [c]
Provider e-mails			84	57	54 [c]
Notes: a) Q7 was the first complete quarter of operation b) These figures may be artificially inflated, as the suppliers' directory was revamped in November and many suppliers would have visited their own entry to check it. c) These are based on figures for February and March, increased by 50% to give an approximate total for the quarter.					

An additional cause for concern over the Directory is the emergence of local supplier directories supported by Regional ICT Champions. The role envisaged for Regional Champions was that they would promote the Suppliers' Directory, make recommendations for suppliers to be included, and contribute to the vetting of new

applicants from their region. Instead, in some regions at least, they appear to be establishing independent local directories, not linked to the national one. Clearly this is a disappointing trend, and one which undermines the usefulness of the national Directory (without bringing any obvious benefit to the regions, since many suppliers are likely to be able to provide services in more than one region).

Overall, there is not enough evidence to reach a firm conclusion, but the possibility must be high that the Suppliers Directory has not attracted sufficient critical mass. While it is probably achieving its aim of being a reliable source of information about potential suppliers to the voluntary sector, it is not doing this to a sufficient extent to be recognised as the resource to which people will turn as a matter of course when seeking a supplier.

4.4 Regional Champions

The Regional Champions were appointed at the start of Phase 2, each with a set of objectives that covered seven broad topics:
- To help develop regional and sub-regional ICT strategies.
- To participate in a regional ICT network and maintain regional contacts.
- To identify groups suitable for the ICT Hub's pump priming and exchange visit programmes.
- To map sub-regional ICT support and, if relevant, set up sub-regional networks and awareness raising sessions.
- To be supported by AbilityNet to continue to raise awareness of accessibility.
- To identify funding for ICT and potential initiatives with economies of scale.
- To be the ICT Hub presence in the region – for example validating local suppliers for the Suppliers' Directory and liaising with other ICT Hub initiatives.

All Champions reported quarterly on their progress towards each of their objectives. Their work plan was not set out in detail because it was recognised that every region would have different needs, and different histories of ICT support and resource provision.

Because the Regional Champions were, in effect, the regional presence of the ICT Hub, the evaluation team intended to focus heavily on the work of the Regional Champions during Phase2. The original plan was to select two willing and suitable Champions and, through them, contact a pool of voluntary organisations in their region who could feed back from time to time on the impact of the Regional Champion activities. It emerged, however, that this was based on a misunderstanding by the evaluation team of the direct support that was to be provided by the Regional Champions and therefore an over-estimate of the number of front-line voluntary organisations that they would be in touch with. By the time this was plain (after delays from a variety of causes) it was too late to put an alternative plan in place.

Being largely strategic, the work of the Regional Champions faces the same evaluation problem as that of the ICT Hub itself – providing evidence to demonstrate adequately and confidently the impact of their work.

Contribution to core ICT Hub programme

From the data provided, both by the Regional Champions and by other ICT Hub organisations, it is clear that the Champions overall made significant direct contributions to a number of areas of the ICT Hub's programme:

- Several Champions set up, ran or contributed to ICT Hub events, local, regional and national.
- Champions played a crucial role in identifying projects for the Pump Priming fund and exchange visits.
- Champions were a significant distribution channel for ICT Hub publications and other information.

Analysis elsewhere in this report testifies to the quality of all of these ICT Hub outputs – and there is a clear benefit in bringing them closer to a local audience. Evaluation forms were returned from a dozen events set up directly by Regional Champions during Q11 and these, too, were of a comparable quality to other ICT Hub events, being assessed as 'Good' by three quarters of the participants and 'Excellent' by a further 12%.

Regional networks

Other aspects of the Regional Champions' work were specific to their region. They all ran regional networks, drawing in others with an interest in the strategic development or provision of ICT support. These networks were evaluated through an electronic questionnaire which attracted 52 responses from all regions – an average of nearly six per region. (The target response was four or five per region, and only one – South East – attracted fewer than four responses.)

The results are analysed in more detail in the separate evaluation report on the Regional Champions. The key result is that the respondents were overwhelmingly in favour of the regional networking role of Champions.

How valuable are the Regional ICT Network meetings for your work, overall?

Essential..*39%*
Very valuable...*35%*
Quite valuable...*23%*
Not very valuable.......................................*2%*

Clearly, respondents were likely to be those who had engaged with the Regional Champion, but it is encouraging that the highest proportion of the response – over two thirds of respondents – found the Regional Champion's support for networking to be essential. Among other responses, one of the more interesting is that over 80% of respondents reported that they made use of the regional network outside meetings, for exchanging information, collaborating on specific issues and seeking mutual help. Clearly there is an important role here in sustaining these regional networks.

Regional strategy

Over the course of their year of operation, most Regional Champions report contributing successfully to regional strategic planning and in many cases fundraising for regional ICT support initiatives. The likely impact of this work, inevitably, is long-term, making it hard to assess. However, given the downgrading of ICT support in the redrawing of Capacity Builders' priorities, it must be a worthwhile effort.

Integration with the national effort

As discussed above (in section 2.4), there was a marked tension between some of the Regional ICT Champions and the national elements of the ICT Hub. This appears to have stemmed from two main causes: the understandable organisational priority of preserving an existing identity and profile in order to retain options for the future, and a genuine and fundamental disagreement about the role of national support structures against regional and local ones.

This latter issue emerged early on, during the finalisation of the funding agreement on Phase 1 of the ICT Hub. Some Regional ICT Champions continued to articulate the feeling that too much money was going to the centre, and to organisations with no greater track record than their own.

In the view of the evaluation team this is regrettable. There appear to be clear benefits of some work being done centrally, and the ICT Hub's efforts to distribute the benefits of its work regionally are to be applauded. There are also many clear examples where Regional ICT Champions have worked in harmony with the ICT Hub, to the benefit of the beneficiary voluntary organisations. The ICT Hub invested considerable trust in the organisations that were commissioned as Regional ICT Champions, and selected them on merit, for what they could bring to the overall picture, regardless of their attitude towards the ICT Hub; it is unfortunate that this trust and respect was not universally reciprocated.

Despite this, the Regional ICT Champion model clearly works – as did the Accessibility Champions in Phase 1. The role is worth continuing, and it is a matter for concern that the funding for the next few years is at a much reduced level. It is also a matter of great concern that the national programme which helped to give a focus and coordination to the work of the Regional ICT Champions, as well as offering them practical support, will no longer be there for them to work alongside.

4.5 Accessibility Champions

Although the separate Accessibility Champion role came to an end in September (and has been evaluated in a separate report), work on accessibility has continued to be promoted through the Regional Champions. AbilityNet have continued to support the Regional Champions in this work until March 2008.

The AbilityNet information packs continue to be distributed freely through the Regional Champions and at events, and the AbilityNet help line and web site will continue to be available, providing free support to VCOs and Regional Champions.

4.6 Publications & research

This quarter saw the publication of several items wrapping up the ICT Hub's successful publication and research programme. These are each briefly described in separate sections below.

The ICT Hub's research and publications programme has been very impressive. As a result of the Hub's output, there are now numerous guides and resources covering a wide range of topics which will continue to benefit the sector for many years. Formal evaluation of the publications was unfortunately delayed. When a major reprint was

undertaken in Q11, this gave an opportunity to include reply-paid evaluation cards with many publications. A rather disappointing 35 were returned. Half of these reported on the 'Guide to managing ICT', the remainder on six other publications. This is not enough data to make confident comments on specific publications, but the general response is very positive. Half of the respondents were managers, suggesting that the publications had reached their target audience. Most of the rest had technical roles. Nearly all the respondents thought highly of the publication they had received:

What was your overall impression of this publication?

