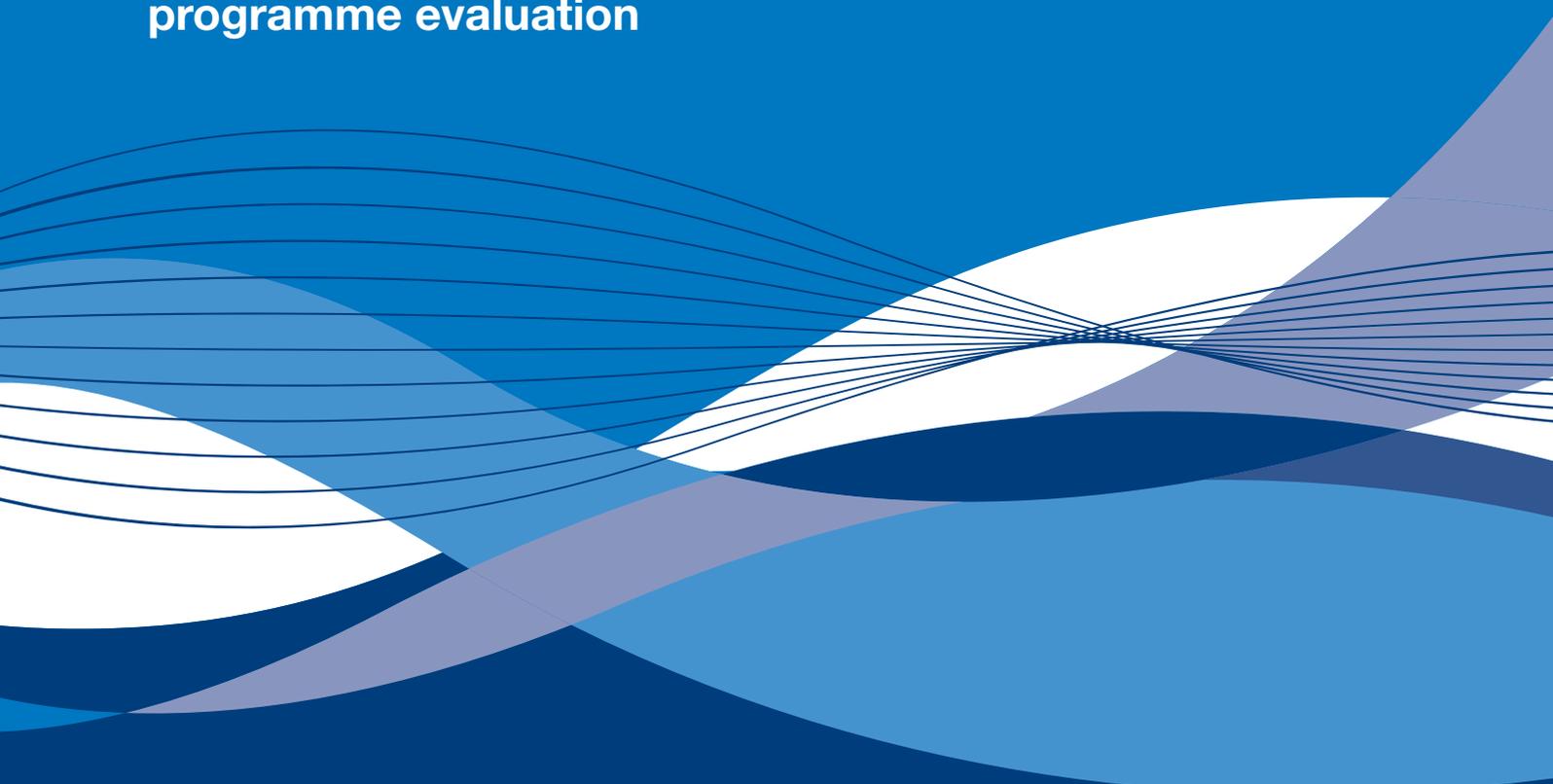


learning connections
adult literacies
phase-two
pathfinders

programme evaluation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Context

The national strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS), 2001, set out a framework and recommendations to address literacies issues in Scotland.

As part of the Scottish Executive's aim to develop good practice in adult literacies provision, four pathfinder projects were established in 2002 to support innovative approaches to literacies learning.

The Scottish Executive set up these initial Pathfinders, with responsibility for ongoing management and administration transferred to Communities Scotland in April 2003.

In 2003, the Learning Connections Team within Communities Scotland, as part of their role in developing adult literacy provision in Scotland, established a second phase of pathfinder projects.

Eight Phase Two Pathfinders were selected which sought to develop innovative practice, identify successful approaches, and inform the developing national literacies strategy. These projects commenced in late 2003 and received grant support up to 31st March 2006.

Delivering the Programme

The programme was designed and managed by the newly formed Learning Connections Team, which initiated a Challenge Fund in order to select a group of Pathfinder projects.

The funding competition was promoted widely and generated substantial interest. An uncomplicated two-stage application process gave rise to 93 Notes of Interest and, later, 16 full applications. During the appraisal of applications eight projects were selected.

An external support contractor was also appointed to establish a formative evaluation framework and tools with which to monitor the activity of the eight projects.

The Framework and tools were developed as agreed, with input from participating organisations. Additional monitoring support was provided by way of one-to-one advice, five workshop events, and a website.

While providing a helpful method of tracking project progress, it proved challenging to accommodate the diversity of project types and organisational capabilities within a single monitoring Framework.

From a programme perspective, the Framework was not used fully to synthesise and distil the learning from the Pathfinders and to share this learning with a wider audience.

From the perspective of projects, opportunities to produce, and critically reflect on, performance information were limited, mainly by the resources and time available to Pathfinder staff to devote to project monitoring.

In addition to the external monitoring support put in place, the Learning Connections Team played an important and effective role in administering grants and in providing ongoing guidance and support to the Pathfinders.

Despite some challenges in management and implementation, the Phase Two Pathfinder Programme was implemented within its agreed budget, at a cost of £964,720 over three years.

The Pathfinder Projects

The Programme supported eight projects that were targeted on strategically significant literacies issues and were well placed to make a contribution to the ALNIS strategy.

The eight Pathfinders were:

- Challenge Dad – encouraging male family members to participate in literacies learning for the benefit of children and families (Aberdeen City Council)
- Countdown East End – family literacies learning using a community development approach and incorporating training and peer education (Parents of East End Primary Schools)
- Farm Plus – literacies learning, through the use of radio and internet technology, for rural areas and farm workers (Dumfries & Galloway Literacies Partnership)
- Homing in on Literacy – promoting sustainable tenancies by ensuring that young people are given literacies learning opportunities (Perth and Kinross Council)
- Healthwise Aberdeen – developing health-related materials and literacy awareness in collaboration with patients and health professionals (Grampian Health Board)
- Links to Literacies – developing arrangements to promote voluntary sector involvement in literacies learning and the work of adult literacies partnerships (Learning Link Scotland)
- Stirling Learning Curriculum – developing training and a curriculum specifically for adults with learning difficulties (Stirling Literacies Action Plan Partnership)
- The Welcoming – literacies learning for speakers of other languages through sharing culture and breaking down barriers for asylum seekers and refugees (City of Edinburgh Council)

The Pathfinders focused mainly on designing and testing new structures and methods for attracting and supporting learners.

Pathfinder Progress and Results

The Pathfinder projects progressed well, albeit subject to significant early delays.

Common difficulties were encountered in: recruiting specialist staff; engaging with the target group; ensuring full take-up of learning opportunities; making use of new technology; and securing appropriate resources. While many of these challenges were unavoidable, others stemmed from a degree of initial over-ambition on the part of participating organisations.

At the close of the programme, the projects had all made satisfactory progress. Particular improvements in progress and performance were evident during the final six months of implementation.

The report suggests that the Pathfinders: brought direct benefits to literacies learners; introduced new ways of working locally; provided an important catalyst for partnership working; and gave rise to tangible learning resources and materials. While these are positive outcomes, these are likely to have been strengthened with further time in which to set-up and deliver agreed activities.

Common elements of effective practice identified included: methods of engaging with 'hard to reach' client groups; the use of community networks, resources and capabilities; learner involvement in programme design; approaches to delivering learning and learner support; the use of new technologies, resources, and materials; approaches to partnership working; and methods of integrating literacies into wider learning/community activities.

In all cases the Pathfinder projects have left some form of tangible legacy locally. In five cases, alternative grant funding has been secured to carry on project activity in a similar vein, and in three cases local partners are attempting to mainstream the successful components into wider programmes of activity.

The ability of the Pathfinders to sustain and build-on achievements was influenced by the extent to which they: were established with an independent structure and identity; were closely linked into local strategic priorities, structures, and support; and had sufficient internal management capacity or outside support in place.

Each Pathfinder project identified elements that had potential for replication elsewhere. However, it is not possible to simply transplant project approaches or methods wholesale to other contexts. In each case a variety of local circumstances and pre-requisites were instrumental to success.

Significant achievements were made, however, the study indicates that the ultimate success and cost-effectiveness of the Pathfinder programme will depend on the extent to which: the pilot activity is sustained and built upon locally; project learning is transferred or replicated elsewhere; and this activity results in new or improved literacies practice across Scotland.

The Lessons Learned

Overall, the study suggests that the Pathfinder programme was introduced as a bold and innovative initiative, which has subsequently yielded positive results and learning.

A number of strengths of the Pathfinder approach have been noted. It has:

- enabled the targeting of strategically important literacies issues;
- encouraged organisations outside of the literacies field to become involved in delivering literacies learning;
- provided the time and resources to test new literacies activity;
- offered the opportunity to gather real-time intelligence from innovative projects; and
- uncovered much learning for practitioners in the literacies field.

On the basis of the evaluation evidence, the study points to a number of key lessons from programme implementation, including the importance of:

- establishing robust programme governance and clear leadership;
- putting in place robust management arrangements and co-ordinated support;
- embedding pathfinder activity fully within local literacies priorities and structures;
- implementing a monitoring framework that lends itself to ongoing and critical reflection;
- setting clear and agreed literacies learning outcomes and measuring these;
- building in adequate resources and time to enable effective project delivery;
- providing ongoing, holistic, and flexible support to participating organisations; and
- ensuring a sustained focus on forward planning, mainstreaming and dissemination.

Alternative Models

In moving forward, the study recognises that the literacies field has matured significantly since the establishment of the Pathfinder Programme.

In recognition of the above, and on the basis of information derived from the consultation process, the report puts forward four alternative models in literacies learning:

- Thematic Pathfinders – a targeted series of large demonstration projects focused on areas where gaps in literacies practice still exist, and which are in keeping with the priorities of the refreshed ALNIS strategy;
 - Action Research – a series of small-scale action research projects that would provide literacies practitioners and partners with the time, resources, and support to enable planning, action, reflection and learning;
-

-
- Seeding Innovation – a seedcorn fund to support small-scale actions that help identify, develop and pilot innovative or effective ways of supporting literacies learning within agreed themes; and
 - Research and Development – a structured programme of research and policy work designed to identify and harvest learning from existing literacies practice.

Whatever the option or combination of options adopted, the study points to the importance of maximising the opportunities for others to learn from and replicate successful elements of the Phase Two Pathfinders.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The national strategy for adult literacy and numeracy is set out in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) report (2001). The report identifies twenty-one recommendations to take forward the Scottish strategy. Recommendation seventeen states that ‘four pathfinder projects should be established to raise the awareness and stimulate demand for literacy and numeracy’.

In 2002, four Pathfinder projects were established to support innovative approaches in literacy and numeracy practice across Scotland. The Scottish Executive’s Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department (ETLLD) set up these initial Pathfinder projects, with responsibility for ongoing management and administration transferred to Communities Scotland in April 2003.

In 2003, the Learning Connections Team within Communities Scotland, as part of their role in developing adult literacy and numeracy provision in Scotland, established a second phase of pathfinder projects. Eight Pathfinder projects were selected and commissioned through a two-stage Challenge Fund process.

The Phase Two Pathfinder projects sought to, amongst other things, develop innovative practice, identify successful approaches, and inform the developing national adult literacy and numeracy strategy. They were initiated in late 2003 and received grant support up to 31st March 2006.

In order to better understand and learn from the Pathfinder experience, EKOS Ltd was commissioned to carry out a final evaluation of the Phase Two Programme. The term ‘Programme’ relates to the entire Pathfinder experience and encompasses the Challenge Fund process, the Evaluation Framework and tools, and the projects. This report presents the findings of the Evaluation study.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The stated objectives of this evaluation were to:

- assess the extent to which the individual Pathfinder projects have achieved the aims and objectives outlined in their action plans;
- identify the lessons learned (positive and negative) from the work of the Pathfinder projects;
- identify effective practice which could be disseminated throughout Scotland and any factors that would need to be taken into account if this practice is to be implemented elsewhere;
- evaluate the effectiveness of the tools and the processes adopted by the Pathfinder Evaluation Framework;
- identify the challenges arising from setting up the Pathfinder projects particularly with regard to the relationship with the host agency; and

-
- consider whether the Pathfinder programme process is a cost-effective way of stimulating innovative work within adult literacies provision.

1.3 STUDY METHOD

The evaluation was carried out between December 2005 and August 2006 and included:

- a desk-based review of:
 - relevant contextual documentation to position the programme within wider literacies policy and practice
 - Challenge Fund documentation to develop a detailed understanding of the mechanics of the allocation and administration of grant funding;
 - project documentation to establish the rationale, objectives, targets, and planned activities of the eight Pathfinder projects
 - project monitoring information to establish the individual progress and performance of each Pathfinder
 - monitoring framework documentation to understand the method and tools used to track and review Pathfinder progress;
- face-to-face consultations with the 10 representatives from Learning Connections and ODS consultants, to review the management, administration and support provided to the Pathfinder projects;
- interviews with lead representatives from each of the eight Pathfinder projects (during implementation in January 2006 and following completion in June 2006) to examine Pathfinder progress, performance, challenges, effective practice, and potential for replication; and
- a programme of interviews and focus groups to enable a variety of stakeholders from each of the Pathfinder projects to reflect on, and share, their experiences, including: representatives from the Pathfinder Advisory Groups; local partners involved in the delivery of the Pathfinder projects; learners and other beneficiaries involved in Pathfinder activities.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides the background and context for the Pathfinder programme and describes its main characteristics;
- **Section 3** reviews the arrangements for managing the Pathfinder programme and monitoring Pathfinder project activity;
- **Section 4** examines the experiences of each of the eight Pathfinder projects and discusses their legacy and opportunities for replication;
- **Section 5** draws together the main findings and implications arising from the evaluation study.

2. THE PHASE-TWO PATHFINDER PROGRAMME

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview of the Phase Two Adult Literacies Pathfinder Programme. In particular, it: describes the main characteristics of the Phase Two Programme; briefly summarises the eight Phase Two Pathfinder projects supported; and outlines the costs associated with the programme.

2.2 THE PHASE TWO PROGRAMME

In 2003, the Learning Connections Team within Communities Scotland, as part of their role in developing adult literacy and numeracy provision in Scotland, established a second phase of pathfinder projects.

