



NCVO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Good employment practice case study: Collaboration on HR

- **Voluntary Action Rotherham**
- **Rotherham Law Centre**
- **South Yorkshire HR and Legal Network**

Organisations

Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) is the lead body for supporting, developing and promoting the voluntary and community sector in the Rotherham Borough. Its core activities and associated projects are a keystone for local community engagement and development.

Rotherham Law Centre (RLC) provides free legal services, including advice and representation, to people who have a connection with Rotherham. They specialise in employment and housing law.

South Yorkshire HR and Legal Network, Voluntary Action Sheffield, Voluntary Action Rotherham, Voluntary Action Barnsley and Doncaster CVS have formed a partnership to share knowledge, resources and expertise in HR and legal issues. Subject to funding the network will have a coordinator for the life of the project.

Project

VAR have formed a partnership with RLC to deliver improved Human Resource support throughout the voluntary sector and to increase access to professional legal services or legal training via a grants programme.

VAR are the lead on the project and have employed a dedicated human resources advisor providing direct support to voluntary sector organisations on day-to-day HR issues. In addition a grants programme has been set up to fund legal services and training for specific legal issues.

RLC provides telephone consultancy support to the HR advisor when requested. If a telephone enquiry through the HR Advisor identifies a need for direct, dedicated legal

services, an organisation can apply for a grant. A successful application will be submitted for tender to law firms from a Panel identified by the project. The project then decides whether to fund all or part of the legal costs. The Law centre acts as a contact point for the law firm and the applicant. In addition, RLC's legal consultancy support to the HR advisor includes access to legal resources, updating material, external supervision and review of HR files.

The project is funded by Change Up, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Yorkshire's Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward and is awaiting the results of a funding application to Objective One. RLC is currently funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

Benefits and challenges

One of the key challenges facing delivery of professional HR advice by a 2nd tier infrastructure organisations is access to affordable legal advice both for the back up for the advisor on more difficult legal issues and for organisations which have been threatened with, or fear, legal action.

Few 2nd tier organisations have managed to address this problem quite so comprehensively; indeed the HR Advisor in post has considerable experience in outside industry and has not previously had access to such comprehensive support on legal advice issues.

Marketing the project has been low key as the funding for legal advice is not limitless. The HR support for the sector is currently free of charge, but for the project to be sustainable in the long term charging may have to be considered.

A major challenge is the development of Trustees and Managers in the voluntary and community sector on Human Resources, employment law, company and charity law to make the service proactive rather than reactive and to ensure that the voluntary and community organisations can deliver their services more effectively.

Future development

This project has been running for six months and is funded for 3 years. If the funding application to Objective One is successful the project will be co-ordinated throughout South Yorkshire with the emphasis on sharing resources to develop the management skills of the sector, HR and Legal network.

The plan is by the end of the project the groups will have access to sound policies and procedures and have been trained to the point where they can avoid the most common legal pitfalls.