Exceptional – it's unusual to read anything as good as this......................15
Good – I would happily recommend it to other people.............................15
OK – worth having, but could be improved...2
Not very good – perhaps a few good bits, but not really worth it 1

Of course, a self-selected sample like this is likely to be extreme – either people who have been particularly impressed and want to acknowledge that, or people who are disappointed and want that to be recognised. The balance, however, is so strongly positive that it is likely to represent a generally favourable view. Anecdotal feedback on the publications has also been very positive.

In their specific comments, many respondents made the point that the publication was easy to read or in non-technical language. The overwhelming impression is therefore of clear, well-thought-out and useful products.

In addition, almost as many felt that their organisation would benefit significantly from the publication:

How much do you think your organisation will benefit from this publication?

A lot 16
Quite a lot 9
To a small extent 5
Not much at all...3

The relative popularity of the various publications distributed so far can be seen from the data below (totals exclude January 2008, for which no figures are available). Shaded cells are incomplete (either no data for Q11, or data for Q11 only). In order to show the complete range of ICT Hub publications, this table includes publications which were produced too late to be distributed in Q11.

	Hard copy	Downloads	Pages viewed on line
Guide to managing ICT	5,287	810	
How to cost and fund ICT	5,432	1,019	
Trustee governance guide	1,066	64	
Funders' booklet	1,814	72	
New media case studies	1,491	264	
Collaborative Working	52	3	1,969 *
ICT tools to support collaborative working	81	116	3,117 *
How to commission and design accessible web sites	416	N/k	
Easy, free & quick accessibility	500		
ICT products guide			
Circuit Rider guide		85	
Sources of funding		113	
Signposting guide		93	

Good telephony guides (VCOs, funders & suppliers)			
ICT Foresight: campaigning and consultation	2,895	116	
ICT Foresight: online communities	2,246	251	
ICT Foresight: charitable giving	2,055	198	
ICT Foresight: How ICT is shaping the future design and delivery of public services			
* Individual page views, not complete documents.			

The 'Guide to managing ICT in the voluntary and community sector' has been the most requested publication since its publication, closely followed by 'How to cost and fund ICT'. It is worth noting that, while electronic distribution is a significant channel, the level of demand for printed copies indicates that this remains an important means of ensuring the widest distribution.

As well as publications requested directly from the ICT Hub, considerable quantities of many publications have been distributed through external conferences, via Net:gain and, especially, via Regional Champions. For some publications, Regional Champions have been the main distribution channel.

ICT Governance Guide

The long awaited ICT Governance Guide was published in March and distributed at the National Conference. Entitled, 'From Nightmare to Nirvana – an ICT Survival Guide for Trustees', the 78 page booklet aims to help trustees understand what their ICT responsibilities are, how ICT can support good governance, and how they can help their organisation benefit strategically from ICT. As the guide has only just been published there is no evaluation data available; however it will undoubtedly be a very valuable resource for the sector.

ICT products research

Following earlier research by ServiceTec into the corporate product needs of the sector, CITA were commissioned to further develop the key areas which emerged from this research. This report has now been published and addresses the following five areas of software for the voluntary and community sector:
- Fundraising products;
- Financial management products;
- Contact management systems & customer relationship management;
- Content managed websites & online transactions;
- Products you need but don't have (utilities, security, etc).

It is available as a single report or as mini-reports on each of the separate topics. Each section contains an overview of available solutions, benefits of using this type of software, key features in selecting this software, how and where to get funding for this software, and case studies.

These will undoubtedly be extremely useful publications for a great number of VCOs and exactly the sort of practical guidance the sector would want from the ICT Hub.

ICT Foresight

The fourth ICT Foresight report: 'How ICT is Shaping the Future Design and Delivery of Public Services' was published in March. Drawing on case-studies from high profile organisations and current thinking and debate from ICT experts, the report looks at

emerging trends in the ways organisations are run and public services delivered through the innovative use of new technology. It includes the role of digital TV and video to provide remote support; open exchange for partners and stakeholders to collaborate effectively online; greater accessibility to information and the use of call centres and online self-help tools.

Telephony & New Media

Three Good Telephony guides aimed at VCOs, funders and suppliers were also published this quarter along with the 'How to Use New Media' guide. Details of these publications are covered in section 4.9.

E-mail newsletter

Currently, there are 6,060 subscribers to the newsletter, an impressive increase of over 1,500 since the end of last year. It is an encouraging sign that readership of the newsletter has continued to rise steadily since its launch in 2006. Presumably this is a reflection both of increased awareness about the newsletter through ICT Hub events and services, and its usefulness to subscribers.

In order to more fully assess the newsletter a second survey of newsletter readers was carried out in Q11. This followed up the first survey conducted in November 2006, which had resulted in several changes to the content and format of the newsletter.

Unfortunately, the response rate to the survey was low, attracting only 117 responses (although a 2% return is reasonable for this type of survey). However, while this is not a statistically robust sample and doesn't allow for any in depth analysis, it is hoped that the responses can provide some insight into current attitudes towards the newsletter and whether changes since last time have been beneficial. The full results of the survey, which also included questions about the web site and ICT Hub generally, are given in a separate document, while key findings are highlighted here.

Overall, satisfaction levels with the newsletter have improved since the last survey. For example, 63% of respondents now claim to read every copy of the newsletter compared with only 54% a year ago. More people now rate the newsletter content as 'Good' or better (63%) compared to previously (53%), with a 9% increase in those rating it 'Excellent'. Obviously, it is some concern that 12% still rate the content as disappointing, although the detailed comments do not provide suggestions on how this could be improved.

The most significant improvements have been around the format and presentation of the newsletter. The number of respondents who find the newsletter 'Very well' or 'Well' presented has increased to 57% from 38% in the original survey.   As it often seems easier to criticise than praise, the fact that the number finding it difficult or badly presented has dropped from 28% to just over 1% is particularly commendable! As presentation was one of the key areas of change, this represents a good outcome.

4.7 iT4Communities volunteer matching

This programme continues to be the core activity of iT4Communities. Data for Q11 shows a significant increase in both volunteer registrations and project definition registrations, while work packages started and finished were also significantly higher. These results are below the ambitious growth targets set by iT4C, but are nonetheless

impressive. Apart from a slight dip in Q10 (similar to many of the ICT Hub activities during that quarter), all the measures show a consistent pattern of growth during Phase 2.

IT4C Volunteer matching service, Phase 2

	April – June 2007	July – Sept 2007	October – December 2007	January – March 2008	
				Plan	Actual
Volunteers registered	217	168	133	237	216
Project definitions registered	123	163	124	173	173
Work packages started	33	37	53	47	65
Work packages completed	29	30	21	36	35
Terminology: 'Project definition' = description of project, compiled by IT4C in conjunction with the requesting organisation 'Work package' = project on which the volunteer agrees to work					

Data for the whole of Phase 2 (April 2007 – March 2008) shows that all the main performance achievement indicators were well within 10% of target apart from one which substantially exceeded its target. This is an outcome with which iT4C is justifiably pleased.

	April 2007 – March 2008		Percentage of target
	Target	Actual	
Volunteers registered	747	702	94%
Project definitions registered	608	579	95%
Work packages started	157	188	120%
Work packages completed	123	114	93%

The more detailed evaluation carried out during Q10 demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the service. The evaluation – conducted entirely electronically – attracted responses from a total of 74 volunteers and 110 voluntary organisations. This response rate of around 1½% for volunteers and 5½% for organisations is reasonable for a cold e-mailing to a fairly dormant list.