Eight Pathfinder projects were selected and commissioned through a two-stage Challenge Fund process.

The aim of the Phase Two programme was to improve the quality of adult literacy and numeracy provision in Scotland. Pathfinder projects were sought that would focus on either service delivery (i.e. courses and programmes) or research into literacy as an everyday practice.

The Challenge Fund was designed to support potentially innovative ideas and approaches from across Scotland and throughout the literacy and numeracy field. These projects were to encourage innovation and collaboration between learning providers by supporting the development of new approaches that could be assessed and evaluated over practical timescales.

The Challenge Fund allowed for a maximum allocation of £50,000 per annum per project, to cover all the costs of developing and piloting Pathfinder activity.

The Phase Two programme was designed and managed by the newly formed Learning Connections Team within Communities Scotland. Each Pathfinder project was assigned a staff contact within the Learning Connections Team, who was to offer ongoing advice and support where appropriate.

In addition, an external support contractor (consultants ODS Ltd) was appointed in March 2004 to establish an evaluation framework and evaluation tools with which to monitor Pathfinder activity and, where requested, support projects on an ongoing basis to use the framework.

2.3 THE PATHFINDER PROJECTS

Following a competitive two-stage application process eight Phase Two Pathfinder projects were selected and commissioned in September 2003.

The phase-two projects sought to, amongst other things, develop innovative literacy and numeracy practice, identify successful approaches, and inform the developing national adult literacy and numeracy strategy.

The eight Pathfinder projects were:

Challenge Dad (Aberdeen City Council) – encouraging male family members to participate in literacies learning for the benefit of children and families;

Countdown East End (Parents of East End Primary Schools) – family literacies learning using a community development approach and incorporating training and peer education;

Farm Plus (previously called Learning Opportunities in Rural Areas - LORA) – literacies learning, via the use of radio and internet technology, for rural areas and farm workers (Dumfries & Galloway Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnership);

Homing in on Literacy – promoting sustainable tenancies by ensuring that young people are given literacies learning opportunities (Perth and Kinross Council);

Healthwise Aberdeen – developing health-related materials and literacy awareness in collaboration with patients and health professionals (Grampian Health Board);

Links to Literacies – developing an infrastructure to promote voluntary sector involvement in adult literacies partnerships and thereby increase engagement with excluded learners (Learning Link Scotland);

Stirling Learning Curriculum – developing training and a curriculum specifically for adults with learning difficulties (Stirling Literacies Action Plan Partnership); and

The Welcoming – literacies learning for speakers of other languages through sharing culture and breaking down barriers for asylum seekers and refugees (City of Edinburgh Council).

2.4 PROGRAMME COSTS

The costs of the Phase Two Pathfinder Programme were made up of two interrelated components:

- grant funding to support the implementation of each project; and
- a contract to design and implement the collective Evaluation Framework and associated support.

The actual expenditure incurred by Pathfinder projects over the period was **£872,426**. A breakdown of Pathfinder project expenditure is presented in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Pathfinder Project Costs

Pathfinder	Expenditure
Challenge Dad	£124,779
Countdown East End	£105,000
Farm Plus	£149,180
Healthwise Aberdeen	£95,527
Homing In on Literacy	£79,360
Links to Literacies	£113,309
Stirling Learning Curriculum	£73,235
The Welcoming	£132,036
All Pathfinder projects	£872,426

In addition, the costs of the design and implementation of the Pathfinder evaluation framework totalled **£92,294**. This included the professional fees and related costs incurred by the external support contractor. A breakdown of costs is provided in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2: Pathfinder Monitoring Framework Costs

Element of cost	Expenditure
Fees	£60,301
Workshops	£4,920
Website	£7,500
Dissemination	£9,395
VAT	£10,179
TOTAL	£92,294

The overall cost of the Phase Two Pathfinder programme was **£964,720**, with some 90% of costs attributable to direct grants to projects and 10% to external project monitoring and support. It should be noted that the input of staff time and resources from Learning Connections was met through existing departmental budgets, and is therefore not included in total programme costs.

3. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Section examines the management and implementation of the Phase Two Pathfinder Programme. In particular it examines: the process of allocating and administering grant funding through the Challenge Fund; the monitoring and support framework put in place; and the arrangements for programme management and administration.

The analysis presented draws on documented evidence made available by Communities Scotland and incorporates the views of Learning Connections staff, the external support contractor, and lead representatives from each of the eight Pathfinder projects.

3.2 CHALLENGE FUND PROCEDURES

3.2.1 INITIAL PROMOTION

Learning Connections initiated the Pathfinder Challenge Fund in April 2003. It was launched by way of an advert in the Times Education Supplement and through some 2,050 letters issued via a database of known individuals and organisations active in the literacies field.

While the Learning Connections network of contacts and distribution list was less developed in 2003 than today, this approach seems to have been handled in a considered way and proved successful in reaching a wide range of prospective applicants.

The interest generated from initial promotion is evident. In all, 296 requests for application packs were requested from organisations across Scotland. This included contact from 29 of the 32 Scottish local authorities, and interest from around 60 voluntary organisations.

3.2.2 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The Challenge Fund was based on a two-stage application process. Initially, interested organisations completed a Note of Interest giving a brief outline of their proposed Pathfinder project. A smaller number of eligible organisations were then invited to submit a full application.

In response to the call for applications, 93 organisations submitted Notes of Interest, 18 of which were invited to submit a full application and offered ongoing guidance and support to do so. In all 16 full applications were received.

Overall, a robust and guided application process was put in place, which made use of appropriate application forms and supporting materials. No significant difficulties have been reported by the individuals involved in designing/administering this process or by the eventual grant recipients.

3.2.3 PROJECT APPRAISAL AND SELECTION

Staff within Learning Connections initially assessed Notes of Interest in order to ascertain the extent to which these were consistent with Pathfinder funding criteria and were unlikely to duplicate existing work nationally.

An independent funding panel, comprising representation from Learning Connections and external partners, then appraised full applications. Applications were assessed against an agreed scoring framework. Projects were ranked on the basis of scores allocated and the decision was taken to support eight projects within the available budget.

This two-stage process of project appraisal appears to have been appropriate and effective. The process was transparent (assessment criteria were agreed and circulated in advance) and decisions drew on a range of appropriate expertise from within and outwith Communities Scotland. The evaluation team has been made aware of no significant difficulties arising from this process.

3.2.4 FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Applicants were notified of the outcome of the funding competition following assessment and there was an expectation that the selected Pathfinder projects would be up and running by January 2004. An award level and payment schedule was agreed with each Pathfinder host organisation.

In line with the terms of grant, payments were made quarterly in arrears on the basis of expenditure incurred and financial claims submitted. Expenditure was authorised by Learning Connections staff and monitored through the Scottish Executive TRS grant payments system.

Although a standard practice for the Scottish Executive, and agreed with project representatives at the outset, this retrospective payment procedure caused cash flow difficulties for one voluntary sector project host in particular. Arrangements for making payments 'in advance of need' should therefore be carefully considered in relation to voluntary sector grant recipients.

3.2.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION SUPPORT

3.2.6 SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

The Phase Two programme aimed to generate maximum learning from the eight Pathfinder projects. As such it incorporated a formative evaluation framework designed to enable projects to track, review, share and improve performance on an ongoing basis.

In February 2004 an external consultancy, ODS Ltd, was commissioned to develop and support the implementation of the Pathfinder Evaluation Framework and Toolkit. The objectives of this commission were threefold:

- to develop a framework that could be used by all of the projects, acknowledging their different themes and based on common principles;

-
- to develop evaluation tools which could also be used by the projects at the different stages required by their 'Conditions of Grant' letters; and
 - through ongoing support, to identify and implement any changes required in the evaluation process.

The formative evaluation framework operated in parallel to the delivery of the Pathfinder projects and was designed as complementary to the independent evaluation reported in this document.

3.2.7 THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The formative Evaluation Framework was developed in a collaborative fashion with Pathfinder project representatives, who were given the opportunity to come together to collectively input at the design phase. As such it was a positive, participative process and arrangements were not imposed on participants.

The Framework provided an overall approach to ongoing self-evaluation, which attempted to cater for the diversity of project types and organisational capabilities. The Framework centred on ongoing Pathfinder reporting against eight agreed evaluation criteria.

A difficulty conveyed to the EKOS evaluation team by the support contractor was in tailoring this 'one-size-fits-all' model to all requirements. For one or two of the Pathfinder organisations, with limited performance management experience, the Framework was perceived as having been an additional and onerous burden. For the more experienced organisations the Framework was regarded as having been relatively straightforward, albeit not fully integrated into existing evaluation frameworks e.g. Learning, Evaluation and Planning (LEAP).

The LEAP framework was considered as a possible model for the Pathfinder Evaluation Framework. Some of the terminology used in LEAP (such as 'outcomes' and 'outputs') was incorporated into the Framework. However, the Evaluation Framework Advisory Group decided that because the idea of using LEAP was introduced after the evaluation framework had been partly designed (with input from the Pathfinder organisations), any attempt to incorporate the LEAP model wholesale would only lead to confusion.

3.2.8 THE TOOLKIT

The Framework incorporated an Evaluation Toolkit, which provided a guided set of materials to be used by Pathfinder projects to assist performance management. These included pro formas that would be used to collate baseline data, establish an action plan, report quarterly on progress against key evaluation criteria, and undertake a detailed final self-evaluation.

While overall regarded as useful, Learning Connections and Pathfinder project staff have conveyed some slight concerns that the materials:

- were introduced during the busy set-up period for projects, meaning that some were playing 'catch up' from the outset to complete required paperwork;

-
- did not include any guidance or pro formas related to monitoring learner progression or outcomes; and
 - centred on multiple and fairly complex evaluation criteria (e.g. best value, innovation etc.), which were subject to variable interpretation by the Pathfinder projects.

It noting all of the above, however, it should be stated that the Pathfinder projects were very closely involved in developing and designing the evaluation criteria documents to be used in the toolkit.

3.2.9 ONGOING SUPPORT

The external support contractor to the Pathfinder organisations provided ongoing guidance and support in three main ways.

ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT

Ongoing one-to-one consultancy support was offered to each Pathfinder, and was generally regarded by them as both helpful and informative. The input of the support contractor has mainly been used to compile baseline information, define project outputs and outcomes, and formulate dissemination strategies.

The use of support, however, was not a mandatory part of participation, and as such the take-up of advice varied substantially between projects, with most making little or no use of the support available. Despite efforts from the contractor to encourage the take up of support, Pathfinder organisations typically prioritised the delivery of agreed activities over the monitoring of project progress.

The scope of the support contractor's remit was also restricted within the terms of the contract from Learning Connections to advising on the use of the evaluation framework and tools. As instructed, their remit did not extend to other (potentially useful) aspects of project planning, the design of internal project monitoring systems, general management support, and the design of 'exit strategies'.

It should be noted that 'exit strategies' were for the Pathfinder projects to arrange themselves (planning exit strategies was an important part of the Challenge Fund application process). However, in the spirit of co-operation, the support contractor, did offer to facilitate additional themed workshops including one on 'exit strategies'.

WORKSHOPS

A series of five workshops were organised to provide the Pathfinder projects with the opportunity to come together and share common experiences. The structure and content of events was designed to enable projects to provide feedback to each other, to address issues of concern, and to learn about topics of interest.

Project representatives have reported that the introduction of workshop events was a welcome addition to the Programme. However, the commitment to these waned as project representatives, particularly those located in outlying areas, recognised the significant time involved in travelling to, and participating in, events. Concerns have also been expressed that the content of some events, one in particular, appeared rather unfocused and did not meet initial expectations.

WEBSITE

A dedicated Pathfinder website was established in early 2005 to enable users to download relevant programme materials, find out about other project activities, and share views with others via a discussion forum. The idea of having a website stemmed directly from early workshops facilitated by the support contractor and was welcomed by the projects. Access to the website was restricted to Pathfinder representatives and Learning Connections staff.

Project representatives have suggested that this website was an underused resource, which provided relatively static and non-interactive content. They have indicated limited value from the website, and consequently their use of the website and its content seems to have been minimal.

3.2.10 REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

Despite input from participating organisations, the Evaluation Framework followed a relatively rigid written reporting format based on quarterly, annual and final reports. Where able to draw comparisons, Pathfinder representatives have reported little distinction between this and the reporting requirements of other grant funders.

All Pathfinder projects were required to complete: a baseline data form; a Project Action Plan; and Quarterly/Annual Progress Reports; and quarterly financial claim. The use of the other toolkit documents was optional, although it was thought that these documents might have assisted the projects when it came to compiling progress reports and in the final evaluation of the Pathfinder project.

In some cases, project representatives have reported that an excessive volume of Pathfinder reporting materials was required. The Support Contractor has also confirmed this assertion.

While helpful in reporting ongoing progress, and demonstrating accountability for the grant funding received, it has been acknowledged by Learning Connections staff that the Framework did not lend itself to ongoing critical reflection. This, and a natural inclination not to report negatively to funders, has meant that the reports produced are in many cases overly positive and offer very little critical analysis of the ongoing challenges arising from project implementation.

An important question is also the extent to which the reported information was used as a basis for ongoing learning and dissemination. Quarterly monitoring reports were posted on the Pathfinder website and experiences shared between projects at scheduled workshops. However, it seems that an opportunity was missed to systematically share the learning from these demonstration projects with a wider audience. That said, various Pathfinder dissemination activities did take place. For example, a small number of the Pathfinder projects were active in sharing their experience through local seminars and events. Learning Connections staff also ensured opportunities to take this experience onto a wider stage. A major Pathfinder dissemination event was also held in March 2006, as the culmination to the Pathfinder programme.

3.3 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND CO-ORDINATION

3.3.1 THE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Learning Connections Team within Communities Scotland managed the Pathfinder programme.

A review of management arrangements has indicated that the programme was managed as two separate but interrelated pieces of work:

- ongoing Pathfinder project delivery and support; and
- the external Pathfinder Evaluation Framework support contract.

Learning Connections staff have identified two main management issues arising at programme level:

- there were no regular dedicated programme management meetings that involved all relevant staff, including the support contractor, which meant that some confusion over roles and responsibilities emerged;
- while all of the reports were available on the website, there was no systematic process for making use of quarterly Pathfinder monitoring information, which meant that this intelligence wasn't used to influence programme delivery.

In addition, while the delivery of the external support contract benefited from ongoing oversight and guidance from a small Advisory Group, the Pathfinder programme itself did not. This meant that following the allocation of grant funding, there was no overall independent strategic co-ordination, guidance or input to the design or direction of the programme.

3.3.2 OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Despite some challenges in establishing a clear and robust management framework, a number of staff within Learning Connections played an important and effective role in supporting the implementation of the Pathfinder programme.

Learning Connections staff fulfilled a range of responsibilities, with two staff tasked with managing the Evaluation Framework, and seven staff tasked with offering ongoing support to the Pathfinder projects.

