



Brighton & Hove

Report on progress since the Best Value Review (2001 – 02) and the future development of Adult & Community Learning in Brighton and Hove

Prepared for members of Children, Families and Schools Sub-committee

November 2004

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The national, regional and local focus is on economic development and community regeneration, to improve the quality of life in the City and promote inclusion. Adult Learning plays a key role by enabling people to improve their work related skills, to re-enter employment and improve their prospects in a fast changing economy.
- 1.2 Adult Learning provides initial entry points for personal and community development through a range of informal and community based learning opportunities; particularly important in communities with low levels of educational achievement and high unemployment. It also enables people to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy and in English as a second language. Current provision is diverse and implemented through different departments with Children, Families and Schools (CFS) taking the lead.
- 1.3 The City Council is well placed to take the strategic lead within Brighton & Hove to ensure residents are provided with learning opportunities. Adult Learning is therefore a corporate issue, which underpins the corporate priorities relating to a prosperous and sustainable economy, liveability (improving quality of life in the city), social well-being and caring for vulnerable people as well as the achievement of Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) target 12 of increasing the number of workless people from disadvantaged areas into employment.
- 1.4 This report details progress made on the recommendations of the Best Value Review (2002) and provides recommendations for future developments.

2. Context

- 2.1 The Best Value Review of Lifelong Learning ran from April 2001 to March 2002 and resulted in an Improvement Plan. The review focussed upon the City Council's co-ordination of lifelong learning opportunities primarily for adults over the age of nineteen.
- 2.2 The context of the review was that the new Learning & Skills Act of 2001 had significantly changed the traditional Local Authority involvement in adult education. This Act brought together all adult provision formally funded by the Further Education Funding Council, Adult and Community Learning (ACL) and School Sixth form funding (formally funded through Local Education Authorities) as well as Work Based Learning, (formally funded through the Training & Enterprise Councils) into a new Learning & Skills Sector. The Learning & Skills Council (LSC), a national body with

47 local arms, one of which covers Sussex, now carries out the funding and planning functions to support the new sector.

- 2.3 Because of these changes the City Council has retained a strategic planning role in partnership with Sussex Learning & Skills Council (SLSC), which is informed by a Memorandum of Understanding and a Contract for Funding which the City Council receives for its strategic role with adult learning, the administration of an Adult Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (AEMAG) as well as the provision of family learning, including specific literacy, language and numeracy programmes in partnership with local schools.
- 2.4 To facilitate this strategic role the City Council takes a leading role in chairing a Consortium comprising the major ACL Providers in the City and by organising support services that are most efficiently delivered at city-wide level rather than by individual providers. This formed the basis for the Adult Learning Plan for 2003 – 04 that was agreed by the Council and the ACL providers and submitted to SLSC as the basis for their performance monitoring of both the Council and individual ACL providers. In taking a strategic approach the Consortium also works alongside the Learning Partnership, which itself has a much wider strategic vision than the delivery of ACL.
- 2.5 Since 2001-02 the context for the work of ACL has altered in four ways:
 - 2.5.1 The Learning & Skills Council has re-organised to work increasingly on regional rather than local boundaries. This has meant that the Executive Director for SLSC has now taken on the additional role of Regional Director for the South East, although Sussex is still designated as a particular area of development and funded accordingly. Similarly the City Council is increasingly involved in partnerships at a regional level most significantly in the Area Investment Framework (AIF) process. The aim of this framework is to provide a tool with which funding decisions that affect sustainable regeneration of the area of Brighton & Hove and Adur can be directly influenced. It has been requested by the South East of England Development Agenda (SEEDA) and is part of a response to the need to develop a more strategic and integrated approach to tackling regeneration. Increasingly key parts of the Learning & Skills agenda are being introduced and piloted at regional level in the South East. These include:
 - A new entitlement for any adult who has not yet achieved a full level 2 qualification (the equivalent of 5 good GCSEs) to free tuition to help achieve this level
 - Support through a new Adult Learning Grant (of up to £30 per week) for any adult studying full time for their first full level 2 qualification.

(DfES 2004, Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners)