The report found that the iT4C programme has succeeded in delivering thousands of hours of work to many hundreds of projects in voluntary organisations. Those organisations whose project has been seen through to a successful conclusion are generally extremely pleased with the service from both iT4C and from their volunteer. The volunteers also get a lot out of the programme. In some cases the relationship persists after the project is finished, with the volunteer continuing to provide ICT support in some form — which can include becoming a trustee. There are therefore many intangible and uncounted benefits as well as the considerable monetary value of the work actually delivered.

The main area of concern is the disappointment felt by those organisations whose project does not find a volunteer, or whose project is terminated before completion, and the frustration of would-be volunteers who do not find a project. It appears that probably around one third of projects do not find a volunteer, and that a third of the projects that do start fail to finish. This would mean that under half of the projects put forward reach a successful conclusion. This report finds that the main reasons for this appear to be:
- the relatively small scale of the scheme;

- the level of motivation required from both the volunteers and the organisations;
- internal factors and lack of resources within voluntary organisations.

Some of these are well outside the control of iT4C. Some 15 recommendations are made in the report for changes which might help to mitigate these problems, and all of these have already been substantially accepted by iT4C.

4.8 Other products and services

HelpDesk

Figures were not available for March so we are unable to make comparison with last quarter. However, statistics from January and February indicate another rise in HelpDesk calls, with the busiest months since last January. As the detail on calls is limited it is difficult to assess why the increase is happening. The majority (61%) of callers cite the web site as being their source of contact. The steady increase may also be a result of raised awareness due to increased promotion in the regions through Regional Champions.

It remains the evaluators' opinion that although usage is increasing, even at its highest level of 104 enquiries in January 2007, this service is unlikely to have represented value for money.

ICT Hub HelpDesk enquiries

Month	Emails received	Calls received	Total enquiries
April/ May (2006)	20	30	**50**
June	8	24	**32**
July	14	81	**95**
August	23	55	**78**
September	10	68	**78**
October	20	62	**82**
November	29	61	**90**
December	13	41	**56**
January (2007)	17	87	**104**
February	14	63	**77**
March	17	54	**71**
April	15	30	**45**
May	8	34	**42**
June	14	39	**53**
July	12	31	**43**
August	18	35	**53**
September	30	43	**73**
October	10	54	**64**
November	25	52	**77**
December	6	41	**47**
January (2008)	13	66	**79**
February	11	69	**80**
March	22	44	**66**
Totals	369	1,164	**1,535**

Web accessibility testing

All forty web overviews were completed by March 2008. This was a popular service throughout the programme, with consistently good feedback.

Bursary scheme & exchange visits

There was a target of four bursary scheme visits in the business plan, but it appears that this never got off the ground and no visits took place.

With regard to exchange visits for infrastructure groups planning ICT support services, the target of nine visits was exceeded with a total of 14 visits taking place in Phase 2, most of which have submitted post-visit reports.

NorthWest
- Cumbria CVS visited Wirral CVS to explore the ICT issues Cumbria CVS faced when merging from a number of local CVSs.
- GMCVO visited Cumbria CVS as GMCVO are looking at using the ThankQ database currently used by Cumbria CVS.

Yorkshire & Humberside
- Humberside Learning Consortium visited Voluntary Action Sheffield to jointly explore a bespoke database solution for their organisations.
- Voluntary Action Sheffield visited Anthem ICT to discuss the move of an ICT Support project to a social enterprise and to demonstrate and discuss VC-Connect – a sector-owned centralised, web based database system
- Horton Community Communications Association visited South Witham Broad Band Service to compare experience of setting up and running rural mesh networks and exchange ideas about the future development of wireless mesh.

East Midlands
- Clannet visited South Witham Broadband to discuss how SWBB have overcome problems that Clannet are facing in providing community Broadband in their rural location.

West Midlands
- Illuminate ICT visited Stafford CVS as Illuminate run a successful ICT Circuit Rider service, which Stafford CVS would like to offer.
- Eight database user organisations visited Illuminate to discuss the issues around selecting a database and to look at how the e-target product was meeting the needs of groups represented by the infrastructure organisations present.
- Illuminate visited Oswestry Community Action Explore to explore the potential for a Drupal web design and hosting solution for Shropshire.

East Region:
- Mid & North Bedfordshire CVS visited Advice For Life in Cambrideshire to find out about setting up and running a successful Circuit Rider service.
- ReBoot visited MillRAce IT to exchange ideas and best practice around computer recycling and to sharing practical support for growth in the sector.

SouthWest

- Black Development Agency visited COSMIC to find out about the strategic review of ICT used by COSMIC, including an overview of how net:gain assisted in this process
- GMCVO visited VOSCUR to examine a working installation of the CiviCRM CMS system which they are planning to implement.

This has proved an extremely popular and successful service. Feedback has been consistently positive, and the face-to-face discussion and learning in these visits in many cases will be the catalyst to a group taking action. In almost all cases, the benefits described are not just to the visiting organisation, but to the host organisation as they are able to critically appraise and review the services they are offering. Although the scale is small, the cost is relatively low and it would appear that each visit is likely to yield significant outcomes in terms of development of ICT support services.

4.9 Development activities

Circuit riding

The most notable event of Q11 was the Circuit Rider conference, held in Birmingham at the end of February. This has been separately evaluated. The evaluation forms indicate clearly that this was an excellent and well-attended event, with a very good atmosphere. It both demonstrated and contributed to a real sense of community among those in circuit rider and similar roles around the country.

The development of Circuit Rider standards, principles and training continues to make progress. An Advisory Group for development of Circuit Rider Training and Standards met in November and finalised the Circuit Rider Principles which are prominently publicised on the Lasa web site. To date, 35 individuals and 14 organisations (including one in the USA) have become signatories – which is more than double the number signed up at the end of Q10. This is a solid beginning which should help to underpin the circuit rider movement in the future.

Summit Collaborative continued work on the development of a document on ICT standards, benchmarks and skills for circuit riders. A draft has been received, which will be reviewed by the Advisory Group, and publication is expected in May 2008.

Work has also continued on the development of Circuit Rider accredited training. A pilot circuit rider training course was carried out in Q10 with 18 refugee and asylum seekers (6 half-day sessions over 6 weeks) and the course was rerun with 10 new recruits in January. Participants then received ongoing mentoring. No feedback has been received from this programme by the evaluation team. A session for circuit riders on 'Effective Technology Advising' was held in March (the day after the circuit rider conference), and received very good anecdotal feedback.

A fifth and final issue of the bi-monthly Circuit Rider news digest (*Round-Up*) was produced in March, but this publication has not been evaluated.

Lasa has also hosted and supported the active and well-regarded ukriders e-mail discussion group throughout the life of the ICT Hub.

Although Lasa's work on the circuit rider concept predates the ICT Hub, the Hub's contribution to the development of the concept and the circuit rider movement has been constructive, innovative and worthwhile. It is likely to have long-term impact because of the additional funding that Lasa has been able to obtain to continue its work in this area, building on what has been achieved over the past three years.

Pump priming fund

The pump-priming fund was a new initiative in Phase 2, which aimed to provide small amounts of funding to kick-start ICT support projects in areas with little or no provision. Each region was allocated £5,000 to spend on one or multiple projects as appropriate. In total 14 projects were funded across all nine regions, as the table below illustrates.