In relation to this input, Learning Connections staff and Pathfinder representatives have found that:

- staff were given a degree of flexibility to undertake their roles and no significant tensions arose as a result of the dual role of staff, i.e. they acted both as grant administrators and as a source of ongoing advice and support;

-
- the approach and input of staff varied somewhat between projects, influenced by their background and interests of staff, although all appeared to fulfil their responsibilities with diligence; and
 - the input of staff was generally valued by Pathfinder organisations, who welcomed the positive and supportive relationship that they established with their designated staff contact.

The support contractor was tasked with a specific remit, to provide support relating to the implementation of the Evaluation Framework. Where this direct support was utilised by the Pathfinder projects this was regarded as effective and of a high quality.

4. THE PATHFINDER EXPERIENCE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This Section examines in detail the individual experiences and lessons emerging from each of the eight Pathfinder projects.

In relation to each Pathfinder, the Section examines the: background and context to activity; project objectives; delivery arrangements; progress and achievements; key constraints and weaknesses; literacies learning and key outcomes arising; effective practice evident; the Pathfinder legacy; and any potential for replication.

The analysis draws on: the performance information produced by the Pathfinder projects as part of the Evaluation Framework; interviews with relevant staff within Learning Connections; and one-to-one interviews and focus groups with Pathfinder staff, Advisory Group members, delivery partners, and learners.

The following pages provide a detailed discussion of each Pathfinder project in turn.

4.2 CHALLENGE DAD

4.2.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Challenge Dad Pathfinder originated from the work of Aberdeen City Council's Family Learning Team. The proposal was developed in response to the needs identified in earlier pilot work in the Tullos area of Aberdeen, an area of multiple deprivation.

The work of the Pathfinder emerged from an established approach to family learning in Aberdeen. This is based on the philosophy that everyone is involved in everyday literacies 'events' and 'practices'. It also recognises the assets and skills that parents/carers already possess.

The Pathfinder was set up to work with, and through, the male relations (the 'dads') of children living in Aberdeen. It had a particular focus on localities designated as regeneration priority areas.

4.2.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Challenge Dad aimed to address the low participation of fathers and other male carers in family learning by harnessing everyday literacy skills (reading, writing and number work) to support children's learning.

Among the key objectives set out initially for the project were to:

- engage with 90 new 'dads' (male family members) in Pathfinder activities, and draw up prototype Family Learning Plans;
- organise one weekend outing per month with literacies content;
- provide appropriate training and support for participants to organise events independently on a sustained basis;
- support participants to become action researchers, recording their everyday literacies practices;
- involve participants as peer educators and engage them in two planned learning activities each term;
- provide in-service training to project partners (e.g. health visitors) in response to identified need; and
- involve participants in final Pathfinder reporting and dissemination processes.

As it emerged, project representatives have reported that the initial breadth of work envisaged for the Pathfinder was overly ambitious. This resulted in some modification of approach, which narrowed the scope of project activities undertaken.

4.2.3 DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

A Steering group comprising partners who supported the initial Pathfinder funding application provided ongoing support to Challenge Dad. Partner input and guidance has been provided through regular steering group meetings. A management committee of dads (users), once established, was also reported to have met regularly and provided valuable input to the development of activities.

The host agency for the Pathfinder was Aberdeen City Council's Family Learning Team. Management arrangements appear to have worked well and seem to have been instrumental in fostering close working relationships between Challenge Dad and wider Family Learning services. These arrangements have been helped by the independent project identity afforded to Challenge Dad (i.e. a separate bank account was set up), which enabled it to respond flexibly to user needs.

Following unavoidable delays in recruitment, Challenge Dad employed a full-time Community Learning Worker and a part-time clerical worker. Part-time support staff were also used as and when required. Line management responsibility for the Pathfinder rested with the Senior Family Learning Worker within the Family Learning Team.

The project was based within a primary school but was able to make use of a wide range of local facilities and settings, which provided opportunities for participation during the day, in the evening and at weekends.

A close working relationship with project partners was also an important feature of the project. The Primrosehill Family Centre, Ashgrove Family Centre, Station House Media Unit and Aberdeen Lads Club provided venues, crèche facilities, in-kind time for collaborative work, and access to high quality multi-media resources. Other partners provided an important source of client referrals to Challenge Dad.

4.2.4 PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Following initial delays in recruitment and time spent in engaging and building up relationships with participants, Challenge Dad surpassed the expectations of the local partners involved.

Among the main reported activities undertaken were the following:

- 122 contacts were made with men through the monthly activity programme (140 children);
- over 90 participants registered and 47 active participants regularly received information of activities and opportunities;
- ten workers from family centres and youth work provision attended a Group Work Skills Course for Professionals;
- a programme of monthly activities was delivered, including group film reviews, quizzes and word searches;
- a range of courses were provided, including First Aid, Video Editing, Minibus training, Digital Photography, Skills for Life, I'm a Parent Get Me Out of Here;

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- one-to-one literacy support was provided, where required to meet the literacies needs arising;
 - a ‘Single Dads Group’ was set up and supported, which was able to make an increasing input to the design and delivery of activities;
 - a Family Learning Plan Framework was commissioned, developed and tested with four families; and
 - a variety of literacies resources were sourced and purchased (e.g. handwriting sheets) and a website developed.

Overall, despite initial setbacks in recruitment, the Pathfinder has delivered a range of innovative community-based literacies work. It has achieved the main objectives set, and has been particularly successful in engaging with and supporting learners.

4.2.5 KEY CONSTRAINTS

Staff and delivery partners have identified a number of operational constraints. These highlight important lessons for the future delivery of this and similar projects.

Among the main challenges encountered were the following:

- difficulties in recruiting appropriately skilled staff resulted in a six month delay in the start date of the project;
- difficulties in securing the expected outputs from a contractor meant that a completed Family Learning Plan framework was not put in place;
- the time and resources required to engage with and build relationships with dads added significantly to the project’s workload;
- an early flow of inappropriate referrals to the project, although subsequently addressed, meant that time was spent dealing with ineligible clients;
- the delivery of more activities than anticipated over-extended both the budget and staffing resource;
- technical hitches and difficulties with a contractor led to delays in establishing a project website;
- difficulties in gaining or sustaining a meaningful commitment from some partners required further work in cultivating new partnerships;
- a lack of interest in the production of a quarterly newsletter proved a time-consuming and expensive distraction; and
- difficulties in finding venues for evening sessions and a lack of take-up of adult learning activity limited the scale of formal learning outcomes.

In some cases the flexible approach of the Pathfinder and the strong partnership working in place ensured that any difficulties were overcome.

4.2.6 KEY PATHFINDER OUTCOMES

Challenge Dad brought about a number of significant achievements that surpassed the expectations of the project team.

Among the main outcomes identified were:

- the development of a core group of learners, which were sustained for over 18 months;
- the creation of a Family Learning Signature template, which will be further developed by the Family Learning Team;
- an increased understanding and skills by staff working with men in a group work situation, through participation in the Group Work Skills course;
- progression onto further learning opportunities for some learners;
- recognition among project partners of the importance and value of having a dedicated project supporting fathers; and
- provision of another route into literacies provision for learners who initially would not have identified literacies as an issue.

4.2.7 LITERACIES LEARNING

Literacies learning was a strong focus of this Pathfinder, through writing, using ICT including video equipment, and one-to-one literacy work. Social activities also incorporated some form of literacy content, which was delivered in discrete ways. Challenge Dad made a subtle link to literacy using activities that informed and stimulated discussion.

Attendance was encouraged through the provision of social activities and a crèche, which resulted in good regular attendance from parents. The approach adopted enabled learners to identify their existing skills visually, acknowledge skills they aspired to and define their learning priorities for the future, allowing a responsive curriculum to be developed.

Feedback from learners has suggested that the Pathfinder resulted in positive outcomes. Participating dads reported gains in confidence and self-esteem, particularly in relation to completing agency forms and dealing with agency staff.

Challenge Dad appears to have led participants to an increased understanding of their children's learning needs and enabled them to be better equipped to support this learning. This was reported to have resulted in dads taking an increased role in their child's development and to improved relationships at home.

Group and social skills were enhanced through an introduction to new activities, for example mountain biking and cooking. Although there was little take up of formal adult learning activity, some of the dads who participated on the original programme went on to become peer educators, assisting new learners and sharing their experiences at seminars and conferences.

Learners were encouraged to provide feedback throughout the duration of the Pathfinder and to provide suggestions for improving activities. This enabled dads to feel that they were actively contributing to the development of the Pathfinder and that those delivering it valued their opinion.

4.2.8 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

From the experience of Challenge Dad a number of main elements of effective practice have emerged:

- using group-based social activity (e.g. football sessions) as a successful way to gently engage with men, enabling them to build relationships and trust before addressing literacies learning needs;
- the development of close working relationships with family centres which has facilitated access to the target group and to community based settings;
- building a literacies component into all activities, formal and informal, in order to stimulate and reinforce literacies learning;
- allowing learners to self-assess improvements in their own skills and plan learning opportunities that meet their agreed learning priorities through the use of 'I Can' checklists;
- having a male worker and approachable staff were key to engaging with a particularly 'hard to reach' group and encouraging participation;
- offering a flexible and holistic suite of activities which are tailored to the interests of participants; and
- the use of regular communication through face-to-face contact and text messaging as an effective way to engage and maintain contact with participants.

Challenge Dad was proactive in sharing the effective practice arising from the Pathfinder. For example, project representatives participated in a Practitioner Action Research Conference and a Learning Connections Conference entitled Researching Adult Literacies in Scotland.

Effective practice was shared with local agencies working with men and those considering working with men. Staff and participants hosted informal meetings with, and provided information to, practitioners from a variety of organisations across Scotland.

4.2.9 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

Recognition of the project's success resulted in continuation funding (on a reduced basis) for the service from the Community Regeneration Fund and Aberdeen Literacy and Numeracy Partnership. This funding covers the costs of a full-time worker and a small budget for activities and development through 2006/07.

Challenge Dad continues to be managed by the Family Learning Team. Local Family Centres have committed to providing ongoing 'in-kind' support. The hope is for the management committee of dads to eventually take over management of the project.

The Pathfinder remains well resourced with high quality equipment, enabling it to deliver activities for years to come. Resources have also been developed that can be tailored to meet the specific learning needs of literacy learners. Moreover, the Pathfinder has also raised dads' awareness of other existing support and forged greater links between participants and local family centres.

A desire has been reported on the part of project representatives to see a dedicated post mainstreamed and working closely with Family Centres throughout the city.

4.2.10 THE POTENTIAL FOR PATHFINDER REPLICATION

Challenge Dad has been regarded as a unique project that filled a gap in the options available to male learners.

If this approach were to be replicated more widely this would require adequate: time to set up the project, built into the project's term of grant funding; administrative/clerical support; flexible and adequate budgets to provide high quality and intensive support to the client group; and effective referral systems to facilitate joint working.

Any attempt at replication would also need to take into account the time it takes to engage and build relationships with participants. For the project to be effective it also requires a project worker with the personality and skills to engage with participants and maintain their commitment. The project also requires flexibility in its approach to engaging with learners and in offering a range of ways to access the project.

4.3 COUNTDOWN EAST END

4.3.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Countdown East End Pathfinder was established based on research that recognised a strong correlation between limited literacies capabilities and poverty, ill health, unemployment and crime. It was established to address low levels of literacy and educational attainment in a deprived area of Glasgow.

Activities were designed to build on existing voluntary sector learning provision, delivered via Parents of East End Primary Schools (PEEPS), a voluntary association which was set up to encourage and support parents/carers to take up learning opportunities within the community.

The Pathfinder sought to provide literacy support to people with limited educational attainment who resided in disadvantaged communities within the East End Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) area.

4.3.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Countdown East End aimed to increase literacies levels and community involvement in the Glasgow East End SIP area by training peer educators to provide additional support to learners on PEEPs courses.

Among the key objectives set for the project were to:

- recruit a pool of 26 peer educators over the duration of the project;
- design and deliver appropriate training and support to peer educators on an ongoing basis;
- enable each peer educator to deliver a minimum of 36 hours support to core PEEPs training programmes;
- provide support from two peer educators on each PEEPs training course; and
- support 140 learners each year, who would participate in PEEPs training programmes.

As the Pathfinder was implemented the approach and methods employed have been altered to reflect emerging experiences.

4.3.3 DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

Countdown East End was developed by PEEPS. The Steering Group included representatives from East End SIP, East End Partnership Ltd, John Wheatley College and Bridgeton Community Centre/Community Learning Campus. These arrangements have been regarded by representatives as having provided a strong focus and positive input to the project.

PEEPS, a community-led voluntary organisation, has been regarded by project partners and funders as an appropriate host for the project, and one that provided community credibility to the initiative, links into existing community networks, and access to an established client base of adult learners.

However, by virtue of the voluntary sector status of the project host and as a result of the initiative being funded directly through Communities Scotland, the project was not at first well linked into the Adult Literacy Partnership for Glasgow.

The Pathfinder project employed a full-time Community Learning Co-ordinator and full-time Administration Officer, who were supported by a management committee comprised of local residents. This provided a supportive environment within which to deliver project activity.

The support of local partners has also been reported to have been crucial in implementing the project. A variety of partners have provided project development support, office space, ICT infrastructure, creche facilities and tutoring.

4.3.4 PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the initial time required to build relationships with learners, Countdown East End delivered much.

The Pathfinder recruited in the region of 240 to 280 learners and delivered a variety of learning programmes including:

- a range of introductory IT courses (e.g. 'PC Passport' and ECDL courses), which provided a foundation in the use of ICT;
- a multi-media course, which used digital cameras and camcorders to develop critical awareness and overcome trepidation in the use of ICT;
- a Build Your Skills course, which encouraged teamwork and provided new skills in sourcing plans, materials, and budgeting;
- a peer educators course, which provided an insight into local decision-making processes, including visits to board and committee meetings;
- a 'Fit for Life' course, which included healthy eating, physical activity and weight management;
- a ten-week drugs awareness course, which provided information on how to approach the issue of drugs with children; and
- a 'Traditional Skills' course, which reintroduced skills such as knitting, sewing, drawing and cookery.

Reflective diaries were used to enable learners to record questions, thoughts, and feelings about the various courses.

Despite a slow start, the project delivered a learning programme of the magnitude originally envisaged, despite a reduced timeframe.

While given objectives were largely met, the original approach was modified to meet the emerging needs of learners and the group of peer educators recruited. This meant that the peer education element of the project did not feature as prominently as initially anticipated.

4.3.5 KEY CONSTRAINTS

Interviews with project delivery staff and partners have highlighted a number of main operational constraints during the implementation of the Countdown East End Pathfinder.

Among the main challenges reported include:

- the lengthy lead-in time taken to design and develop programme content, which truncated the timescale for delivering learning activity;
- the effort required to secure expected levels of interest and take-up, albeit this was overcome with time and perseverance;
- limitations on the availability of tutors in particular subject areas, which limited the learning options available;
- the method of grant payment adopted by Communities Scotland, which contributed to significant cashflow difficulties for the organisation; and
- a lack of time and resources built into the Pathfinder project, which limited the opportunities for staff to reflect on and share experiences with others.