- 2.5.2 The City Council has produced a new Corporate Plan to cover 2004 -07 that links the significant agendas into common priorities. Whilst both ACL and family learning have a role to play in meeting these common priorities they do not of themselves form one of those priorities and therefore cross-council working is become increasingly important. In the current context they can no longer be delivered without considerable reference to other City Council directorates and common agendas. To be valued across the city these various forms of learning for adults must demonstrate that they can deliver improvements in developing a prosperous and sustainable economy, improving the quality of life in the city, to ensure thriving 14 year olds who are able to participate in the life of the city or contribute to social well-being and caring for vulnerable people and/or support adults. Of the twelve LPSA targets the twelfth is the most relevant, which is to support 340 people, who are currently workless, to gain employment and for at least 170 of those people to sustain their employment for 13 weeks. This will need to be achieved by 31st March 2005.
- 2.5.3 There is greater financial security from the LSC for providers and less for any type of strategic function. This reflects a national trend since 2001 towards some form of delivery and away from contracting out to one or more major providers (as outlined in DfES (2003) Early Impact of the New Arrangements for ACL provision under the LSC.) In the proposed budgets for 2004-05 the Council received a reduction in LSC grant (£129,761 compared to the previous year's £140,307) whereas providers' budgets stayed steady with an increase to reflect inflation. The guidance on adult learning plans for 2004-05 from the LSC also proposes that the AEMAG grant would be considered to be part of the budget allocated to providers for the next academic year 2005 - 06 rather than at present where it is an element in the LEAs Business Plan, which could result in the further loss of £9,455 to the LSC funding received by the City Council. Yet in terms of our direct provision for Family Learning we will receive an increase of £12,234 for 2004 - 05. The LSC is also taking advice from NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, about safeguarding an element of adult learning that is not explicitly covered by the National Skills Strategy. This is likely to include Learning for Active Citizenship and/or Community development, which the City Council is arguably in a better position than anyone else to deliver through existing community outreach.
- 2.5.4 The development of extended schools, which are beginning to offer a range of activities and services, often beyond the school

day, to help meet the needs of pupils, their families and the wider community. Across the country many schools are already providing some extended services including Adult Learning and Family Learning. The 2002 Education Act has specifically provided flexibility for school governing bodies to develop these additional services in partnership with other groups and agencies to provide a 'joined up approach' to local services. Local authorities have a key role in enabling extended schools to develop. LEAs are expected to work with schools to identify suitable opportunities for involvement. It is anticipated that schools may be able to contribute to local adult learning plans in some or all of the following ways:

- Providing facilities for courses run by existing providers.
- Advising existing providers on the development of suitable local courses.
- Providing information on local learning opportunities
- Promoting existing strategies such as Skills for Life or Adult Learners' Week.

The City Council's Adult Learning team has a key role to play in supporting schools and ensuring the quality of provision.

3. The role of the ACL Consortium and the strategic role of the Council in adult learning

3.1 Without the benefit of an external inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) it is difficult to gauge the impact of the Consortium as a way of planning and delivering adult & community learning across the city. There are few opportunities to benchmark with any similar models nationally. However we are pleased to note that the results of self-assessment and individual provider performance reviews indicate that the provision is 'good' in parts and at the least 'satisfactory'. This stands well in comparison with existing national inspection results provided by the ALI. In terms of best value the Consortium does appear to provide a lower management and co-ordination cost at £129,761 than the three LSC planning areas in West Sussex at £256,507 each, although a direct comparison is not possible at present.

3.2 The Common Inspection Framework (ALI 2001) against which ACL will be judged comprises seven key questions that relate to achievement & standards, the quality of education and training, and leadership & management. The ACL Consortium is likely to be judged upon its performance in providing leadership & management. The seventh question of the Common Inspection Framework is 'How effective are leadership & management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?' and this formed the basis of the Self-Assessment Report and

Development Plan for ACL which was submitted to SLSC by the City Council in January 2004.

- 3.3 The best value challenge for the ACL Consortium is to prove that Leadership & Management for ACL is more cost-effective and efficient through the Consortium model than the alternative models used by other LEAs (either a contracting out role or by making direct delivery of the service). The Consortium is likely to be strengthened by the agreement of proper terms of reference and will be developing the capacity to improve the sharing of good practice, benchmarking, target setting and curriculum leadership & development.

4. Progress with the Best Value Improvement Plan

Recommendation	Progress and comments
<p>Recommendation 1: Contribute to increasing the scope and sustainability of learning opportunities through increased efficiency and capacity building by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular financial reporting on council expenditure • Forming a cross-council co-ordinating group 	<p>Brighton & Hove ACL reaches 3.8% of the city's adult population. This means that the Council is not in the top group of 22% of LEAs who deliver ACL to over 4% of their adult population, but is still well above the national average, which is between 2% and 2.99%.</p> <p>Since 2001-02 ACL has been the direct responsibility of SLSC through contracts with ACL providers. The overall trend in learning opportunities is declining despite budgets remaining constant. The City Council has endeavoured to maintain the number of learning opportunities through regular financial reporting and a strategic overview of adult learning.</p> <p>In 2004 SLSC provided £35,000 funding for two part-time community outreach workers and a Community Learning Fund of £15,000 attached to the City Council's ACL Team in CFS. This work is linked to increasing participation in learning opportunities in nine identified neighbourhood action zones across the city. In the first six months free taster sessions, in local neighbourhoods provided in partnership with the major providers of ACL and supported intensively by outreach workers, have resulted in 110 new learners of which 49% had not been on any courses for at least three years and 44% were from ethnic minorities. 79 of these learners also received some form of accreditation for their work. 49 of these learners were recorded on the data returns that individual providers make to the LSC.</p> <p>It is increasingly likely that the City Council can increase the number and scope of learning opportunities through specific cross-council initiatives funded through the use of the ACL Grant from SLSC (and therefore at no extra cost to council taxpayers). It is recommended in this paper that these initiatives are linked with economic development, community regeneration and extended schools.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2. Achieve effective internal communication about learning opportunities to share good practice across the</p>	<p>These have been created but are limited in their use and development. However internal communication across the City Council is being improved by events and initiatives that involve partnership with other directorates and by an increase in publicity and sharing of good practice. Work has also begun on developing information on learning opportunities and a website is</p>