Region	Projects funded
North East	• Provision of IT access in remote rural communities (Northumberland Community Development Network)
North West	• Mapping & promoting video conferencing facilities (Cumbria CVS) • Research into ICT training needs and provision (GMCVO) • Feasibility study for development of user-driven ICT resource web site (Clitheroe Database) • Further development of GMCVO training strategy
Y & H	• Feasibility study for ICT support service delivered by the VCS but working with university students (Coast & Moors Voluntary Action)
East Midlands	• Start up funding for ICT Development post (Voluntary Action East Lindsey)
West Midlands	• Project to investigate the potential market and delivery options for an ICT Support service in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent
East England	• Feasibility study for Bedfordshire Circuit Rider scheme (Voluntary Community Action North & Mid Beds) • Feasibility study for Hertfordshire CR scheme
London	• Feasibility for expansion of successful S London Circuit Rider scheme to other London areas (Superhighways)
South East	• Pilot ICT support service for 15 groups in Slough (Slough CVS)
South West	• Mapping & feasibility study for ICT support service in Wiltshire (Community First Wiltshire with assistance from COSMIC) • Mapping & feasibility study for ICT support service in Gloucestershire (GAVCA with assistance from COSMIC)

NAVCA administered this fund, working with each of the Regional Champions to identify suitable projects for funding. Inevitably the delivery window for the projects was very small given the need to firstly liaise with Regional Champions in identifying projects, request and approve applications, and finalise plans with successful bidders. In the end, most of the projects were only delivered this quarter and some are still outstanding or ongoing. Given this, and the nature of the projects being primarily research based, it is impossible to provide any meaningful evaluation of the projects.

However, although the longer term impact of these projects cannot be assessed yet, the principle behind the funding scheme should be commended. This is the sort of funding which can make all the difference in a new service getting off the ground, such as the circuit rider scheme in Bedfordshire, or moving to a new stage, such as expanding the already successful South London circuit rider project to other areas of London. It is often lack of resources for the feasibility work, background research and preparation of funding applications which prevents services being developed.

The innovative nature of some of the projects, such as working with university students to deliver support in Yorkshire, and promoting video conferencing facilities in rural Cumbria, will also potentially provide models of good practice for other areas which can more cost-effectively repeated.

Work with funders and corporates

Pilot service for funders
Peach Consultancy were commissioned to develop a pilot service for funders in October 2007. Work was reported as progressing, with initial research into the methods currently used by funders to assess ICT applications completed. These findings are currently being assessed in order to inform other work in future.

Corporate involvement seminars
Intellect and the ICT Hub established a working group for this project. Seven Corporate Involvement seminars were intended to be run in conjunction with Regional Champions between January and March 2008, but in the event only two ran. A large event planned for the North West was cancelled due to lack of take up. However, other Regional Champions did carry out research into local suppliers for the Suppliers' Directory and other related activities in place of running events.

Research into corporate product needs
As discussed in section 4.6, the research into corporate product needs of the sector has now been published as single report or five mini reports covering:
- Fundraising products;
- Financial management products;
- Contact management systems & customer relationship management
- Content managed websites & online transactions
- Products you need but don't have (utilities, security, etc).

This appears to be an extremely useful report which will hopefully get wide circulation throughout the sector.

Free & open source software (FOSS)

This strand of work was reduced in Phase 2, following limited uptake of Open Source resources in Phase 1. A new delivery partner, Advice for Life, was commissioned to undertake a smaller programme of work from October 2007 to March 2008 including the following objectives:
- Mapping FOSS networks & Linux user groups and promoting discussion forum
- Producing regular articles for ICT Hub and regional newsletters
- Training for IT Support workers
- FOSS certification scheme and training toolkit
- Linux qualification for techies
- Promotional leaflet outlining Business Case for FOSS
- Two FOSS Case Studies

Unfortunately, due to staffing/capacity issues with the commissioned partner, the bulk of this programme was not delivered. It appears that the only outputs are the mapping exercise of FOSS networks and Linux user groups, discussion group, and a

draft leaflet promoting the business case for using FOSS.   Attempts were made by ICT Hub staff to get the project back on track, but in the end most of the objectives had to be abandoned, and the project more or less collapsed.

New media

The Media Trust was commissioned to carry out a second phase of New Media development work between April 2007 – March 2008, having successfully completed a programme of new media training and support in the first phase of the ICT Hub.

The project included a number of key objectives:
- Development of an online advice service and discussion forum to ensure VCS organisations have access to a range of national and sub national new media advice, training and support services;
- Research and collation of best practice case studies;
- Development of an online database of new media suppliers

Although commissioning took longer than planned, and the start of the project was delayed until June 07, all of these objectives were completed.

Online Advice Service
The New Media discussion forum was launched in October 2007 as part of the relaunced ICT Hub Café on Knowledgebase. Six expert advisors were recruited to answer queries, provide advice and post discussion threads. The Media Trust promoted the Café to all charities on their database, all MT advisors, and all Community Newswire users. Although slow to start, traffic has increased dramatically over the past few months, and the New Media forum has clearly been the most active topic in the Cafe with 50 threads and 117 visitors to date.

Case studies& Briefings
Following from the popular 'New Media Case Studies' booklet published in Phase 1, a further set of 12 case studies were collated in this phase and published in the 'How to Use New Media' guide. This 72 page guide provides practical advice on a range of new media tools, and highlights voluntary sector success stories which have emerged over the course of the project. The guide was only completed towards the end of the project so there is no evaluation or uptake data available; however, it appears to be a very informative and accessible introduction to new technologies which will complement and build on the success of the Case Studies booklet.

According to the Media Trust, 200 Case Study booklets were given to smaller organisations at the 'Online and Inspired' event Media trust co-hosted with Google. Of the 200 attending, 41 completed a survey, in which 92% said that they found the content of the booklet useful, and 80% felt the booklets would make a difference to their organisation.   The New Media Case studies are also consistently in the top 5 downloaded documents from the website. In total, 1851 Case Studies booklets were distributed this phase, and with the new 'How To' publication will be the main legacy of this project.

As well as the case studies and booklets, six articles were produced and published on the ICT Hub and Knowledgebase covering: Podcasting, Google Grants, Social networking sites, Virtual press office, Effective tagging, and Wikis for collaboration.

Both in this phase and the previous phase, the New Media project carried out by Media Trust appears to be one of the real successes of the ICT Hub's programme.

Telephony

The ICT Hub commissioned research in 2006 which highlighted key issues around the role of telephony and ICT and its impact particularly on small and medium VCOs. In the light of this research, the ICT Hub further commissioned the Telephone Helplines Association in Phase 2 to develop resources aimed at improving the telephony environment for small and medium VCOs across England. The objectives in this programme of work included:

- 8 regional training sessions for VCO managers
- 8 regional training sessions for IT Support workers
- 2 'Train the Trainers' for Regional Champions
- Telephony Case Studies
- 3 'Good Telephony Guides' (VCOs, Suppliers, Funders)
- Target of 30 telephony suppliers for Directory

The bulk of this programme was well delivered, although fewer workshops than planned were actually run.

Seven of the eight planned workshops for VCO managers were run, attracting a rather disappointing 56 participants (average eight per event). These sessions were intended to be very practical, allowing managers to identify their telephony requirements, learn how to cost and budget for telephony, and assess suppliers and solutions. Three of the eight scheduled workshops for IT support workers were completed, with 25 participants (again about eight per event on average).