These difficulties were overcome with ongoing development support from advisors from the East End SIP and Local Development Company (East End Partnership Ltd). This support played a critical role in planning activities, managing the project, securing the funding package, and putting in place an exit strategy for the project.

4.3.6 KEY PATHFINDER OUTCOMES

Based on the evidence available it seems that the Countdown East End Pathfinder achieved much.

Among the main outcomes identified as part of the review were:

- a range of additional community learning activity was offered and taken up by the target client group;
- high retention rates among learners were achieved, reflecting the highly tailored nature of learning activities;
- the approach of tutors at the local college was modified in light of the Pathfinder experience, reflective diaries are in use, and the Build Your Skills Course has now been mainstreamed;
- increased community engagement has been evident in local decision-making processes;

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- the capability to offer literacies learning has increased in the area, with 24 local workers and volunteers given the opportunity to undertake PDA ITALL training; and
 - many learners have reportedly achieved positive learning outcomes, and moved on to further study (including eight to University and ten to college in the most recent year).

4.3.7 LITERACIES LEARNING

Countdown East End delivered a broad-based programme of community learning activity. The literacies component of the courses was explicitly defined in a pre-course interview with learners and monitored throughout the period of participation.

Learners have reported a uniformly high level of satisfaction and welcomed in particular the wide range of learning options available, as well as the opportunity to inform course content. The flexibility of classes and the crèche provision has reportedly helped to encourage regular attendance and materials and activities were viewed as interesting and relevant to learners' needs. The open and flexible learning environment encouraged discussion of literacies issues and learners benefited greatly from the flexible, person-centred and fun approach that enabled them to proceed at their own pace.

The only point of dissatisfaction reported by participants was the short length of courses available.

Learners highlighted a number of positive outcomes from their experience with the Pathfinder project. Increased confidence, new skills, and increased participation in community activity emerged as significant benefits. A greater awareness of literacies issues has been reported, together with a greater knowledge of the learning opportunities available in the local area and a greater willingness to continue or progress with learning.

4.3.8 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

From the experience of the Countdown East End Pathfinder a number of elements of effective practice have been identified, including:

- one-to-one pre-course induction meetings which, although resource-intensive, has proved effective in building trust and removing any barriers to participation in learning;
- involvement of learners in the design of programme content, which has been found to create a more rewarding and effective learning experience;
- the use of enhanced Individual Learning Plans (introduced as LPADs) and reflective diaries, which have been instrumental in establishing and reviewing learning objectives/outcomes;
- the use of peer educators to offer support to new learners, which was considered to provide an invaluable form of support;

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- the flexibility and willingness of the College tutors to adapt and improve learning activity as it progressed, which was important in securing high learner retention rates;
 - the establishment of a *Learning from Learners* event, which helped to understand participants' experiences, celebrate achievements, examine future learning needs, and ensure the transition to further learning; and
 - immediate access to further learning opportunities in PEEPs and the local college, which has proven critical in enabling learner progression or advancement.

Pathfinder staff have taken the opportunity, where possible, to share effective practice with others. However, the priority has remained firmly on delivering agreed project activity. This has necessarily limited time and resources available to share effective practice with a wider audience.

4.3.9 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

The Countdown East End project has now moved into a new purpose-built community learning and development campus and has built upon working relationships with a number of local partners.

In April 2006, on completion of the Pathfinder period, Countdown East End secured partial two-year continuation funding from Glasgow Adult Literacies Partnership. Grant funding has been secured from the Community Regeneration Fund to support the project's clerical post, together with a contribution from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support operating costs as part of a joint initiative with Bridgeton Community Learning Campus.

The Pathfinder Steering Group has been reformed as the Curriculum Development Group and will continue to develop further programmes with input from learners.

The capacity of PEEPS as an organisation continues to grow and learning provision has been enhanced and expanded. The current timetable includes 18 different learning options per week.

4.3.10 THE POTENTIAL FOR PATHFINDER REPLICATION

Countdown East End represents a community-based approach to learning that is potentially replicable in other communities.

However, if the approach were to be replicated elsewhere there appears to be a number of important pre-requisites, including the need for: effective community involvement and consultation; a close working relationship with an appropriate learning provider; skilled and personable project staff; a curriculum that is sufficiently flexible to address individual needs; effective processes for learner self-evaluation; and an integrated set of learning options and progression opportunities.

Overall, the success of the approach adopted by Countdown East End is dependent on local community knowledge and networks, as well as a safe welcoming learning environment that is operated by and for local people.

4.4 FARM PLUS

4.4.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Farmplus Pathfinder emerged from research carried out by Barony College, on behalf of the Dumfries & Galloway Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnership, which identified a need for literacies services among people working within the agricultural and land-based sector. The research found that, due to long working hours among this group, learning from home would be a popular option.

Farmplus was established to address the limited experience of delivering core skills training to dispersed rural communities in Scotland. Activities were to be based on successful approaches identified elsewhere, most notably Cumbria and Ireland.

The Pathfinder set out to serve rural Dumfries & Galloway. It targeted individuals living and working on farms, where particular literacies needs were identified. Its estimate was of more than 1,300 people in the target group with literacies needs; a number which was said to be growing due to the increasing technological and administrative requirements of the agricultural industry.

4.4.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Farmplus was established to identify and test a 'blend' of delivery methods to support distance and on-line learning within rural communities (e.g. including e-mail, internet broadcasts, video conferencing, telephone, face-to-face contact, mobile libraries, and local learning centres).

Among the key objectives set for the project were to:

- equip 25 farms/farm workers homes with a PC, ISDN/ telephone line, video conferencing and Internet access;
- produce a learning curriculum tailored to individual learner needs in the context of the farming sector;
- establish a community radio project through which literacies content would be broadcasted;
- produce webcast literacies materials (audio and written) covering issues of interest to the farming community;
- transmit the webcast content via the Internet; and
- examine and evaluate appropriate delivery modes required to successfully engage with and retain learners.

These objectives remained largely unchanged throughout the implementation of the Pathfinder, albeit the realism of some objectives (e.g. community radio broadcasts) was brought into question by the project team.

4.4.3 DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

A Project Management Group provided ongoing direction and support for the Farmplus Pathfinder. This Group was effective in bringing together the skills and expertise of the main partners to the Pathfinder. While meeting regularly and making a positive contribution, representation to the Group declined somewhat over time due to the other commitments of members.

The host agency for the Pathfinder was Dumfries & Galloway Council, on behalf of the local Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnership. This arrangement appears to have provided a natural management fit. Nevertheless, some early challenges are reported in establishing a strong management and administrative link into the local authority.

A Project Team was established between September 2003 and May 2004. The Team brought together: a contribution of one day per week from a Webcast Development Officer (Dumfries & Galloway College); two Project development Officers (Barony College); and latterly a Learning Materials Developer with a literacies background. To this was added the contribution of two graduate placements (one to two days per week) from September 2005 to develop interactive online resources.

The Pathfinder benefited from close and productive partnership working. In particular Farmplus representatives have highlighted the importance of strong links with pre-existing local community learning and literacies services, together with the ongoing commitment and input from local colleges.

4.4.4 PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

From the information made available, Farmplus appears to have progressed well and achieved much, taking into account the innovative nature of activities and the complex technical aspects of delivery.

Among the main reported activities undertaken were:

- research was conducted into more than 30 models of good practice in the use of ICT-based open learning approaches;
- Community Learning Assistants (CLAs) and literacies tutors were inducted, underwent Risk Assessment Training, and were provided with training on the set up and monitoring of learner ICT support;
- 17 learners were recruited and supported as part of the project, each of which developed an Individual Learning Plan and had one-to-one tutor support in their home of one hour per week (up to 40 hours in total);
- a tailored Farmplus website was developed and evolved over time with a growing range (in 22 topic areas) of interactive audio, visual and text-based learning materials prepared with tutor/learner input; and
- an internet-connected PC was set up in the home of each learner to provide full access to online Farm Plus learning materials and learner resources.

Overall, the Pathfinder achieved the main objectives and quantitative targets established. Difficulties that did arise related largely to unforeseen technical and resource constraints, which created delays or led to enforced changes.

4.4.5 KEY CONSTRAINTS

The Project Team and delivery partners have highlighted a number of main operational constraints.

Among the main challenges encountered were:

- difficulties in identifying locations accessible to all learners across a large rural area meant that opportunities for group interaction with tutors were limited;
- the constraints of time and technology proved to be a major stumbling block in creating a Discussion Forum on the website;
- difficulties in assessing demand, combined with late and limited promotion, contributed to difficulties in recruiting a second wave of learners;
- challenges in setting up ICT resources in learners homes were underestimated and caused significant delays for some learners;
- the dispersed nature of activities, and limited management resource available, made it difficult to co-ordinate activity and collate learner/tutor feedback;
- a bid for a Community Radio license was unsuccessful and community radio broadcasts were therefore not possible; and
- a lack of rural broadband access meant that it was not technically feasible to offer online broadcasts or to use video conferencing facilities.

In some cases these challenges created significant difficulties and delays in implementation that potentially eroded the level of outcomes possible. Nonetheless, most of the above issues represent a learning curve of the sort to be expected in establishing a new approach of this kind.

4.4.6 KEY PATHFINDER OUTCOMES

Based on the evidence available, it seems that the Farmplus Pathfinder achieved much with grant support from Communities Scotland.

Among the main outcomes identified as part of the review were:

- the establishment of an effective online learning environment to support independent literacies learning;
- the development of an effective, holistic model of literacies learning appropriate to a rural setting;
- the production of effective literacies learning materials of interest and relevance to the agricultural sector;

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- the development of a core group of agency partners committed to building on the provision established through the Pathfinder; and
 - a range of positive outcomes for learners that participated in the Pathfinder experience.

4.4.7 LITERACIES LEARNING

From the ongoing learner feedback, and from interviews with learners and tutors, a strong positive literacies learning experience was evident.

Learners have provided consistently positive feedback from their participation. In particular, learners have welcomed the one-to-one tutor support backed up by the opportunity for independent learning and reflection. The range of materials were considered to be both interesting and relevant, and have been put to use in everyday work.

The main point of dissatisfaction among learners related to the delays and difficulties in installing IT equipment as a basis for learning.

Learners have reported a range of positive outcomes from participation. Increased confidence appears to have emerged strongly as a result of participation, particularly in the use of ICT. There is documented evidence of improvement in writing, reading and spelling skills in most cases.

Interest among learners was noted in relation to continuing relationships established with tutors and to take advantage of other literacies learning opportunities. It has been suggested, however, that learner progression will potentially be stifled by a lack of local and accessible literacies learning provision available in rural Dumfries & Galloway

4.4.8 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

From the experience of the Farmplus Pathfinder a number of main elements of effective practice have emerged:

- the use of high quality audio and visual materials, which provided vital support for, and reinforced, independent literacies learning;
- the emphasis placed on taking learning to the learner, which enabled them to work at their own pace and address many of the barriers relating to rural isolation and farming commitments;
- the use of fully contextualised literacies learning materials and relevant news items, which stimulated the ongoing interest of learners and made learning practical and relevant;
- the systematic and wide-ranging review of a range of comparable ICT-based open learning approaches, which enabled the establishment of a delivery model consistent with best practice elsewhere;
- the combined use of online learning, tailored materials and one-to-one tutors, which provided a holistic form of learner support; and

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- the use of a broad-based partnership approach that closely integrated with Community Learning, which ensured access to a range of support resources for learners.

Despite much effective practice the Pathfinder did not find the time and resources to share learning outside of the local area. In this respect local project partners await further guidance and support.

4.4.9 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

Although coming late in the life of the Pathfinder, the local Partnership committed itself to an exit strategy, which involves two main aspects:

- continuing locally, and mainstreaming where possible successful Pathfinder activities; and
- commissioning an independent feasibility study to establish the potential to upscale and sustain the initiative on a national basis.

This means that, at a minimum, the Pathfinder will leave a tangible legacy of literacies work for the target audience in Dumfries & Galloway.

Thus far agreement has been reached that during 2006/07:

- the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnership will provide some finance to provide continued support to the seven new Farmplus learners;
- supported by Barony College, the Farmplus website will continue with access restricted and controlled via a password system; and
- the Project Team will continue on the basis of a half-day per week input to post up-to-date news items and additional online materials.

At the time of review it is too early to assess the longer-term prospects for the approach tested by the Farmplus Pathfinder. External funding is yet to be secured to conduct the planned feasibility study.

4.4.10 THE POTENTIAL FOR PATHFINDER REPLICATION

The Pathfinder experience reveals a highly innovative and potentially replicable approach that could be rolled out to other rural communities. This could conceivably involve an expanded online learning environment that is accessible to learners throughout rural Scotland. It might also potentially involve the development of tailored literacies learning resources designed around the needs of other sectors of the rural economy (e.g. forestry, fishing etc.).

However, if this approach were to be replicated more widely there appears to be a number of important pre-requisites. These include, the need for: learner access to an internet-connected PC in the home to enable online learning; sufficient and appropriately skilled support from local literacies tutors to support online learning; a growing range of suitably adapted materials to appeal to an enlarged target audience; and an expanded technical capacity to develop, update, and content-manage the online learning environment.

Replication is therefore potentially constrained by the availability of resources to expand this learner-centred approach. While economies of scale might be achieved by creating an expanded technical 'hub' and wider access to learning resources, it would be more difficult to extend localised support without significantly expanded resources or without compromising the integrity of the model. It is this holistic, supported environment (i.e. home PC, one-to-one support etc.) that has enabled learners to identify, use, navigate, and make the most effective use of learning resources.

4.5 HEALTHWISE ABERDEEN

4.5.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Healthwise Aberdeen Pathfinder was developed in recognition of the limited capacity of the health care sector to respond appropriately and sensitively to the literacies requirement of patients.

The rationale for the project was informed by national and international research that established a link between low literacy levels and poor health.

The design of the project drew on local evidence that established the need to test new approaches to health and literacy issues in an economically and socially disadvantaged area of Aberdeen.

The project set out to target its work at a wide range of health care professionals (e.g. health visitors, general practitioners, dieticians, and physiotherapists) and sought to benefit individuals with literacies difficulties in the former Aberdeen Great Northern Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) area.

4.5.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Healthwise Aberdeen aimed to raise awareness of literacies issues among health care professionals and to strengthen networks and referrals between health and literacies providers. In doing so it intended to ultimately benefit patients, who would be able to make more informed choices about health care and to take up opportunities to develop literacies skills.

The initial objectives of the Pathfinder can be summarised as, to:

- raise literacies awareness (via training and support) among health care professionals in the target area;
- enhance the role of health care professionals in identifying and signposting relevant health service users to existing literacies services;
- strengthen the links and partnership working between health care professionals and other community services;
- actively involve learners in the design of accessible and appropriate health information; and
- disseminate learning and ensure the integration of health literacy work within the literacies policies/practices of Aberdeen City.

