

CASH Manifesto

Community Accountancy Self Help (CASH) wants the next government to recognise the need for training in community accountancy for trustees, volunteers and employees of voluntary and community organisations. Voluntary and community organisations provide crucial services from the cradle to the grave for people in need. These services include health, education, employment and community safety. They are run by local people who often have little or no training in trusteeship or boardroom responsibility.

The next Government should:

1. Fund community accountancy training for voluntary organisations at levels 2 and 3 by allocating £20 million from the existing budgets of the Learning and Skills Councils.
2. Ensure that all charities with turnovers of less than £500,000 have access to a community accountancy service. Cost £20 million funded by reallocating existing Home Office and ODPM voluntary sector budgets.
3. Commission accredited courses at GCSE, A level and BTEC covering the voluntary sector, its history and role in current day society. This will encourage volunteering and trusteeship by young people. Cost £5 million funded from existing learning and Skills Councils budgets
4. Commission and fund accredited courses for community accountants at level 3. None exist. Cost £1 million funded from existing Learning and Skills Councils' budgets.

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5. Work with CASH and other charities to strengthen the financial skills of small voluntary organisations.

Voluntary sector spends 3% of GDP. Ninety percent of charities have turnovers of less than £150,000. A 10% improvement in productivity would create £3.7 billion of services for the poorest people in the community.

The above proposals do not cost additional money, they improve the allocation of existing spending and are a modest starting point for a sector that is keen to learn.

Too many charities fail to file proper accounts with the Charities Commission. Good community accountancy is not bureaucracy, it provides accountability and efficiency. It focuses on teaching volunteers, trustees and workers good financial management skills. Without it, taxpayer's money can be lost or wasted.

Learning and Skills Councils have total budgets of £9 billion and are meant to provide the nation with the skills it needs. Hairdressing receives more funding than is provided for financial skills in the voluntary sector. It is not possible to go to any college of further education in the UK and study to be the finance worker or treasurer of a voluntary organisation. Learning and Skills Councils do not fund this type of course. The main professional accountancy bodies – AAT, ACCA, ACA - do not provide options in charity accountancy.

The voluntary sector is the bricks and mortar that builds communities. Let it learn.

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