A separate evaluation report finds that these appear to have been good, well run events, with a very practical focus, despite the low turnout. In the VCO sessions, a very satisfying 85% of respondents felt that their organisation would benefit 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' from the event, while this figure dropped to 50% for the IT Support sessions. Further analysis on these events is available in the separate event reports.

In March, the three telephony guides were published, providing an excellent resource for VCO managers, funders and suppliers respectively. Although there is no evaluation or uptake data available for these products, they appear to be extremely well presented and informative, including several case studies and practical resources. Assuming these publications get sufficient promotion and distribution following the disbanding of the Hub, this project will have made a strong contribution to the legacy of the ICT Hub.

4.10 Hard to reach groups

In Phase 1 of the ICT Hub's programme of work, the ICT Hub carried out a number of small scale commissions to find out how best to reach 'hard to reach' groups. This research identified that these groups were most effectively reached if the ICT Hub worked in partnership with a trusted intermediary, and the resources were repackaged (not redeveloped) for the target audience.

On the basis of this initial research six 'themes' were chosen to be funded through the Hard to Reach fund between April 2007 and March 2008:

- Arts
- BME (Black Minority Ethnic)
- Faith
- Homeless
- Hospices
- LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual)

These themes were decided upon, giving consideration to the ICT Hub's desire to work with groups it had not historically worked with before, the extent of the route to market, and how linked-in the relevant national infrastructure was to the ChangeUp programme. Several specialist infrastructure groups were commissioned to carry out the different work programme under each theme. All of the projects were completed and the results of the end of project reports are summarised below.

Arts

The ICT Hub commissioned Voluntary Arts England (VAE) to disseminate the ICT Hub's resources to as many Arts groups as possible through the provision of suitable workshops and events to the target audience. They created suitable resources by re-branding, re-packaging and disseminating ICT hub articles, services, resources and information to voluntary arts and crafts groups and umbrella organisations throughout England. In addition to this, information was also used to create new briefing/ information sheets to add to the existing library of 130+ Voluntary Arts England briefing sheets.

They organised and delivered 16 half-day workshops in 8 locations across England, aimed at grass roots groups and umbrella bodies who wish to develop their ICT skills and knowledge. Morning sessions were aimed at beginners with afternoon sessions taking the form of a 'master class' covering IT planning, Web 2.0, E-commerce, free software, and sharing hardware. According to the organisers, representatives from over 150 arts groups participated in these sessions, with feedback ranging from good to exceptional.

The second objective of this commission was to deliver a plenary session at the National ICT and the Arts conference in Birmingham. (a separate evaluation report of this event is available).

The project's legacy will be the range of resources distributed directly to the workshop participants and the ICT articles, briefing sheets, and online forum which will continue to be made available through VAE.

BME

For this theme, the ICT Hub worked with Black Training & Enterprise Group (BTEG) to learn more about the ICT needs of BTEG's members and BME networks, and to provide BME frontline organisations and their networks with access to the ICT Hub's products and services and those provided by BTEG's Centre for Technical Assistance. Another aim was to provide advice to CTA on how to best capture BME data and benchmark it against their own client data base.

The project had 3 specific objectives:

- Consult BME Infrastructure and frontline organisations to understand their ICT requirements
- Draw up programme of work including events to disseminate BTEG and ICT Hub resources
- Host 4 national workshops to disseminate these resources and provide platform for Regional ICT Champions to engage with BME audience

200 expression of interest and needs assessment forms were sent out to BME organisations of which 50 were returned. These helped to identify the development needs and priority areas for the workshops.

Four workshops were carried out in London, Leicester, Manchester and Leeds attracting a total of 55 participants. According to the organisers, the workshops had positive feedback including:
- 65% of participants indicated that the information they received about the ICT Hub Knowledgebase and Supplier's directory was excellent, with 31% rating it good.
- 54 % of participants felt the information received about managing, costing and funding ICT was excellent and 44% believed it was good.
- 67% of participants expressed that the products and services offered by CTA were excellent and 28% expressed it was good

Two case studies were also produced as a result of the project.

Faith

As there was no single infrastructure group appropriate to undertake this work, the ICT Hub worked with 6 different regional ICT Champions to carry out this strand of the programme. Each of the following regions was tasked with consulting identified faith networks in that region, and establishing how best to disseminate ICT Hub resources as to these groups.
- East of England:
- East Midlands:
- North East:
- North West:
- South West:
- Yorkshire and Humberside:

According to the organisers, the project helped identify barriers that faith groups encounter and explored how these can be broken down. The project also served to develop new links and relationships with faith networks and signpost other advice, help and support available in the region. Finally, the project provided faith groups with forums to discuss their vision of the future and what they need from ICT to achieve these ends. A more detailed account of activities undertaken in each region is available in the end of project report.

Homeless

Homeless Link, the national umbrella organisation for this sector, was commissioned to carry out this strand of work. The overall purpose of the project was to highlight areas of good practice in service-user skill development and informal uses of

technology. A key goal of the project was to provide low cost, reliable alternative resources for small to medium sized agencies to improve their ICT capacity.

The specific project objectives were:
- To consult on the ICT requirements of the homelessness sector
- To co-ordinate dissemination programme of ICT Hub materials
- To develop regional workshops to disseminate materials

All of the above aims were fully achieved. An online survey was sent to all members covering ICT use, ICT training and perceived ICT needs. Additionally, informal interviews were carried out with small to medium sized organisations. Subsequently these conclusions were used as the basis for the types of resources that would be disseminated through workshops, direct support and the website.

A new resource area was developed on the Homeless Link website with links to key ICT Hub resources for members to access. Two new case studies were also produced from this project.

Two regional events were run, one in Leeds covering Yorkshire and Humber and one in London. The events attracted a good turnout relative to some of the other specialist regional events with 21 in Leeds and 28 in London representing 33 different agencies. 97% of these found the events good or exceptional, and 84% of respondents stated that the events would benefit their organisation a lot or quite a lot.

Homeless Link also gave workshops at the Mental Health (22nd February) and Rural (5th March) ICT Events to support and promote cross sector working. These workshops were intended to explore the similarities and differences to ICT development between the homelessness sector and other sectors. According to the organisers, these workshops were very successful at engendering cross sector debate and promoting closer partnership working.

The legacy of the project will be maintained thorugh the resources now available on the Homeless Link website and the promotion of the materials through the Homeless Link regional managers.

Hospices

Help the Hospices, the national membership charity for the hospice movement, was commissioned for this strand work. This project was designed to improve the use of ICT in the hospice movement, both within Help the Hospices and at the level of local hospices across the country.

The project focused on a number of areas:
- Help the Hospices own proposed ICT review
- Undertaking a national review of hospices use of ICT to act as a benchmarking and 'state of the nation' tool.
- Providing hospices access to the ICT Hub's Regional Champions and local volunteers to provide advice and support
- Running a number of events for hospices across England to promote awareness of ICT

The IT review was undertaken by an ICT consultant who drew heavily upon the resources and information available from the ICT Hub. The resulting report has already been implemented in many ways to support the security, and other policies and procedures of Help the Hospices ICT resources.

The survey reviewing all member hospices was very well received at the ICT Hub supported event at BT Tower on 18th March which was attended by over 60 hospice IT managers. It is the first such national survey on hospice IT capabilities and resources and should be very valuable in improving ICT capacity in the sector.

The events run aimed to spread awareness of the ICT Hub resources available to hospices. These were held at BT Tower London with 65 delegates, Manchester with 30 delegates), Trinity Hospice, London with 20 delegates, and Prospect Hospice, Swindon with 25 delegates. According to the organizers, the feedback from attendees has been positive and a large amount of ICT Hub materials were distributed at the events.