Pathfinder representatives have suggested that these objectives provided a broad and ambitious basis for pilot activity. The wide scope of the objectives appears to have given rise to very many opportunities; more than could be satisfied within limited Pathfinder resources.

In this respect, it seems that the objectives and approaches pursued by Healthwise Aberdeen were refined over time, and in light of emerging experience. For example, the emphasis quickly shifted away from direct training and support for health professionals as the challenges of securing input to the 'protected learning time' of this target group became evident.

4.5.3 DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

The activities of Healthwise were developed and guided by an Advisory Group made up of representatives from key agency partners. Meetings were held on a regular basis and the collective skills and knowledge of Group members provided a positive contribution. However, given ongoing change in public health service structures it proved difficult to secure consistent and wide-ranging input to the Advisory Group from partners in the health sector.

Aberdeen City Council hosted the Pathfinder project, with operational management support provided through its Adult Learning Team. The project's positioning within this Department reportedly ensured a clear literacies focus to activities, ensured effective Pathfinder co-ordination with the work of Council literacies staff, and provided access to literacies tutors and resources. While regarded as effective, the management input required to progress the work of the Pathfinder has been reported to have exceeded the initial expectations of project partners.

Although housed within the Adult Learning Team, Healthwise Aberdeen was established with its own distinct project identity and staff team. Resources from the Pathfinder Challenge Fund supported the costs of a full-time Adult Literacies Worker and part-time administrative support, as well as associated training costs (tutors, trainers, crèche, materials) and overhead costs. Here Pathfinder representatives have indicated unavoidable delays in appointing an appropriately skilled Literacies Worker and limited staff resources as key constraints.

The Pathfinder also reportedly benefited from the active input of local project partners. In particular the important contribution of local facilities through which the Pathfinder was able to recruit prospective learners and deliver a range of targeted services. Also noted was the productive collaborative working between local partners to develop literacies learning programmes.

4.5.4 PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

From the information made available, it seems that Healthwise Aberdeen has generated much interest and undertaken a substantial level of activity within a relatively short timeframe.

Among the main reported activities and achievements were:

- baseline research was undertaken to establish the role, experiences, and needs of health professionals in relation to literacies work;
- productive working relationships with the health care sector were cultivated through presentations at meetings/forums, informal advice to local health professionals, and the production of health materials;

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- some 92 prospective literacies learners were engaged with, and offered guidance through a Learning Advisor service with a regular presence in a variety of local health clinics;
 - a range of health literacy programmes were created which incorporated, and reinforced, one-to-one literacies tutoring, including: Log on to Health; Lunch and Learn; Food for the Family; Able with Labels; Family Health; Be Healthwise; and Smithfield Tasty Tit Bits;
 - the importance of easy-to-understand health information was promoted, through advice to health professionals and through rewriting health promotion materials on request;
 - a range of health literacy resources were identified, collated, or produced, which were made available in hard copy (via the Adult Learning Resource Base) and electronically (via the Healthwise website); and
 - a health literacy input to tutoring practice was encouraged through a launch night for tutors, the provision of tutoring resources, and ongoing attendance at tutor meetings and training courses.

The above suggests that through a variety of methods, albeit not always as originally anticipated, Healthwise Aberdeen performed well against its stated objectives. The Pathfinder achieved as much as could be reasonably expected (if not more) within the resource constraints and timeframe available.

4.5.5 KEY CONSTRAINTS

Consultations with the Pathfinder Advisory group, staff and partners have revealed a number of main operational constraints that represent noteworthy lessons from the Pathfinder experience.

Among the main challenges encountered were:

- the lengthy lead-in time required to recruit a skilled Literacies Worker with health sector experience, which created knock-on delays in progressing Pathfinder activities;
- a significant and time-consuming process of development work that was required to promote the project, build relationships in target communities, and design a range of appropriate activities;
- ongoing challenges in securing opportunities to provide literacies input or training through the 'protected learning time' of health professionals, which meant that direct engagement with this group was limited;
- limitations on the availability of resources (e.g. staff time, tutors, crèche places etc.), which constrained the ability of the Pathfinder to respond flexibly to the many opportunities that arose;
- difficulties in securing a local literacies influence on public health priorities, practices and materials, which were subject to centralised design and decision-making within the health service; and

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- a slow or limited take-up of some literacies learning programmes, which appears to reflect general difficulties in securing a strong interest in training amongst residents from disadvantaged communities.

Pathfinder representatives have suggested that these largely unavoidable challenges did not create significant difficulties, and were overcome through alternative courses of action.

4.5.6 KEY PATHFINDER OUTCOMES

The evidence suggests that the Healthwise Aberdeen Pathfinder achieved much as a result of the pilot activity initiated with support from Communities Scotland.

Among the main outcomes identified as part of our review were:

- the development of an effective model of service delivery and growing network of local delivery partners;
- the establishment of a strong base of resources through which to progress health literacies practice;
- increased awareness of health literacies issues among healthcare professionals and literacies tutors; and
- an increase in the referral of prospective learners from health-related settings and sources.

These outcomes appear to have increased as Healthwise Aberdeen became more widely known, as relationships with health professionals matured, and as the range of supporting resources and activities expanded.

4.5.7 LITERACIES LEARNING

The primary purpose of the Healthwise Aberdeen Pathfinder was to test mechanisms to strengthen the provision of support around health literacies needs; an additional target was to deliver learning to fifty literacies learners during the course of the project.

The Pathfinder provided a number of group-based programmes in conjunction with community health and learning partners. Each course involved: the development of relevant literacies learning resources; supplementary tutoring and guidance for learners; regular reviews in the form of Individual Learning Plans or Group Learning Plans; and exit interviews and informal visits from the Healthwise Adult Literacies Worker.

The Pathfinder attempted to take these learning opportunities to non-traditional learners and content was designed in response to feedback on local interests.

Despite some difficulties in securing large-scale participation from the 'hard to reach' client group targeted, Pathfinder representatives have reported encouraging learner feedback.

In particular, the flexible and tailored nature of content, which was delivered within an informal and supportive environment, was regarded as conducive to enabling learners to openly address literacies difficulties. The sustained input of appropriately knowledgeable and skilled tutors also seems to have been a critical success factor.

4.5.8 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

From the experience of the Healthwise Aberdeen Pathfinder a number of main elements of effective practice emerged:

- the development of targeted outreach and promotional activities through local learning and health facilities, which enabled the Pathfinder to engage directly with local residents;
- the use of a Learning Advisor service, which proved instrumental in building relationships with, and links between, prospective learners and health professionals;
- the production of high quality and accessible materials, which were used to build awareness of health literacies issues and to support work with literacies learners;
- the development of innovative group-based learning opportunities, which stimulated learner interest, incorporated a strong health literacies component, and were well integrated to existing literacies support;
- sustained and informal contact with health professionals, as a means to raise literacies awareness, adapt health service practices and materials, and encourage the referrals to literacies provision; and
- the development of close and productive links with local health promotion and community learning staff, which led to much joint activity and proved mutually beneficial.

Representatives from the Healthwise Pathfinder were active in sharing experiences, facilitating debate, and raising health literacies issues. They organised or provided input to a range of events and forums, both locally and on a national stage.

4.5.9 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

A viable exit strategy for Healthwise Aberdeen emerged, and was agreed, in the latter stages of the period of grant funding from Communities Scotland. The approach was to secure continuation funding to consolidate and then extend the Healthwise project.

With funding now secured for 2006/07, the Pathfinder has left a significant legacy. With support from the Adult Literacies Partnership and Community Regeneration Fund in place, Healthwise Aberdeen will continue as an independent entity. Plans are in place to recruit an additional two part-time staff, to deliver an expanded Learning Advisor service and health literacies activities across all targeted regeneration areas of Aberdeen.

With the short-term future of the project now secured, the challenge is to consolidate activity in existing areas and to extend the base of activity to new communities. This will test the extent to which the Healthwise approach can be scaled up in a cost-effective way.

4.5.10 THE POTENTIAL FOR PATHFINDER REPLICATION

On the basis of the evidence generated to date, there appears to be significant potential for replication of this Pathfinder approach. This potential was confirmed by the extension of Healthwise Aberdeen to neighbourhoods throughout the city.

For other interested parties there is the opportunity to import the Healthwise approach in two ways. First, and subject to the availability of resources, there might be the opportunity to establish project activity similar in scope to that in Aberdeen. Second, there is the opportunity to import specific project approaches (e.g. online dissemination of health literacies resources etc.).

However, if the Healthwise project activity were to be replicated more widely there appears to be a number of important pre-requisites, including: appropriately skilled and knowledgeable staff; access to literacies support services; the support of a network of community health and learning partners; access to an appropriate range of health literacies resources; suitable bases through which to establish and deliver activities; the presence of 'Learning Advisors' in local health settings; and a sustained commitment to building relationships with healthcare professionals.

The experience in Aberdeen, however, points to one critical underpinning barrier to achieving a transformational impact – the full 'buy in' and commitment at a senior level within the health service to the literacies agenda. Without this, impacts are likely to be localised and dependent on productive working links with health service professionals. This implies the need for further national-level strategic dialogue, taken forward by Learning Connections and others, to examine the potential to mainstream the Pathfinder lessons.

4.6 HOMING IN ON LITERACY

4.6.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Homing in on Literacy Pathfinder emerged from research that established a link between low educational achievement and homelessness. Local evidence pointed to a need to improve the responsiveness of services to meet the literacies needs of homeless people.

In the Perth and Kinross area it was identified that there were 1,254 homeless applications (38% from those aged 16-24), with an upturn in demand evident due to the Housing Act (2001), which extended local authorities' duties to homeless people.

Homing in on Literacy was designed to provide this target group with the literacy and numeracy skills to deal better with matters relating to their tenancies. In this, the importance was attached to form filling, budgeting, understanding bills and meters, communicating with agencies and accessing the benefits system.

The project was therefore set up to work with people who were homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or living in temporary accommodation in the Perth area.

4.6.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Homing in on Literacy aimed to reduce the number of adults and particularly young adults abandoning their tenancy.

Among the key objectives initially set for the Pathfinder were to:

- deliver quality one-to-one and group support to learners, 75% of which will continue their learning on exit from the project;
- enable learners to access health care and related services, in order to improve health and well-being;
- actively participate in relevant networks to build collaborative arrangements for supporting the client group;
- advise, support and train agency staff, to better address literacy issues within their everyday work; and
- develop in collaboration with learners, a user-friendly guide to sustaining tenancy, and disseminate any good practice arising.

These broad objectives remained largely unchanged throughout the duration of the Pathfinder project. However, in light of the delays and challenges encountered, the realism of some targets were brought into question. The means of achieving objectives also differed somewhat from expectations.

4.6.3 DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

The Pathfinder drew on the support and expertise of a Project Steering Group which included representatives from Churches Action for the Homeless (CATH), the Salvation Army, NHS Tayside, and council representatives from housing, youth services, and community learning. The membership of this group differed significantly from the original project proposal due to staff turnover within partner agencies. The loss of the original project vision, combined with new ideas from new members, influenced the eventual direction of the Pathfinder.

The Pathfinder employed one full-time Senior Community Learning Worker, together with part-time clerical support. This was supplemented by the input of sessional support workers seconded first from CATH and then the Salvation Army. The project also provided opportunities for the development of staff awareness and skills within partner organisations.

Project partners proved instrumental in the delivery of activities. The partnership group provided access to information on homelessness, venues for delivery of the service, and client referrals. The Project Manager also worked collaboratively with partners to develop user-friendly information on tenancy maintenance and health.

4.6.4 PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

From the information made available it is clear that the Pathfinder delivered a wide variety of activities, including:

- the establishment of a young people's Tenancy Resource Implementation Group meeting weekly to inform resource development;
- the delivery of a ten-week creative writing programme with Wellbank House residents;
- the piloting of a driving theory preparation programme with the Anchor House S team;
- the planning and development of a Sport and Literacy programme in partnership with Community Learning and Sports Development staff;
- the delivery of the Get Ready for Christmas programme at Wellbank House focusing on budgeting, cooking and healthy eating;
- the development and delivery of the Skinflints resettlement taster programme and associated resource packs;
- the development of the Our House tenancy resource pack, CD Rom and website;
- the launch of a reading campaign, with books and magazines provided to projects to encourage reading;
- the organisation of a youth homelessness conference 'More than a Roof';
- the provision of one-to-one support, advice, and signposting for young homeless adults with chaotic lifestyles; and

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- awareness raising sessions and support to staff from a variety of local statutory agencies such as Housing and Criminal Justice.

These and other actions undertaken by the Pathfinder represent an evolving, pragmatic and user-led approach to addressing the issues of literacies and homelessness.

While the achievements are positive, the original Pathfinder objectives were regarded by project partners as somewhat overambitious, given the limited staff resource and time available.

4.6.5 KEY CONSTRAINTS

Pathfinder project staff and Steering Group representatives have highlighted a number of constraints in the approach undertaken by Homing in on Literacies.

Among the main challenges encountered were:

- the project began in May 2004, six months behind schedule due to recruitment difficulties, which delayed its development;
- the turnover of initial Steering group members, and subsequent difficulties in getting full buy-in from partners caused further delays;
- Awareness-raising training for agency staff did not proceed as anticipated meaning that few referrals occurred;
- the lack of a dedicated space in which to meet learners necessitated outreach work and learning activity in a variety of venues, which became a strength of the project;
- the limited amount of clerical support available increased the administrative burden on the lead project worker; and
- the limited attendance at planned drop-in sessions meant that the Pathfinder had to work closely with partners to identify alternative ways to engage with young people (this became a strength).

These difficulties constrained both the progress and achievements of the Homing in on Literacies Pathfinder.

4.6.6 KEY PATHFINDER OUTCOMES

Despite constraints the Homing in on Literacy Pathfinder achieved some positive outcomes with grant support from Communities Scotland.

Among the main outcomes identified as part of the review were:

- the development of new networks, collaboration and co-operation between support agencies, in addressing the interrelated issues of literacies and homelessness;
- some modest gains in the literacies awareness of staff working with the client group in Perth;

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- establishment of a variety of tenancy resources, developed with input from young people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless;
 - production of multi-media resources which can be used as an inspirational tool with learners;
 - implementation of a Social Inclusion Policy within AK Bell Library, making membership without a permanent address available;
 - an increase in the range of activities and options available to young homeless adults; and
 - gains in awareness, self-confidence and communication developed as a result of one-to-one and group-based activities.

4.6.7 LITERACIES LEARNING

The Homing in on Literacies Pathfinder piloted a number of learning programmes and resources with homeless adults. The project worker also tutored several individuals in literacy and numeracy over the course of the project

The feedback available highlights positive overall satisfaction among participants in the various activities. For example:

- participants in the Skinflints programme highlighted its value in learning new skills or refreshing existing ones;
- participants in the Sport and Literacy project reported benefits through physical activities and the process of negotiating learning activities;
- participants in the creative writing classes reported positively on the opportunity to express themselves within a safe environment; and
- participants in Get Ready for Cooking highlighted broad satisfaction with content, particularly in relation to budgeting and cooking.