<p>council and provide a co-ordinated approach to adult learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a document library about learning opportunities • Creating an officer directory on the WAVE 	<p>planned for the near future.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3. Deliver better access to learning for adults who face barriers to participation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a checklist of issues to be addressed in the planning of new learning opportunities 	<p>A proforma and monitoring tool has been created and circulated to relevant City Council staff responsible for providing learning opportunities. So far there is no evidence that this is being used consistently across the council. However we are delivering better access to learning through taking learning opportunities out into local neighbourhoods, making such provision (as well as family learning) free, by using the consortium to encourage providers to increase the number of courses that are run in community settings rather than in their main sites. We have also been proactive in using some of the Community Learning Fund to support learners with specific childcare and transport needs.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4. Improve information about the impact of council learning provision as a basis for continuous service improvement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing new performance indicators to measure service improvement 	<p>All adult learning is subject to performance indicators set by the LSC and the ALI. This is already the case for Family Learning and has been extended to cover our Community Outreach. The performance that needs to be more accurately measured is the contribution that adult learning makes to the wider agenda of the Corporate Plan and specifically targets such as the Employment LPSA for West Hove and Portslade. This will be a major focus for the ACL team for 2004-05 and will be carried out in partnership with other areas of the City Council.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5. Provide learning opportunities that reflect community learning needs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing the results of consultation exercises and 	<p>SLSC have been proactive in commissioning research that has resulted in a clearer picture of learning needs, especially the recent MORI survey in four selected wards in East Brighton, Portslade and Hove. They have also produced a 2003/04 Review of contextual information for learning & skills planning for the Brighton and Hove area. The ACL team have also carried out small scale surveys with the general public into both</p>

<p>programme evaluations</p>	<p>barriers to learning and also what people would be most interested to learn. This information is updated by each event that is open to the general public.</p> <p>The community outreach workers have also provided additional points of contact for specific neighbourhoods and feedback relevant information to the ACL Consortium.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6. Provide equal access to learning opportunities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing comprehensive public information about council learning opportunities • Agreeing a strategy with external partners to produce targeted local information 	<p>Negotiations have continued with the main providers with concerns around duplication and ease of access to information. The ACL team at the City Council have a telephone helpline which is regularly used by members of the public even though often this means signposting them to the appropriate provider . A Learning Information Directory is being planned, which is likely to take the form of a website presence.</p> <p>Adult Learners' Week is a major national event that is co-ordinated by the City Council on behalf of the providers and planned by a focus group. This year a joint leaflet was produced as well as a separate leaflet by City College giving details of extra events at the Connaught Centre. The ACL team distributed these leaflets widely and organised joint events at Churchill Square and on the Bristol Estate.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7. Maximise external funding for learning provision through grants to develop extra capacity and fund measures to support access to learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a central function to help with bids • Installing Grant finder software • Establish a consortium to make best use of funding 	<p>Despite the fact that Grantfinder is 'live' and the Consortium has been meeting for at least twelve months little extra funding has been forthcoming. However, although individual providers do continue to make bids for additional funding independent of partnership with the Council, there are some signs that this culture is changing. Recently the Friends Centre was supported by a seconded member of staff from the ACL team in a successful bid to add to facilities at the new Morley Street Family Centre. With the support of the City Council, the City College has been successful with a European Social Fund bid to provide specific learning opportunities for people with acquired brain injuries. It would seem likely that there is potential here for the successful co-ordination of future bids.</p>

opportunities	
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5. A way forward: a new role for the Council combining strategic leadership with learning opportunities that will support existing City Council priorities

5.1 A new Adult Learning Plan

5.1.1 Currently we provide an annual business plan for the City Council's role in leadership & management of ACL, an annual city-wide curriculum plan for ACL and three year development plans for both Family Learning and the Learning Partnership. All of these are short-term plans, which conform to LSC priorities. What appears to be missing is a long-term strategic Adult Learning Plan, which can link the contribution of Adult Learning to the Corporate Plan of the City Council and both guide the contributions of Adult Learning providers and assist SLSC in its dual roles of planning and funding.