Help the Hospices believe that this project will be sustainable on a local, regional and national basis. Locally, IT Managers in hospices will have access to ICT Hub materials and the IT review to help develop their services. Regionally, they have set up regional ICT groups for hospices around the country which will enable them to meet on a regular basis to discuss areas of mutual interest and offer peer support. The regional steering group will be supported by a national group that will be supported by Help the Hospices. Help the Hospices will also continue to offer support and advice on clinical software issues and connectivity issues for their members.

LGBT

This area of work was carried out by the Consortium of LGBT Organisations, which is a national membership organisation representing the needs and support requirements of LGBT organizations, groups and projects.

The project was split into three main areas:
- Consult existing and identified networks about their understanding of and requirements regarding ICT.
- Draw up a programme of work to disseminate ICT Hub's resources to as many LGBT groups as possible, adapting and repackaging where necessary.
- Provide suitable workshops and events to the target audience.

All aspects of the project were completed.

Initially, members were invited to several focus group consultation events held in North London. The feedback from these sessions highlighted key areas to cover in the workshop events including website design and maintenance, online safety/security, data protection, financing ICT, and obtaining hardware/software. An online survey was also advertised and distributed through the Consortium's network but only attracted 22 respondents. Nonetheless this information was also helpful in planning the next stages of the project.

Feedback from the focus groups indicated that members found the ICT Hub materials relevant and useful with 97% of participants rating the materials on offer either 'good'

or 'excellent'. A tailored DVD was also produced in order to reach as many LGBT groups as possible. All of the relevant resources were distributed to members in each of the nine regions by a variety of means, including e-mail, post, workshops and telephone.

Workshops were delivered in Bradford, Manchester, Birmingham, Leicester and Cambridge, reaching a total of 90 people, representing 51 LGBT small and medium organisations and groups. In line with the results of the survey and focus groups the key areas covered in the workshops were: web site design and maintenance, costing and funding ICT, Circuit Riders, ICT Regional Champions, Knowledgebase and Suppliers Directory. Workshops were delivered interactively, with information about the ICT Hub delivered. The events appear to have been very successful with 83% of respondents reporting that their organisation would benefit 'quite a lot' or 'a lot' from the sessions.

There was also a stall allocated to this project at Newcastle's LGBT history month event which attracted 150 LGBT members from groups in the North East. The two workshops at the Consortium's Annual Conference and AGM will reach a further 25 – 50 people. This means that in total over 250 people and 100 LGBT organizations will have been reached through this project.

The Consortium believes there is now momentum for the work started through this project to continue, and feedback at workshop events highlighted the positive impact the ICT Hub has had on its members.

4.11 Unmet need fund

The unmet need fund followed on from the successful initiative in Phase 1. Responsibility in Phase 2 was transferred from NCVO to NAVCA. The fund's aims were:
- To meet innovative needs for ICT support that were not covered elsewhere by the work of the hub or its commissioned partners.
- To explore new ideas for innovative ICT use that would leave a lasting impact, inform funders of the potential, or to encourage others to take the idea further.

Twenty-one applications for funding were received. When these were examined, it was found that some good projects did not fully meet the original criteria, mainly because they were not particularly innovative. Two good projects that clearly met the first aim were awarded funding, and others were rejected as being impractical or not relating sufficiently to ICT support. Three projects, however, were identified as models of good ICT use that could also have an application in an ICT support environment, and the criteria were therefore adapted to allow these to go forward.

This meant that, in all, five projects were commissioned to carry out work totalling £48,927. The projects were carried out in a tight six month timeframe generally between Oct 2007 – March 2008. Again, given the pilot nature of the projects and that they have only just been completed, it is impossible to evaluate their longer term impact. However, where possible based on the reports submitted, key outcomes and lessons learned have been highlighted below.

All projects have reported significant benefits to their organisation as well as immediate beneficiaries, and most feel their project could be used as a model or reference for other groups throughout the country.

Age Concern Stockport, In Touch
Funding : £5,519
This was a pilot project to assess the benefits of providing front line workers with PDA and Smartphone technology to improve efficiency and productivity through increased home visits and less office time filling in paperwork, and security through use of password controlled devices rather than paper files which can be lost or stolen.

Five hand held phones were purchased and used by trained staff throughout the trial period for visiting older people in their homes, providing assessments and referrals. The project was completed to plan and judged to be a success by Age Concern Stockport. They have highlighted problems with implementation and identified services for which this approach would not be appropriate (i.e. counselling), but will be looking to roll this solution out to other areas of their service and believe it could be a model for other front-line organisations.

Digital Umbrella, Modelling IT social enterprise business support (GetIT)
Funding : £13,972
Through a variety of research methods and action learning, this project researched and identified the support needs of third sector organisations developing IT social enterprises; defined success indicators; mapped existing support to IT social enterprises; and identified various models of support (including social franchising) and how these could be developed nationally to meet the needs of those developing IT social enterprises.

The work culminated with a report containing recommendations for organisations developing IT social enterprises, and for activity at national and local level to support development of these services. Although the project demanded more time and resources than planned, the authors are confident the report will be a powerful document that will inform a range of audiences, and will contribute to the growth and creation of IT social enterprises around the country.

Future Prospects Radio Project
Funding : £9,050
This project has engaged and trained speakers of other languages in the York area to develop 'accessible' community internet radio programmes and podcasts where people can record and share news and information in their first language. During the course of this pilot, ten learners received over 10 hours of training each and produced 13 recordings covering a range of topics using seven different languages.

To ensure a 'market' for these recordings, other non-English speakers were engaged to receive training in how to access internet podcasts. Over the period, 78 people from 21 nationalities received training, and 38 individuals subscribed to receive regular podcasts and updates. This has provided skills needed to get local information in first languages for many who would otherwise not have access to such information.

The coordinators believe the project has given a voice to some of the 'silent' communities in the city, strengthened networks and allowed individuals to discover the role ICT has to play as a pivot to learning, work and social communication.

While there were implementation issues around the amount of support required for learners, they would recommend organisations working with other marginalised groups (especially BME groups, disabled people and people with learning difficulties) to explore this option as a way to improve communication and information sharing.

Single Parent Action Network, Virtual Local Group Project
Funding : £10,170
The project piloted the development of two local online Self-Help Groups to support isolated one parent families. The aim of the groups is for single parents to offer mutual support and share information about local family services, childcare, training and community events. The project also aimed to increase knowledge of how ICT, including through social network sites can contribute to the strengthening of family self-help groups generally.

Two contrasting areas were selected for the pilot - South & West Yorkshire and Warwickshire & Northants. Two local volunteer moderators were recruited in these areas, and various networking platforms were researched. The groups were promoted using a variety of traditional and electronic methods. However, a software problem with the SPAN web site resulted in a month delay in launching the groups from December to January. As with most online groups, they have been slow to take off and become established. Therefore, it is impossible to assess how effective this solution is, as the project has not had enough time to run yet.

The coordinator believes the potential for local 'online' groups to break isolation and offer support is clear, particularly for those in rural areas or who find it difficult to get out, for example due to disability. However, there is some evidence that online groups work best when there is also face-to-face contact, offering a place to physically meet others in similar situations. The difficulty with single parents and other vulnerable groups is safety – people may not be who they pretend to be online and meeting up could be risky. This issue will need to be explored more as the groups develop.