The Pathfinder therefore successfully engaged with learners and provided short-term group work programmes and taster sessions.

4.6.8 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

The Homing in on Literacies Pathfinder provided a useful insight into a variety of measures used to address the literacies issues faced by homeless people.

Among the main elements of effective practice were:

- engagement with young people in residential settings, which provided an opportunity to introduce creative approaches to learning in a safe environment;
- close partnership working with healthcare, personal development, housing, and community development staff, which was vital in addressing literacies within a holistic context;

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- initial and ongoing awareness raising and training in literacies issues for frontline support staff in related disciplines, which is regarded as vital in reinforcing the role of literacies;
 - the use of variety of different methods (e.g. creative writing, cooking, sport, film-making), which was found to be essential in promoting interest, communication, and self-expression on the part of participants; and
 - the ongoing involvement of learners in the design and review of learning, which was found to be vital in providing activities that reflected everyday needs and were meaningful to participants.

Pathfinder made some attempts to reflect on and share effective practice from local experience, including the More than Roof Conference, workshops with learners at the International Literacy Day 2005, and information to homelessness workers in Edinburgh.

4.6.9 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

At 31st March 2006 the Homing in on Literacies Pathfinder project formally drew to a close. However, despite the absence of continuation funding or dedicated staffing resources, many of the approaches and practices established within the Pathfinder will be retained locally.

Thus far the tangible legacy of the Pathfinder during 2006/07 has included:

- the staff seconded to the Pathfinder from CATH and the Salvation Army continue to use new-found awareness and skills to continue project activities established with the Pathfinder grant;
- the resource packs and materials produced by the Pathfinder are available and can be adapted to meet the needs of particular groups;
- literacy issues will continue to be represented on a Youth Homelessness Strategy sub group for Perth & Kinross; and
- a literacy worker within CATH funded by the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnership and a part-time tutor within Adult Learning continue to support the learners identified during the Pathfinder.

It has also been reported that the partnership working engendered as part of the pilot initiative continues, aided by improved awareness of literacies issues, with more active co-operation now evident between statutory and voluntary sector partners. This provides a solid basis on which to sustain the gains made initially.

4.6.10 THE POTENTIAL FOR PATHFINDER REPLICATION

The Homing in on Literacies Pathfinder represents an important area of focus for literacies practice, which has given rise to some useful resources and potentially replicable approaches.

To progress the opportunities for replication in other areas various actions have occurred or are planned. For example: the tenancy handbook produced will be distributed on CD Rom; the 'Skinflints' resource has been made available for dissemination; and a website and associated resources will be launched and maintained by the Salvation Army.

There is the opportunity for interested parties in other areas to make use of the resources available and to adapt the approaches and techniques highlighted.

While there are no significant barriers to replication, a number of important pre-requisites are noted including: the establishment of realistic objectives; sufficient time to embed a literacies element into homelessness support services; a committed and active group of project partners; sustained emphasis on building literacies awareness among support staff; the creative use different spaces and techniques for learning; and content and activities that reflect the lives of learners and are informed by them.

4.7 LINKS TO LITERACIES

4.7.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Links to Literacies Pathfinder emerged from a recognition that many people involved with, or served by, voluntary organisations had literacy needs and that significant opportunities existed to strengthen the role of the voluntary sector in meeting these needs.

The Pathfinder concept was based on research that, in some areas in Scotland, identified little or no participation from the voluntary sector in adult literacies provision and planning. Key issues identified included the lack of capacity of voluntary organisations to participate and the lack of formal mechanisms to ensure voluntary sector representation in ALN partnership arrangements.

Links to Literacies, as a pilot initiative, was then set up to take forward a targeted programme of work in seven local authority areas: Angus; Argyll & Bute; Clackmannanshire; Falkirk; Inverclyde; Stirling; and West Dunbartonshire.

4.7.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Links to Literacies aimed to increase involvement of the voluntary sector in literacies by establishing and supporting networks of voluntary organisations in each target area, and providing them with a Link Worker whose role was to represent them on the local Adult Literacies Partnerships.

The initial objectives of the Pathfinder were to:

- increase collaboration and innovation through networking and supporting 60 voluntary organisations in six areas;
- increase the number of voluntary organisations being effectively represented in six literacies partnerships;
- increase voluntary sector participation through designing/implementing effective communication systems;
- improve the quality of literacies planning/delivery and the capacity of voluntary organisations to get involved in this; and
- increase by 1,800 the number of new literacies learners reached through voluntary sector engagement.

These objectives set the focus on testing a model of partnership working designed to strengthen the literacies infrastructure in Scotland. Unlike the other Pathfinder projects, Links to Literacies did not seek to support literacies learners directly.

The goal was to build effective voluntary sector participation in local partnership arrangements, in order to impact on the effectiveness of these partnerships, the quality of literacies services, and the numbers of people accessing literacy services.

4.7.3 DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

Links to Literacies received ongoing guidance and support from a Steering Group. The Group was made up of relevant agencies (e.g. Communities Scotland, Volunteer Development Scotland, CVS Scotland, Careers Scotland etc.). The Steering Group met regularly, made a positive contribution to the Pathfinder, and offered effective support to the Project Co-ordinator.

The 'host' organisation for the Pathfinder was Learning Link Scotland, a well-established voluntary sector organisation operating in the field of adult education. This organisation provided ongoing operational and financial management support for the Pathfinder. Project partners have highlighted the added value of the host organisation in terms of expertise, connections, and credibility.

The Pathfinder operated with one full-time Project Co-ordinator, appointed in April 2004, who played an instrumental role in establishing local networks and partnerships, and who reportedly played an effective role in developing and co-ordinating the work of the Pathfinder.

The Pathfinder drew on the input of Link Workers in each target area, who were appropriately experienced staff within local intermediary organisations. These Link Workers were contracted to provide 17.5 hours per quarter to support local voluntary sector networks and facilitate communication with Adult Literacies Partnerships.

The Pathfinder played the role of network builder, facilitating communication between Partnerships and local voluntary organisations. In this respect, local partners have indicated an increasing interest and commitment to the process and the Pathfinder has reportedly provided an important bridge between the voluntary sector and the established adult literacies infrastructure.

4.7.4 PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

After an unavoidably slow start – where time was taken to recruit project staff, secure commitment from local delivery partners, and build local voluntary sector networks – the Pathfinder progressed well and created a growing momentum and achievements.

Among the main reported activities and outputs arising from the Pathfinder were:

- seven voluntary sector networks were established, with an average membership of 12 organisations in each (84 organisations in total);
- Link Workers were inducted and trained in each of the seven target areas (two workers shared duties in one of the areas);
- various forms of awareness raising training were provided by local Link Workers, which involved around 40 voluntary organisations;
- a major conference (Sharing the Literacies Vision) was held in March 2005, which attracted 73 delegates (35 of which were from target areas);

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- in all areas except one, Link Workers regularly attended Adult Literacies Partnership meetings and disseminated information from these meetings to network members;
 - an event examining the use of voluntary sector 'Compacts' was undertaken, which involved 30 delegates; and
 - network meetings were facilitated by Link Workers, and localised network bulletins were produced (14 in total across the areas).

This represents strong progress and achievement by the Pathfinder. Despite significant early and time-consuming groundwork, Links to Literacies achieved the main objectives and quantitative targets set.

Where network activity and briefings were less than expected, this can largely be attributed to the late start of many networks and limitations on the time available to Link Workers. It seems that local network activity varied somewhat between areas and that networks in some cases are only now reaching a stage of maturity after a lengthy set-up period.

4.7.5 KEY CONSTRAINTS

On the basis of consultations with Pathfinder staff, Link Workers, and local delivery partners a number of constraints have been identified, which represent noteworthy lessons for others.

The main reported challenges encountered by Links to Literacies were:

- a necessarily lengthy process of Pathfinder staff recruitment created a late start to project activities;
- the time taken to identify local delivery partners, recruit Link Workers, and establish local networks was underestimated, and created knock-on delays in fully establishing local networks;
- the geography of rural Scotland created particular barriers of distance and time and created an additional burden in maintaining regular network activity;
- the level of time allocated to Link Workers proved inadequate to carry out required tasks, meaning that many ideas and opportunities for network development could not be taken on;
- it proved difficult to find suitable local delivery partners that were linked into existing voluntary sector networks, were sufficiently interested in literacies issues, and could release the time of a staff member;
- there were real limits to the time available to already 'stretched' voluntary organisations, which limited the frequency of network activities possible and the level of participation; and
- in a number of areas it proved challenging to secure recognition of the voluntary sector as an equal partner in Literacies Partnerships, which limited the opportunities for full engagement with the sector.

These difficulties appear to have been overcome skilfully and with perseverance. The time taken to carry out the initial groundwork and build relationships appears to have been time well spent. This resulted in the development of a model of partnership working that has been increasingly successful.

4.7.6 KEY PATHFINDER OUTCOMES

Overall, the Links to Literacies Pathfinder achieved outcomes that were broadly in line with expectations.

Among the main outcomes identified were:

- the active engagement of a range of voluntary sector organisations in the literacies agenda;
- the active co-operation of the Adult Literacies Partnerships in extending opportunities for voluntary sector participation;
- the design and testing of a range of methods and tools for brokering links between local literacies partners;
- a growing awareness among local Adult Literacies Partnerships of the role and potential of the voluntary sector; and
- an increase in the level of voluntary sector participation in local literacies service planning and delivery.

However, these outcomes have taken longer to achieve than anticipated and have not been straightforward.

4.7.7 LITERACIES LEARNING

As described previously, the purpose of the Links to Literacies Pathfinder was to test mechanisms to strengthen the role of the voluntary sector in literacies work – not to directly provide literacies learning.

The survey feedback (from 62% of participating organisations) gathered on Pathfinder completion has pointed to promising benefits. As a result of participation in the Links to Literacies network:

- 71% of participated voluntary organisations report that their awareness of literacies has increased;
- 66% of organisations reported that they have been more active in spotting/referring literacies learners;
- 70% of organisations indicated that they can provide a better service to people with literacies needs;
- 82% of organisations indicated that they are more aware of other literacies providers; and
- 56% of organisations indicated that they have developed stronger links with Adult literacies Partnerships.

These findings indicate success in increasing the voluntary sector's awareness and involvement in the literacies agenda in the seven pilot areas.

However, the findings have also highlighted concerns that Partnerships were slow in some cases to accept the sector as a full and equal partner in literacies work. Outcomes have reportedly been particularly weak in one area where the Link Worker was not invited to attend strategic Partnership meetings.

4.7.8 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

From the experience of the Links to Literacies Pathfinder a number of main elements of effective practice emerged:

- the unique use made of Link Workers, which proved instrumental in sustaining local networks and opening up dialogue between local literacies partners;
- the method through which Link Workers were drawn from within local delivery partners, which brought local knowledge, credibility, and connections into existing voluntary sector networks;
- the use of a variety of methods, which helped to open up dialogue (e.g. participation in Partnership meetings), maintain communication (e.g. network meetings), and share learning (e.g. conference, bulletins);
- a direct and personal approach to communication, which is credited as having been instrumental in building and sustaining networks;
- the emphasis placed on the use of a Compact, which potentially provides a solid basis for the engagement between Literacies Partnerships and voluntary sector partners;
- the use of expenses for organisations, which is reported to have encouraged greater participation in Pathfinder activities and events;
- the use of awareness raising and training events to equip organisations to undertake practical literacies work; and
- the systematic arrangements put in place to track outcomes for participating organisations, which included a baseline survey (at inception), mid-term survey (June 2005), and final survey (February 2006).

During implementation Links to Literacies took a highly effective action research based approach, which incorporated a process of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Steps were taken to test new approaches, encourage dialogue, and document learning (e.g. through research reports, conference reports etc.).

The dissemination of information and learning also provided an ongoing feature of the Pathfinder's work. The Project Manager took the opportunity to share experiences of the Pathfinder at a variety of events locally and at the request of Communities Scotland and others.

4.7.9 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

Pathfinder representatives have suggested that a strategy for continuation after time-limited grant support was considered at a relatively early stage. The approach was twofold:

- to consolidate networks and activity in the seven pilot areas, where possible in conjunction with local Adult Literacies Partnerships; and
- to promote the approach more widely, and to incrementally replicate the model in other local authority areas where interest exists from local partners.

As of June 2006, the Pathfinder had taken steps to consolidate existing activity, with some form of legacy likely in at least four of the seven pilot areas:

- in four areas funding has been committed by local Literacies Partnerships to continue the work of the Link Worker, to support Network meetings, and to produce newsletters; and
- in three areas Partnerships have recognised the value of the Pathfinder approach and expressed varying degrees of interest in continuation.

Despite achievements in each area, Link Workers have conveyed concerns that progress is unlikely to be sustained without some form of continuing input from Links to Literacies. In many cases local networks are still in an early stage, are fragile, and a legacy in each target area is uncertain.

4.7.10 THE POTENTIAL FOR PATHFINDER REPLICATION

Links to Literacies offers a model that is potentially replicable in other areas. In a direct sense, there is now the opportunity to transplant this approach into other local authority areas.

There are also various aspects of the Pathfinder approach that are potentially transferable to other contexts. The use of Link Workers and Compacts are both potentially valuable tools to support the voluntary sector's contribution to network and Partnership arrangements. Learning Link Scotland has already taken this model and secured funding from the Big Lottery Investing in Ideas fund to test the approach in the context of Community Planning Partnerships

However, in order to replicate or transfer the approach elsewhere there are a number of important pre-requisites. These include, the need for: appropriate time and resources to engage with the voluntary sector; a local project host with credibility and capacity to participate; appropriately skilled and committed Link Workers with a local knowledge; a full commitment from local agencies to involve the voluntary sector as a full partner; and appropriate protocols to guide relationships between the voluntary sector and local Partnerships.

Here it is likely that the availability of resources will present the most significant barrier to expanding this approach. The Pathfinder experience suggests that success will depend on an intensive and sustained input from local Link Workers.

4.8 STIRLING LEARNING CURRICULUM

4.8.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Stirling Learning Curriculum Pathfinder sought to address the disadvantage and discrimination faced by adults with learning disabilities and to design a curriculum framework that fully addressed the needs and aspirations of this group.

It was recognised that over preceding years policy and attitudinal changes had opened up new opportunities for people with learning disabilities. Opportunities were identified to build on the gains already made locally.

A proposal was developed to target adults with learning disabilities in the Stirling area. Prior to the establishment of the Pathfinder, Stirling Literacies Partnership had interacted with around one-third of the 300 people accessing services for people with learning disabilities.

4.8.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Pathfinder was to develop a curriculum framework for adults with learning disabilities. The focus was on enhancing learners' lives by increasing their ability to deal with everyday situations, to reduce exclusion, and increase confidence and aspirations.

The initial objectives set for the Pathfinder were to:

- survey and report on existing literacies provision as it relates to adults with learning disabilities;
- audit existing learning resources and materials and identify any gaps;
- design, pilot and evaluate a curriculum and supporting learning materials for adults with learning disabilities;
- design, pilot and evaluate a training programme and resource pack for tutors; and
- deliver a programme of training sessions to partnership groupings across Scotland in order to roll out the curriculum and resource developments.