5.1.2 A new Adult Learning Plan would also give a strategic focus and direction to the work of the ACL Consortium, which takes on the key quality improvement roles of:

- Putting teaching, training and learning at the heart of what we do;
- Developing the leaders, teachers, trainers and support staff of the future; and
- Developing a framework for quality and success.

(DfES 2002: Success for All: Reforming Further Education and Training)

5.2 A new cross-council working group to develop new opportunities

5.2.1 Following the Best Value Review in 2002 – 03, the importance of being able to co-ordinate work across the City Council that relates to adult learning and skills has been emphasized. Whilst it is impractical to sustain the level of involvement of a continuous review process there is a need for a process of planning and delivery to tackle regional and local issues that involve more than one directorate of the City Council.

5.2.2 A cross-council group of managers has been meeting recently to attempt to co-ordinate Adult Learning activities within the remit of the City Council. This informal group is chaired by the Adult Learning Manager and includes representation from Children, Families and Schools, Corporate Services and Cultural Services. It is proposed to extend this to include a representative from Adult Social Care. The major focus of the group has been to begin to plan for community-based provision around learning & skills,

reinforce educational links to employability training and support the cultural development of individuals.

- 5.2.3 There is potential to strengthen this group by ensuring that it has a properly agreed remit, representation from all the relevant Council service areas and has agreed reporting strands within the City Council's directorates.

5.3 New possibilities for expanding our existing community outreach work linked to neighbourhood renewal

- 5.3.1 Through two part-time community outreach workers contact has been made with residents in identified Neighbourhood Renewal Wards. Supportive courses have been developed and delivered using a Community Learning Fund to buy in tutors from existing adult learning providers, both within the ACL consortium and also the Community Learning Forum (CLEAR) of voluntary sector organisations within the Learning Partnership. The key to this effective learning brokerage is to work in partnership both with community groups to reach the potential learners and with existing and new learning providers who are willing to adapt to the needs of the learners (Learning & Skills Research Centre 2004: Learning Brokerage: Building bridges between learners and providers). Thus far we have been able to develop new courses linked to community safety and also provide a mix of courses linked to employability (e.g. first aid and food & hygiene), which offer accreditation that can support the City Council's wider neighbourhood renewal and economic development policies.
- 5.3.2 Given the success of this pilot and the pool of national good practice available both through New Deal for Communities (DWP 2004: Building on New Deal: Local solutions meeting individual needs) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Initiatives, combined with the growth of interest at national and local level in extending schools into their communities, there appears to be ample potential to develop new provision in this way that will support wider Council agendas. And continue to draw down LSC funding.

6. Recommendations

6.1 To agree a city-wide Adult Learning Plan (see Appendix 2 for a draft outline), which will be included as part of the Directorate Delivery Plan for Children, Families and Schools.

6.2 To form a new cross council group to explore cross-directorate opportunities for Adult Learning, at a regional and local level.

6.3 To develop new forms of learning brokerage with the Learning & Skills Council that can deliver against the Council's priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan.

7. References

7.1 National and regional plans & strategies

Adult Learning Inspectorate (2001) The Common Inspection Framework for Inspecting Post-16 Education and Training

Department for Education and Skills (2002) Success for All: Reforming Further Education and Training

Department for Education and Skills (2004) Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

Department for Work and Pensions (2004) Building on New Deal: Local solutions meeting individual needs

Learning and Skills Council, South East Region (2004) Improving LSC Effectiveness in the South East Region

7.2 Local strategies and plans

Sussex Learning and Skills Council (2004) Annual Plan 2004-05

Brighton & Hove Council (2004) Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007

Brighton & Hove Council (2004) The Brighton & Hove and Adur Area Investment Framework: Executive Summary & Action Plan

7.3 Research papers

Department for Education and Skills (2003) Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report: The Contribution of Adult Learning to Health and Social Capital

Department for Education and Skills (2003) Early Impact of New Arrangements for ACL under the LSC'

Feinstein, L (2002) Quantitative Estimates of the Social Benefits of Learning.1: Crime Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning

Sussex Learning and Skills Council (2003) MORI Poll – Adult Learners in Brighton and Hove

Learning & Skills Research Centre (2004) Learning Brokerage: Building bridges between learners and providers

8. Glossary

ACL	Adult & Community Learning
AEMAG	Adult Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant
AIF	Area Investment Framework
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
CFS	Children, Families and Schools
CLEAR	Community Learning Forum of the Learning
Partnership	
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
LEA	Local Education Authority
LPSA	Local Public Service Agreement
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
SEEDA	South East England Development Agency
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
SLSC	Sussex Learning and Skills Council