On the basis that the project is only just getting going, SPAN are still uncertain about the potential for national rollout, but expect that if the groups take off they will aim to add more local groups in different parts of the UK.

VOSCUR - Give One In - Get One Back!
Funding : £10,216
This pilot project aimed to innovatively join up the services already being provided by two established IT social enterprises in Bristol. Through the project carried out by VOSCUR, old PCs could be collected and disposed of securely by Byteback Recycling, and in exchange the donor organisation would be given a refurbished PC by Bristol Wireless running a full suite of open source software with access to the services of a support help line. The project funding covered the collection cost for Byteback Recycling and subsidised the refurbished computers from Bristol Wireless (£25 rather than the usual £50), and the coordination and promotion costs of the project.

Although the coordinators feel that overall the project had real successes, there were also some problems. More time was needed for publicity and awareness raising, with the result that initially service targets were not met. However, towards the end of the project demand for the services was increasingly steadily.

Also there was much more uptake of the recycling part of the project than the opportunity to claim refurbished machines. They believe there is a combination of reasons for this. Firstly, new equipment is very competitively priced these days, and most organisations get new PCs with every new project. There may have also been a reluctance to accept a computer running open source software which would have required more education and awareness raising to overcome. They also felt the geographical scope of the project was probably too big to effectively market and deliver the service.

However, as a result of the project, there is definitely raised awareness about the need to recycle and dispose of old equipment properly, and of the services provided by the two partner organisations. In fact, due to the promotion of the scheme, Bristol City Council has pledged to use a local provider to dispose of their redundant ICT equipment rather than shipping these machines to a private company in Wales.

From such a short local project, VOSCUR felt it was difficult to assess the potential for national roll out and whether funding could be secured to do so. However, as they found many voluntary organisations not disposing effectively of their machines, it seems there is scope for more work in this area. They believe that marketing and subsidising recycling services would be a good investment to promote proper disposal of old computer equipment in the voluntary and social enterprise sector.

Appendix A: Phase 1 delivery against plan (from Q7 report)

	Phase 1 Business Plan	Actual
Objective 1		
Events:		
Annual Hub Conference	2 conferences with target audience of 250 each (total 500)	2 conferences with 468 delegates; Exceptional or Good rating of 60%
Regional Conferences	9 conferences with target of 60 each (total 540)	8 conferences with 747 delegates; Exceptional or Good rating of 82%
How to Cost & Fund Seminars at conf	11	10 seminars
Value of Volunteering Seminars at conf	11	10 seminars
Computer Support Workers Forum	5 meetings with 15-20 delegates each (total 75)	6 forums with 106 participants; Exceptional or Good rating of 87%
Products/Services:		
Value of Volunteering Pack/Resource	By Q4	Resources available on IT4C website from Q4
Bursary Scheme	4 bursaries	No bursaries delivered; to be picked up in 07/08
ICT Hub Newsletter	18 with mailing list of 8390	12 newsletters to mailing list of 5600
Good ICT Governance Guide	By Q5	Deferred to 07/08
Objective 2		
Products & Services:		
ICT Core Website	Launched in Q3	Launched end Q4; over 64,000 visits by end Q7
Web: Knowledgebase	Launched in Q4; 125 articles by Q7 25 FAQs by Q7	Launched Q4; 110,434 visitors by Q7 250 articles by Q7 20 FAQs by Q7
ICT Hub Website: Techfinder Directory	Launched in Q4; 75 supplier entries	Launched in Q6; 135 approved supplier entries
ICT Hub Helpdesk	Launch in Q3; 2660 users	Launched in Q3; 811 users
How to 'Cost & Fund' Guide	Publish in Q5	Published in Q7
Good ICT Guide	Publish in Q5	In development; deferred to 07/08 business plan

	Phase 1 Business Plan	Actual
Activities:		
Mapping ICT Support projects	Identify sub-national ICT support projects for inclusion in Techfinder	Completed; over 330 sources identified
Regional 2nd tier Support/Development	Forum operating in each region by Q4	Completed – all regions with ICT Forum
ICT Foresight Panel	1 report published Q4	2 reports published by Q7: • 'Campaigning & Consultation' • 'Online Communities'
Objective 3		
Events:		
'Making Best of Free Support' Seminars	32 seminars with total of 352 delegates	24 seminars with total of 250 delegates; Exceptional or Good rating of 90%
Value of Volunteering seminars to CRs	6 presentations at events	Format of events changed, so no longer appropriate
IT volunteer training for Sub-National Hubs	9 training seminars	0 ; this was dropped due to lack of demand
Intl CR Delegation	UK delegation at 2 intl CR conferences	1 delegation in Q4 (and 1 in Q8)
Annual CR Conference	2 conferences	2 conferences; 136 total delegates Exceptional or Good rating of 89% (based on 2ndonly)
CR Practitioner Meetings	11 meetings	8 meetings; Exceptional or Good rating of 72%
CR Seminars at Hub events	11 seminars at other conferences	1 at YH regional conference
Intro to CR' Meetings	14 meetings aimed at non-technical managers	5 meetings – these were dropped as stand alone events with a few being combined with practitioner meetings
Open Source Conference	2	1 stand alone in 2006 with 55 delegates 1 as part of CR conference in 2007
2nd Tier ICT Network meeting	2 meetings	3 meetings; Exceptional or Good rating of 100%
Products & Services:		
VCS Registration	43/month (revised from 130)	44 p/month in Q7 Total 1800 VCOs registered end Q7
Volunteer Registrations	62/month (revised from 200)	140 p/month in Q7 Total 1411 volunteers registered end Q7
Volunteer Opportunities	45/month (revised from 150)	36/month in Q7 Total 2146 project requests end Q7
IT Volunteering 'Best Practice'	Publish by Q4	Resources avail online from Q3 / ongoing development
UKRiders forum	Moderate and contribute	Ongoing – 366 subscribers at Q7

	Phase 1 Business Plan	Actual
Guide to Circuit Riding	Publish in Q5	Published in Q6
2nd Tier Exchange Visits	7 p/quarter (total 35 visits)	18 visits benefiting 38 organisations; Very high satisfaction levels
Guidance for Infrastructure support	Written guidance on support models	Outcome of network meetings written up and evolved into successful bid for Regional ICT Champions
Activities:		
Mapping Volunteer Programmes	Compilation in Q3 & Q4	Published in Q6; ongoing development
Virtual Volunteering	Develop resources and opportunities for VV	Completed; resources on website 97 Virtual Volunteering opportunities by Q7
CR Steering Group	6 meetings	4 meetings
Objective 4		
Activities:		
Brokered Deals w/ Suppliers	On website by Q4	7 deals promoted on website
Corporate Meetings/Seminars	3 meetings	This part of the work programme was deferred to 07/08 due to staff shortage and work overload
Corporate Online Consultation	1 online consultation Q4	" "
ICT Products research	(not in phase 1 business plan)	Research carried out – to be published early 07/08
Objective 5		
Events		
Funder Seminars	3 seminars	Most of 'Funder' activity transferred to Finance Hub; ICT Hub assisted with Funders Conference in Q6
Products & Services:		
Sources of funding	Publish Q4	Published Q6
How to Cost & Fund ICT for Funders	Publish on website Q5	Removed from business plan as transferred to Finance Hub
Activities:		
Funder Meetings	meetings	Removed from business plan as transferred to Finance Hub
Objective 6		
Events:		
Accessibility seminars at Hub events	11 seminars at Hub events	9 seminars
Lo-No Accessibility Seminars/Courses	9 seminars	9 seminars with 137 delegates; Good or Exceptional rating of 92%
Web Accessibility (for managers)	9 briefings for managers	9 courses with 137 delegates;