In light of the shifting focus of the Pathfinder, and emerging delays, the timetable and method for delivering these objectives was revised.

4.8.3 DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

The Stirling Pathfinder was guided by a Stakeholder Group that brought together a number of partners working with people with learning disabilities. This Group was important in harnessing the professional skills and expertise of partners, in avoiding unhelpful overlap or duplication of effort, and in ensuring that the needs of services user were met.

Stirling Council's Adult Learning Team managed the Pathfinder on behalf of the Literacies Partnership. The project was managed by the Service Manager, who was able to offer strong strategic direction to the project, if not commit significant time to project development due to other competing priorities and commitments.

The Pathfinder and Stirling Council provided the funding for a full-time Development Worker, part-time clerical support and sessional tutors. Pathfinder staff worked alongside other members of the Adult Learning Team (community workers, literacies specialists and development workers). Reportedly this encouraged joint working and resulted in Adult Learning Team staff taking on increasing responsibility for Pathfinder activities as part of their everyday workload.

The Pathfinder also benefited from the support of partners who provided access to clients and resources, including information, contacts, tutor support, and participation in residential events and working groups.

4.8.4 PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite its delayed start, and a change in project worker during a key stage of implementation, the Pathfinder progressed activity in a number of areas.

Among the main reported activities were:

- an audit of existing provision carried out through liaison with existing learning providers;
- facilitation of a range of consultation events:
 - the first event was attended by 20 learners and carers and gathered views on existing provision and any gaps evident
 - a second event was attended by 80 people, with views gathered on the skills required to take part in hobbies, vote in elections, go on holiday etc.
 - a third two-day residential event explored the effectiveness of different media in supporting people to articulate their ideas, opinions, fears and aspirations;
- establishment of programmes designed around the needs identified from the consultation exercise, relating to employment, campaigning, using public transport, handling money, using IT, languages, creative writing, drama and advocacy, statistics and Powerpoint presentations;
- the participation of 10 care support partners from Streets Ahead in PDA ITALL training;
- delivery of a pilot training session to encourage staff within partner agencies to challenge their perceptions of people with learning disabilities; and
- the development of a draft curriculum framework which, at the time of review, is at final draft stage.

The activities were delivered in a pragmatic way in light of the resource/time constraints arising and participant needs identified.

The Pathfinder did not adhere closely to the detailed objectives and work programme initially proposed. In particular, the originally proposed programme of training linked to the Curriculum Framework did not occur.

In this respect there was realisation on the part of project partners that the Pathfinder needed to influence thinking and challenge attitudes to learning disability prior to developing new skills, frameworks and materials.

4.8.5 KEY CONSTRAINTS

From consultations with staff and partners of the Stirling Pathfinder a number of main constraints and difficulties have been identified.

Key challenges arising for the Pathfinder included:

- difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff (a re-advertised post was taken up almost one year later than initially anticipated), which led to increased pressure on staff to meet targets much more quickly than planned;
- difficulties in securing the full support of some partner organisations, in light of major organisational change and competing pressures on their time and resources;
- an underestimation of the management time and commitment required to implement the Pathfinder activity, which created difficulties in maintaining momentum and recording/sharing experiences;
- a longer period of learner consultation than expected, which limited the time available to prepare and pilot the Curriculum Framework; and
- difficulties in embedding a full understanding of literacies work into the role of carers and support workers, and in embedding learning disabilities awareness among learning providers.

These difficulties and delays meant that Pathfinder was unable to deliver as much as was initially planned or would have been possible given a full three-year timeframe to deliver.

4.8.6 KEY PATHFINDER OUTCOMES

While taking longer than expected, and not following the process initially anticipated, the Stirling Pathfinder has reported a number of main outcomes. These have included:

- almost all of the 100 or so people with learning disabilities accessing agency services were given the opportunity to shape a new approach to literacies learning;
- alternative ways to provide literacies support to the client group were explored and new programmes of activity tested to good effect;
- literacies providers were encouraged to work more closely together, which has fostered better joint planning and acted as a catalyst for new programmes of activity;

-
- a Learning Curriculum, informed by both the learners and providers, was eventually established, which will provide a common framework and approach for service providers.

These are notable outcomes achieved quickly and with modest resources.

4.8.7 LITERACIES LEARNING

The Stirling Learning Curriculum pathfinder was primarily concerned with redesigning approaches and challenging attitudes, rather than creating additional learning provision or directly testing literacies learning.

The most fundamental difference reported by Pathfinder partners was that the work enabled staff to look afresh at people with learning disabilities and their literacies needs. In this it:

- raised awareness of the potential of learners, given the right tools and environment in which to learn, and the effectiveness of visual methods of learning; and
- enabled staff working with people with learning disabilities to engage better with learners, to explore the day-to-day literacies skills they need and to encourage them to achieve their aspirations in life.

The increased awareness and understanding brought through working in partnership reportedly resulted in partner organisations actively assisting tutors in literacies programmes and now considering this to be part of their role.

4.8.8 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

From the experience of the Stirling Pathfinder a number of main elements of effective practice have emerged as significant, including:

- the singular focus on people with learning disabilities meant that the curriculum framework could be geared towards their specific needs and learning goals;
- the development of a curriculum in full consultation with learners and providers, with a practitioner tasked with this to ensure a practical and user-led perspective;
- the focus on getting literacies staff to think of people with learning disabilities as people first and foremost, and on raising their expectations of and aspirations for this group;
- the use of high quality and intensive consultation events, each of which put people with learning disabilities at the heart of the process and ensured that all views were heard;
- the active involvement of service providers in assisting the delivery of literacies programmes, involving staff who would not previously have seen this as part of their role; and

-
- the close working relationship between partner organisations, which has enabled the Pathfinder to begin to embed its approach across the adult learning sector in Stirling.

Subject to resource and time constraints the Pathfinder staff, together with adults with learning difficulties, were active in sharing their experience through local and national forums.

4.8.9 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

As planned, the Stirling Pathfinder formally drew to a close on 31st March 2006 after a shorter than anticipated period of implementation.

Despite the end of Pathfinder status, Stirling Council's Adult Learning Team has allocated resources to continue mainstreaming the approaches developed as part of the project. This process of transition has been helped by the commitment of Adult Learning Team staff.

As part of the future approach the Adult Learning Team plans to:

- develop the use of a 'bilingual approach', where local agencies use agreed symbols and language in their interaction with people with learning disabilities;
- introduce further opportunities for people with learning disabilities to develop their literacies skills through a variety of project based work and short programmes linked to identified hobbies and interests etc.; and
- encourage the use of the materials and programmes developed as part of the Learning Curriculum, which will form the basis of future partnership working and engagement with the client group.

4.8.10 THE POTENTIAL FOR PATHFINDER REPLICATION

The Stirling Pathfinder has illustrated a process of developing a learning curriculum around the needs of one target group, people with learning disabilities, although this broad approach could be replicated for other groups.

Based on the Pathfinder experience, there would seem to be no insurmountable barriers to transferring the Stirling approach elsewhere. This process of transfer will be greatly assisted by the production of a written framework and supporting materials, which might be followed by others and adapted to local circumstances.

However, Pathfinder representatives point to a number of important local circumstances or pre-requisites that should be given consideration. These include the importance of: a strong and shared set of core principles in relation to people with learning disability; an effective partnership structure that lends itself to meaningful collaboration; strong leadership, combined with a willingness to test new ways of working with the client group; the recruitment of staff with appropriate experience and skills; and an agreed and user-led process of consultation that is afforded sufficient time and resources.

4.9 THE WELCOMING

4.9.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Welcoming emerged from an earlier six-month pilot project that had demonstrated a range of literacy and language needs among refugees and minority ethnic groups. The project had highlighted potentially valuable approaches and techniques to delivering literacy and language programmes.

The Pathfinder was established to target refugees/asylum seekers, black and minority ethnic people, and indigenous Scots who were residents of the Gorgie/Dalry area of Edinburgh. It was developed in recognition of the increasing numbers of refugees with leave to remain in Scotland.

The Welcoming was established to address issues faced by the target groups including: English literacy requirements; alienation and isolation; a lack of civic participation; and limited access to key services such as health and housing.

Pathfinder funding was sought to enable the Welcoming to undertake additional literacy work, ESOL activity, and outreach work.

4.9.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Welcoming Pathfinder was a multi-cultural gathering event held on a weekly basis to bring together refugees, asylum seekers, Scottish and local minority ethnic communities. The aim was to create an environment where people could socialise, share cultures, and learn together and where newcomers could learn about Scots society and culture, and practise their English speaking and writing.

Among the key objectives initially set for the Pathfinder were to:

- involve an average of 40 people each week in scheduled Welcoming sessions;
- provide increased access to educational, health, and housing services for participants;
- promote active citizenship and methods of greater refugee input and influence;
- promote participants' awareness and understanding of housing, health promotion, and mental health; and
- promote anti-racist and equal opportunities advocacy including the raising of refugee issues.

These broad objectives, while refined over time, remained valid and were used to guide the work of the Pathfinder.

4.9.3 DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

The Welcoming was initiated and managed by the Adult Learning Project (ALP), a City of Edinburgh Council project. A Steering Group comprising partner organisations was established to guide the work of the Pathfinder. In addition, a large committee made up of ALP members and Welcoming participants met up monthly to oversee progress and to develop a programme of activities.

A Community Learning & Development Officer employed by the local authority had lead responsibility for the project. Through Pathfinder funding the Welcoming employed an Organiser (15 hours per week), an ESOL worker (5 hours), a literacy worker (5 hours), three multilingual outreach workers (a total of 30 hours) and an administrator (9 hours). This team brought together a range of skills appropriate to the needs of the Welcoming and its participants.

The Pathfinder also benefited from the support of around 15 to 20 volunteers who helped to prepare food, supported the ESOL and literacy work, befriended participants, led activities and performances, and produced a newsletter. An outreach worker acted as volunteer co-ordinator.

The Welcoming also drew on the in-kind support of a wide variety of partner organisations that provided information and support on health, housing, ESOL, literacy, and legislation relating to asylum seekers and refugees.

4.9.4 PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Based on consultations and reported information, the Welcoming Pathfinder seems to have generated significant levels of activity and participation within the target community.

Participation in the weekly Welcoming event was maintained at between 45 and 50 people, and as part of this a variety of activities and services were provided, including:

- a morning drop-in, which involved 15 to 20 people, and included childcare facilities;
- a lunch prepared by participants, volunteers and partner agencies, which generated attendance of between 35 and 50 people;
- group-based discussions around themes determined by participants (e.g. festivals, marriage, education, health, visual arts, drama and personal safety), which involved all participants;
- ESOL/Literacy groupwork, which involved 15 to 20 participants on a regular basis;
- a range of ceilidhs, social events, and outings, which drew on varying levels of attendance; and
- the ongoing provision of information, advice, referral and one-to-one tutoring support as required by individual participants.

Based on the reported level and scope of activity, the Welcoming appears to have regularly met or exceeded its stated objectives/targets.

4.9.5 KEY CONSTRAINTS

On the basis of information gathered and reported, a number of key constraints or difficulties have been highlighted.

Among the main challenges encountered were:

- a forced relocation of the Welcoming venue from Dalry House to the Central Hall created significant difficulties and disruption;
- it emerged, in light of demand, that a more structured approach was necessary to recruit, train and deploy a larger team of volunteers;
- the level of participation on the ALP Welcoming Sub-committee was disappointing and the effort required to develop this underestimated;
- the timing of the weekly events, during working hours, systematically excluded economically active people from participating;
- administration support was lacking after the administrator left in December 2004 and could not be replaced until the end of March 2005;
- the project worked with a large number of people with mental and physical health problems requiring training for both staff and volunteers;
- higher levels of participation than expected led to the need for stronger leadership and a more tightly structured approach; and
- a more limited input from partner organisation than anticipated occurred during 2004/05 due to illness, staff shortage, and organisational restructuring.

Despite ongoing difficulties and challenges, the scope of activities and level of attendance at the Welcoming was not been significantly affected.

4.9.6 KEY PATHFINDER OUTCOMES

From consultations with Pathfinder staff, volunteers and partners a number of key outcomes have been reported, including:

- the development of joint working between a variety of organisations around the weekly programme of activities;
- an increased participation in community life by, and integration of, refugee/asylum seekers, minority ethnic groups, and Scottish people marginalized because of literacy difficulties;
- an improved awareness of health, housing and other community services by participants; and
- improved English literacy as a result of practicing and developing language and literacy skills around everyday issues and themes.

4.9.7 LITERACIES LEARNING

The Pathfinder grant from Communities Scotland has been used to bolster the languages and literacies learning component of the Welcoming event.

Discussions with participants at the Welcoming events have indicated strong satisfaction and broadly positive learning experiences. Reflecting the above, participants have highlighted positive outcomes in relation to:

- improved cultural awareness and support in English;
- increasing opportunities for social interaction;
- improvements in language skills;
- improved confidence and self-esteem;
- increased willingness and ability to use local services;
- progression onto further learning opportunities; and
- more active involvement in local community events and activities.

Participants have also commented positively on the practical and supportive environment created and the value of regular group-based discussions, and the learning and language skills arising from these.

4.9.8 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

A number of elements of effective practice have also been identified, which appear to underpin the success of the Welcoming approach. These included:

- the focus on promotion and outreach, which made use of local networks to ensure the Welcoming is open and accessible to all;
- the use of universal themes as programme topics, which enabled everyone to engage in discussion and learning activities regardless of their level of English or literacy;
- regular sub-committee review and input, which ensured that participants could take ownership of activities and ensure they remained responsive;
- the use of music, dance, visual arts, drama, craft work and creative writing, which provided opportunities for participants to express themselves and connect with others;
- bringing people from a diversity of backgrounds, which helped to encourage multicultural dialogue and promote positive community relations;
- the joint working fostered between a variety of learning and community services, which was structured and focused around participant needs;
- the process of collectively preparing meals, which enabled social interaction and cross-cultural understanding; and

-
- the multi-cultural and multidisciplinary approach, which brought together workers and volunteers from a range of backgrounds and encouraged the sharing of expertise.

The success and profile of the Welcoming generated much interest from across Scotland. This created a number of opportunities for staff and volunteers to reflect on and share effective practice with others.

4.9.9 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

With funding from Communities Scotland having come to an end, the Welcoming has continued with financial and in-kind support from the City of Edinburgh Council and other sources.

The short-term objectives of the Welcoming are to consolidate current activity and to gradually introduce further activities and services, including: the increased use of food to promote learning and cultural exchange; the expanded use of arts activities to promote individual expression; the introduction of further information and advice services; and further visits and outings of an overtly cultural and educational nature.

Longer-term the priority for the Welcoming is to build the strong user-led and democratic structure, and put in place the stable funding package, required to provide continuity and stability of service.

4.9.10 THE POTENTIAL FOR PATHFINDER REPLICATION

With a continuing increase in migration into Scottish communities, from the new EU countries and elsewhere, the type of approach taken by the Welcoming continues to grow in significance. Such an approach addresses language and literacy skills whilst orientating the newcomer to the local culture.

As such the approach is highly replicable in other urban areas subject to similar levels of immigration and with sufficient scale to make the project viable. It is an approach that has already generated much interest from elsewhere and has exhibited the potential (subject to funding constraints) to be extended to other communities of Edinburgh.

In implementing a similar approach elsewhere there are a number of pre-requisites necessary to ensure success. These include: a host organisation with local credibility and connections; a centrally located and highly accessible venue with all required facilities; commitment from like-minded partner organisations with a complementary remit and services; adequate staff and volunteer resources to provide a broad-based and holistic experience; and sufficient commitment from the local authority or other lead funder.

5. STUDY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This Section draws together the main study findings and lessons. It begins by summarising the key findings and issues arising from the Pathfinder experience before going on to discuss some of the major lessons learned from the experience. Finally, it offers some alternative models derived from discussions with staff who took part in the interview process.

5.2 KEY FINDINGS AND ISSUES

This study has evaluated the progress and performance of both the Phase Two Adult Literacies Pathfinder projects and the framework put in place to support their design and delivery. From this review a number of main messages have arisen.

5.2.1 FOCUS AND TARGETING

The evaluation finds that the Challenge Fund process put in place by Learning Connections was successful in bringing forward a range of potentially valuable project actions. The Phase Two Pathfinder projects selected have been well targeted, and have addressed strategically significant literacies issues. As such they have been well placed to make an important strategic contribution to the issues and priorities set out in the original ALNIS report.

The Pathfinder projects have typically focused on designing and testing new structures and methods for attracting learners and supporting learners.

The strength of the literacies component has varied somewhat between projects, although literacies learning has been incorporated into all of the Pathfinder projects. In some cases this component could have been made more explicit or the outcomes from literacies learning more clearly monitored.

5.2.2 PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE

Overall, the Pathfinder projects have progressed well, albeit subject to significant early delays. Difficulties during the set-up phase meant that projects have struggled in some cases to deliver agreed activities within a truncated timescale. Modifications to agreed project activity have been noted in most cases.

Common difficulties and constraints faced have included: recruitment difficulties; time taken to engage fully with the target group; low take-up of learning opportunities; technological difficulties; limited partner commitment or input; and a variety of resource constraints (e.g. tutors, venues, crèche, and volunteers etc.).

Many of the challenges noted appear to have been unavoidable or have been a symptom of the learning curve that might be expected for organisations delivering new or innovative activity. However, in other cases a degree of over-ambition is noted in relation to the initial Pathfinder proposals.

At the close of the programme, the projects have all made satisfactory progress. Particular improvements in progress and performance have been evident during the final six months of implementation.

5.2.3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY

The evaluation indicates that the Pathfinder organisations put in place reasonably strong and supportive project management arrangements. Steering groups have proven to be particularly valuable in harnessing the skills, knowledge, and commitment of partners. A key issue identified, however, has been the limited management time that could be allocated to the Pathfinder from within host organisations, in light of available resources and competing priorities/demands.

The staff employed with Pathfinder funding have proven instrumental in the successful development and delivery of activities. However, the shortage of specialist literacies staff at the outset of the programme created significant recruitment difficulties for almost all of the Pathfinder projects.

Although a standard practice for the Scottish Executive, and agreed with project representatives at the outset, retrospective payment arrangements procedure caused cash flow difficulties in at least one case. It is important that arrangements for making payments 'in advance of need' should therefore be carefully considered in relation to voluntary sector grant recipients.

The delivery of activities in partnership with others has been central to the success of the Pathfinder projects. Joint working has typically broadened out over time, with staff successful in bringing new partners on board. That said, varying levels of 'buy in' from local partners have been evident and differing levels of connection to, or integration with, Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnerships has been achieved.

5.2.4 PATHFINDER EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION

Considerable effort has been devoted to putting in place a supportive framework designed to enable Pathfinder organisations to track, monitor, review activity and to share this learning with others.

From the perspective of the Pathfinder organisations, however, this effort was somewhat misdirected. The emphasis placed on generating and critically reflecting on performance information was limited both by the resources/time available to project staff and by the perceived weakness of the formative Evaluation Framework and tools put in place. In this respect further broad-based project management and capacity building support might have been more welcomed.

From a programme perspective, the Framework was not used to systematically synthesise and distil the learning from the Pathfinder projects or to share this learning with a wider audience. Greater emphasis on gathering and disseminating evidence might have been expected in a demonstration programme of this kind.

5.2.5 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Despite some difficulties in project implementation and monitoring, a variety of elements of effective practice have been identified as part of Pathfinder implementation.

Common elements of effective practice identified have included: methods of engaging with 'hard to reach' client groups; the use of community networks, resources and capabilities; learner involvement in the design of programmes; approaches to delivering learning and learner support; the use of various technologies, resources, and materials; approaches to partnership working and collaborative delivery; and methods of integrating literacies into wider learning/community activities.

Where learning did take place, learners welcomed the: gentle and informal means of introduction to literacies learning; learner-centred, responsive and flexible approach to courses; non-threatening and positive learning environment created; range of interesting and relevant activities for learners; opportunity to apply literacies learning in a real-world context; and the opportunity for learner progression through related forms of support.

5.2.6 OUTCOMES

On the basis of the research carried out it appears that outcomes are now emerging, to varying degrees, from all of the Pathfinder projects. These outcomes have been evident at four levels:

- learner outcomes – there have been wide ranging benefits for learners, although literacies learning has not always been to the fore and outcomes have not always been systematically captured;
- partnership outcomes – the Pathfinder projects have provided an important catalyst and focus for partnership activity locally;
- organisational outcomes – in some places the Pathfinder projects have introduced new ways of thinking and working locally; and
- infrastructure outcomes – in most cases tangible resources/materials are now emerging from the Pathfinder projects.

While these are positive outcomes, the evidence suggests that these are likely to have been strengthened with a longer timescale in which to set-up and deliver agreed activities. Due to early delays, much of the Pathfinder activity was only becoming fully embedded or reaching a point of maturity at the point of closure of the programme.

5.2.7 THE PATHFINDER LEGACY

The evidence indicates that exit strategies for the Pathfinder projects were initially underdeveloped and only seriously considered late in the life of the projects. For most of the Pathfinder projects there was no straightforward or managed transition from the end of funding. As noted below, however, 'exit strategies' were for the Pathfinder projects to arrange themselves (planning exit strategies was an important part of the Challenge Fund application process).

The Pathfinder projects, in all cases, have left some form of tangible legacy locally (i.e. literacies materials, resources or activities). In five cases local partners have secured alternative grant funding from other sources to carry on the projects in a similar vein, if not always on the same scale. In three cases, local partners are

attempting to mainstream the successful elements of activity into wider programmes of activity.

In each case it seems that partnership relationships and structures have been strengthened as a result of the Pathfinder experience. This bodes well for future adult literacies work and as such should be regarded as an important legacy from the Phase Two Pathfinder Programme.

A range of factors has determined the ability of the Pathfinder projects to sustain and build-on activities and outcomes. In particular, the extent to which the project: was established with an independent structure and identity; was closely linked into the structure, strategic priorities, and support of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnership; and sufficient internal management capacity or external development support was in place to plan for continuation.

5.2.8 REPLICATION

The Pathfinder review undertaken as part of this evaluation reveals a range of interesting and effective practice that merits the attention of practitioners in other areas. The potential for learning lessons or replicating practice exists in each case.

Experience suggests, however, that it is not always possible to simply transplant project approaches or methods wholesale to other contexts. For each Pathfinder, a variety of local circumstances and pre-requisites have been identified as instrumental to project success and necessary as any attempt at replication elsewhere.

It is also noted that the process of transferring this learning and practice is still at an early stage. Dissemination to date has taken the form of a national dissemination conference in March 2005 hosted by Learning Connections, where all eight Pathfinder projects were given the opportunity to showcase their work. Dissemination has also taken place at a local level involving some of the Pathfinder projects.

The intention ultimately will be to disseminate the findings of the programme evaluation and the framework evaluation via Learning Connections' main website and also the website: www.adultliteraciesonline.com. Where possible and appropriate, the resources and materials produced by the Pathfinder projects will be posted on this site to aid dissemination.

5.2.9 VALUE FOR MONEY

In coming to an assessment of value for money achieved by the Phase Two Adult Literacies Pathfinder Programme there are three main perspectives: absolute; in terms of achievement against stated objectives; and in terms of cost-effectiveness when compared to similar programmes.

In absolute terms, the evidence indicates that the Pathfinder projects have achieved much with investment from the programme. They have undertaken project activity that has left a worthwhile legacy locally and in doing so produced a variety of learning. In this, programme investment has been additional and complementary to that allocated through Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnerships. Moreover, in all cases but two (where projects had been piloted prior

to the award of funding) the investment seems to have been instrumental in bringing forward new project activity.

In relation to objectives, the Pathfinder projects have helped to encourage innovative and collaborative literacies practice. In all respects the Pathfinder Programme has achieved the main objectives set for it.

In relation to cost effectiveness, there are no simplistic benchmarks. The Phase Two Programme was designed as a demonstration programme, and as such its ultimate success and cost-effectiveness will depend on the extent to which:

- the pilot activity is sustained and built upon locally;
- local learning is transferred or replicated elsewhere; or
- this activity results in new or improved literacies practice across Scotland.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

5.3.1 LESSONS LEARNED

The Phase Two Literacies Programme itself was introduced as a bold and innovative initiative at the time, which has subsequently yielded positive results and learning.

The evaluation has indicated a number of important strengths of the Pathfinder approach. In particular, the approach has:

- enabled the targeting of strategically important literacies issues;
- induced organisations/agencies outwith the 'literacies field' to become involved in delivering literacies learning;
- provided the time and resources for the meaningful testing of new demonstration activity;
- offered the opportunity to gather real-time intelligence from innovative literacies practice; and
- uncovered a range of interesting and informative materials for those working in the literacies field and beyond.

On the basis of the evaluation evidence, and from the above discussion, a number of important lessons have arisen for Learning Connections and partners surrounding the delivery of any similar programme, including the importance of:

- establishing a robust programme governance framework, including input from an independent and expert Advisory Group, to ensure clear leadership and direction;
- maintaining tight management arrangements, to ensure a co-ordinated focus and sustained efforts from all of those tasked with implementing, and supporting the implementation of, the programme;

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- establishing a straightforward project monitoring framework that lends itself to ongoing critical reflection and is tailored carefully to the needs, workloads, and capabilities of participating organisations;
 - selecting projects with a clear and additional focus on literacies learning and providing adequate support to measure and track these agreed learning outcomes;
 - building in adequate resources to project proposals from the outset to enable effective management, delivery, review, and dissemination of learning from the Pathfinder experience;
 - providing ongoing, holistic, and flexible support to participating organisations, as necessary, to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of agreed project activities;
 - providing sufficient time to organisations, including appropriate 'lead in' time to establish a realistic delivery plan and recruit staff, and adequate time to test project activities;
 - facilitating connections between pathfinder activity and the work of local Adult Literacies Partnerships, to ensure that these activities are not delivered in isolation from local priorities and support structures; and
 - ensuring a sustained focus and commitment on the part of participating organisations to the requirements of the Pathfinder programme and to progressing project 'exit strategies' against agreed milestones.

5.3.2 CHANGING INFLUENCES

In moving forward, it should be recognised that the literacies field has matured significantly since the establishment of the Pathfinder programme by the Scottish Executive in 2002.

Broad changes in this respect include:

- the continuing development of Learning Connections and its portfolio of activities designed to develop and promote innovative and effective practice;
- the evolution of Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnerships and their increasing willingness and ability to stimulate and support innovation; and
- the breadth and scale of innovation in literacies practice that has now emerged naturally through investment from a variety of sources.

In addition, the current developments in the field of adult literacies are due to feed into a refreshed ALNIS report. This refreshed document will set revised priorities and actions.

5.3.3 ALTERNATIVE MODELS

In recognition of the above, and as part of this review, consultees have put forward various alternative models for Learning Connections to consider in stimulating innovative and effective practice in the future.

From these we have distilled four main options, which are not mutually exclusive, and include:

1. Thematic Pathfinder Projects

Under this option a further small number of large-scale pathfinder projects would be commissioned. This strategically targeted series of demonstration projects would be focused on a small number of areas where gaps in literacies practice still clearly exist, and which are in keeping with the priorities of the refreshed ALNIS strategy. The support framework for these projects would be redesigned to reflect the learning from the Phase Two Pathfinder Programme.

2. Action Research

Under this option a set of strategically focused small-scale action research projects would be initiated. These community-based projects would provide practitioners and partners with the time and resources for planning, action, reflection and learning. These projects might be initiated with support from action research mentors, and could be linked to or established in partnership with the Scottish Community Action Research Fund (SCARF).

3. Seeding Innovation

Under this option a seedcorn fund would be established to support small-scale innovative actions within agreed themes. This would provide small amounts of grant funding to identify, develop and pilot innovative or effective ways of supporting literacies learning. This might be modelled on, or broadened out from, the existing Innovations in ICT and Literacies Project and would include appropriate support to extract and disseminate the learning from the pilots.

4. Research and Development

Under this option a programme of research and development activity would be initiated. This would focus on identifying and harvesting learning from existing literacies practice throughout Scotland, rather than initiating or supporting new project activity. This might involve: the commissioning of targeted research and studies into effective practice; targeted policy development work with partners in relevant fields; and the development of mechanisms to share effective practice.

Whatever the option or combination of options adopted it will be important to maximise the value of learning from the Phase Two Pathfinder experience. As noted, the ultimate success of the programme will depend on the transfer of learning and knowledge, and the use of this, to bring about improvements in literacies practice throughout Scotland.

GLOSSARY

ALN	Adult literacy and numeracy
ALNIS	<i>The Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland Report, 2001</i>
ALNPs	Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnership(s). Thirty-two partnerships linked to local authority areas' Community Learning Partnerships have been established to prepare, deliver, and monitor local strategic plans aimed at developing literacy and numeracy provision. Some areas use a range of terminology including Adult Literacies Partnership or Literacies Action Plan Partnership.
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
ETLLD	The Scottish Executive's Education, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department
Exit Strategies	The plan devised, when an application for funding is made, for what will happen after the grant is completed
Formative evaluation	A method of judging the worth of a programme while the programme activities are forming or happening
ICT	Information Communications Technology
LEAP	Learning, Evaluation and Planning – a learning-based planning and evaluation framework that supports those working to improve the quality of community life
Literacies	A term acknowledging that different literacy and numeracy skills, knowledge and understanding are needed for different contexts
Learning Connections	A Team within Communities Scotland responsible for Adult Literacies, Community Learning and Development, and Community Engagement issues
SIPs	Social Inclusion Partnerships – 48 area based and thematic initiatives (now closed) to promote the Scottish Executive's social justice agenda



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