	Phase 1 Business Plan	**Actual**
		Good or Exceptional rating of 78%
Web Accessibility training courses	9 web training events	9 courses with 158 delegates; Good or Exceptional rating of 76%
AC Partnership Meetings	4 networking events	4 events run; Exceptional or Good rating of 88%
Accessibility Seminar for IT Volunteers	4 seminars at IT4C events	4 seminars with 47 delegates; Good or Exceptional rating of 95%
Products & Services:		
Accessibility Resources database	Development Q4	Removed from plan due to overlap with Suppliers Directory
Accessibility Helpline	Avail from Q2	Avail from Q2; 133 users by Q7
Accessibility Pack & CD	Published in Q3; 10,000 distributed	Published in Q4; 10,000 distributed
Web Accessibility Pack	Published in Q3; 10,000 distributed	Published in Q4; 10,000 distributed
Open Source Accessibility Guide	Published in Q3	Published in Q4
Web Accessibility Testing	Up to 150 free overviews	152 by Q7
Accessibility Course Discounts	100 places offered	37 discounted places taken up (not including those available to Accessibility champions) Low uptake due to availability of free AbilityNet workshops thru Hub
Activities:		
Accessibility Champions	9 Partners by Q3; ACs Equipped & trained by Q4	9 Partners by Q3; (1 terminated due to staffing issues) ACs Equipped & trained by Q4; Most ACs meeting targets by Q7
Accessibility Issues Survey	Published by Q3	Published in Q3
E Nations Survey	Published in Q3	Published in Q4
Commissioned Work – Open Source		
Open Source Baseline research	Publish in Q5	Completed; unsure of current status re publication
Open Source Seminars at Hub events	11 at Hub events	8 seminars
Open Source Demo Suite	11 at Hub events	Demo suites at 11 Hub events
OS Presentations at External events	9 in total	1
OS 'Train the Trainers' course	9 w 10 delegates each (90 total)	9 FOSS courses; 47 delegates; Good or Exceptional rating of 85% for 2 day courses Good or Exceptional rating of 73% for 1 day course

	Phase 1 Business Plan	**Actual**
OS trial CD for voluntary sector	Avail Q4	Avail by Q5; distributed at Hub events
Report on OS Applications for Vol Sector	Avail Q5	Completed; unsure of current status re publication
Open Source Case studies	10 on Hub website	6 completed
OS Best Practice Guides	6 on Hub website	3 completed
OS Helpdesk via Hub helpline		System in place; very few referrals
OS Discussion forum	Set up and moderate discussion forum on hub website	Not developed; overlap with existing lists
Lobbying OS suppliers	10 meetings total	4 by Q5
Open Source Awards	3 awards for suppliers 4 awards for frontline	1 award for frontline
Commissioned Work – New Media		
Communication Seminars at Hub events	9 seminars	9 seminars
½ day MT seminars	1200 delegates	33 events 1014 delegates trained (or 933? From Paul's tables)
New Media Think Tank	3 meetings	Met 3 times; produced articles for newsletter and New Media Case Studies booklet
'Media Matching' Communications volunteering	380 matches	350 matches
New media Case studies on website	4 p/quarter (20 total)	Booklet of 10 cases studies produced in Q7; On website
Commissioned Work – Neighbourhood Anchors		
Baseline research	Analysis of ICt needs of small community groups to complement ICT Hub baseline research	2nd stage research completed; unsure of status re publication
Briefings on Hub website	Information sheets targeted at small community groups	6 briefings submitted
Case studies on Hub website	4 case studies	7 case studies submitted
Funder briefings		1 briefing submitted
Hub Marketing/Quarterly update	5 mailings	3 mailings to CSC members
ICT Focus Group	Active focus group with approx 6 members	Met 2x; 8 members contributed to Learning Programme
National Learning Programme	Develop national learning programme for small community groups and report on the potential for national roll out	Completed; launch in June?

Appendix B: Additional evaluation reports

During the course of the ICT Hub programme, most of the events, and most of the other main areas of activity were evaluated in detail and reported on in separate reports. These were made available to the organisers of events or providers of services as soon as they were produced, so that they could inform the development of the work.

In the time available at the end of Phase 1 it was not possible to complete detailed reports on all events which ran towards the end of the programme. Priority was given to those which had not been run previously and/or which were expected to be run in a similar format in Phase 2. Data from the evaluation forms for many events in Phase 2 was not received in time to write detailed reports on specific events, but data from these has been included in the main report.

They are now available to supplement this report, and comprise:

Programmes

Accessibility Champions, October 2007
iT4C, January 2008
Knowledgebase, March 2008
Electronic newsletter, January 2007
Electronic newsletter & web site, April 2008
Regional ICT Champions, May 2008

National & regional events

National Conference March 2006
National Conference March 2007
National Conference March 2008
Circuit Rider Conference, January 2007
Circuit Rider Conference, February 2008
Regional Conference, Newcastle, April 2006
Regional Conference, Liverpool, June 2006
Regional Conference, Reading, July 2006
Regional Conference, Chesterfield, October 2006
Regional Conference, Walsall, March 2007
Regional Conference, Taunton, March 2007
Volunteer awards, November 2006

Phase 1 training events

Accessible computing on a low budget, Bristol & Manchester, February 2006
Accessible computing on a low budget, Cambridge & York, April 2006
Accessible computing on a low budget, Leatherhead & Warwick Sept/October 2006
Accessible computing on a low budget, London & Leicester, November 2006
Accessible computing on a low budget, Newcastle Februray 2006
Free & Open Source Software (pilot), December 2006
Free & Open Source Software, nine two-day events, January – March 2007
Making the best use of free ICT support, four events, July/September 2006
Making the best use of free ICT support, four events, September/October 2006
Making the best use of free ICT support, seven events, November/December 2006

New Media made cheap & easy, London, Birmingham, Southampton, June/July 2006
New Media made cheap & easy, six events, July 2006
New Media made cheap & easy, six events, September – November 2006
New Media made cheap & easy, five events, November – December 2006
New Media made cheap & easy, twelve events, January – April 2007
Managing Web 2.0, three events, January – March 2007
Web Accessibility, London & Newcastle, May 2006
Web Accessibility, Leicester & Leatherhead, July 2006
Web Accessibility, Manchester & Warwick, September 2006
Web Accessibility, Harrogate, Papworth, Manchester, October – December 2006
Web Accessibility for Volunteers, London, June 2006

Phase 1 Networking events

Accessibility Champions Network Day, April 2006
Accessibility Champions Network Day, June 2006
Accessibility Champions Network Day, September 2006
Circuit Riders meeting, Manchester, 15 March 2006
Circuit Riders meetings, London & Newcastle, May & June 2006
Circuit Riders meetings, Leeds & Ely, July & September 2006

Computer Support Workers' Forum, August 2005
Computer Support Workers' Forum, January 2006
Computer Support Workers' Forum, April 2006
Computer Support Workers' Forum, September 2006
Computer Support Workers' Forum, November 2006
Regional network meeting, 15 May 2006

Phase 2 events

Infrastructure Conference (Arts), February 2008
Infrastructure Conference (Mental Health), February 2008
Infrastructure Conference (Older People), November 2007
Circuit Rider training & standards consultation, July 2007
Regional faith events (North East), three events, January 2008
Talking Telephony, six events, January 2008
Supporting VCOs on telephony, three events, January 2008