Adult and Community Learning in Birmingham and Solihull
2003 Final Report

Learning + Skills Council
Birmingham and Solihull

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

The establishment of a national network of Learning and Skills Councils was potentially a hugely significant step for lifelong learning. For the first time we have the capacity to look across almost every provider of post-compulsory education (apart from higher education), and to assess how well provision meets local needs. Moreover, the remit of the LSC includes individual and community learning needs as well as the skills demands of the region. This is essential if the social as well as economic agenda is to be tackled.

How well this opportunity will be taken depends on the imagination and commitment of the LSC. I was delighted to be asked to chair the Birmingham and Solihull LSC's review of adult and community provision. The review signals that the LSC intends to sustain a serious commitment to this kind of service.

The key themes of the review are outlined in the following pages. We suggest that there should be a strategic forum covering the sub-region as a whole, complemented by local planning groups. The review has only begun a job that now needs to be taken on at several levels.

I would just like to highlight three points:
- First, the review involved a serious amount of data collection. It has laid the basis for informed, evidence-based policy-making. We believe this might help similar exercises elsewhere in the country.
- Secondly, we place a lot of emphasis on including providers who are not in the formal sector: voluntary organisations but also libraries and other groups. This is essential if we are to make outreach work effective.
- Finally we began to grapple with the question of how to think about progression and what actually happens as a result of people getting engaged in learning – something that tends to get overlooked if the focus is only on who participates.

I would like to thank all members of the review panel, especially those who chaired the working groups and worked on assembling the information and the members of the LSC Secretariat who managed the process so capably.

Tom Schuller

Dean
Faculty of Continuing Education
Birkbeck College
University of London

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council has completed a review of Adult and Community Learning, which has involved all key stakeholders.

The following key themes and action emerged:

Planning Arrangements
There is a need to create a planning framework for Adult and Community Learning:

➢ Develop a consensus definition of Adult and Community Learning
➢ Establish an adult and community learning Policy Group where issues of entitlement, adequacy and sufficiency can be addressed, involving stakeholders in shaping LSC decisions regarding Adult and Community Learning.
➢ Establish local area planning groups for Adult and Community Learning which include all stakeholders
➢ Establish a central resource to provide planning data to local planning groups.

Entitlement
The Policy Group will explore the potential of a common entitlement to Adult and Community Learning:

➢ Develop new mechanisms for the articulation of demand, baseline standards for community based centres and a development plan for ACL venues
➢ Proactively link Adult and Community Learning providers with recognised centres of excellence for curriculum enrichment.
➢ Incorporate into the planning of provision standardised induction procedures, on-programme support and IAG intervention towards the end of a course.
➢ Review barriers.

Contribution of the Voluntary / Community Sector
The Review Group recognised and seeks to further develop the community and voluntary sector as providers of Adult and Community Learning:

➢ Develop transparent arrangements between the community/voluntary sector delivering adult and community learning and the most appropriate funded institution, where the institution funds the provision and takes responsibility for developing the community / voluntary sector provider.

Information, Advice and Guidance
The review identified a need to enhance the role of Information, Advice and Guidance services to bring people into learning, feed back to providers and help learners progress:

➢ Maintain and develop links between tutors of first-rung Adult and Community Learning provision and tutors working in progression provision. Enhance progression for adult students through personal support and mentoring.
➢ Review Information, Advice and Guidance services delivered by peripheral organisations such as Trades Unions and voluntary sector; scope and develop to offer a "trusted" route into learning

- Provider-based IAG services to promote all progression opportunities and link into the network of public sector based information services (eg libraries) and other outreach services.
- Design simple, generic, paper-based resources to support induction, guidance, and mentoring functions carried out by part-time teachers
- Support voluntary and community organisations offering front-line IAG services to play an active role in both local area planning and feeding back from learners.

Marketing

The Policy Group will take forward the development of a minimum standard for the marketing of learning opportunities and Information, Advice and Guidance services:

- Agree at Local Area level a range of mechanisms to develop and disseminate to potential learners information about learning opportunities
- Agree with learning providers how opportunities will be marketed to different market segments
- Develop a programme of action to recognise, celebrate and develop the role of students as learning ambassadors/champions

Staffing

The Policy Group will agree a development plan for staffing across the sector:

- Develop enhanced role of community tutors
- Review staffing qualifications and agree a preferred minimum
- Design and implement a staff development plan with clear routes to accreditation

Reviewing and Evaluating

The Policy Group will review the effectiveness and impact of Adult and Community Learning:

- Track cohorts of new learners in non-accredited, first rung provision, and report on the factors which encourage progression; this to result in quantifiable data to inform planning.
- Encourage a growing awareness of wider benefits of learning, such as health and environmental issues and link to remit of other agencies
- Information, Advice and Guidance network to support organisations to access new learners.
- Establish impact of information, advice and guidance services on how local adults make choices about learning, and ensure coverage in all wards in Birmingham and Solihull
- Introduce a process of 'peer inspection' by community-based tutors within and across providers to facilitate the sharing of good practice and improve quality monitoring in a supportive, non-threatening way.
- Encourage more routine and better follow-up of early leavers, even where retention levels are relatively high.

VISION

All adults living or working in Birmingham and Solihull will have access to appropriate, local, first-rung learning opportunities, and be supported to progress into mainstream learning where this is their goal.

This will be achieved by:

- establishing local area planning groups for adult and community-based learning throughout the sub-region
- monitoring information illustrating penetration rates, participation and curriculum detail at enumeration district level to inform action planning
- creating a protocol for transparent arrangements to support the delivery of Adult and Community Learning by the voluntary and community sector, funded through LSC providers. The structure will clearly identify the role and fee of the funded provider and the action required by the sub-contractor to be eligible for future direct funding.
- listening to the voice of the learner and responding to the needs of the local labour market
- coordinating a responsive curriculum that is accessible to all
- jointly marketing learning provision to local communities
- offering a curriculum entitlement to Basic Skills provision, first rung engagement and personal development opportunities within a reasonable vicinity
- ensuring clear progression routes into appropriate, accredited provision across providers
- offering an entitlement to free, impartial information and advice within a reasonable vicinity
- linking adult and community provision with providers of appropriate progression routes, curriculum excellence and enrichment opportunities
- supporting the development of Adult and Community Learning tutors, IAG, community and outreach workers, library staff and tutors of mainstream progression provision, and promoting their interaction
- celebrating and disseminating good practice in Adult and Community Learning.

INTRODUCTION

1. Reasons for the Review

1.1 The National Context:

The Learning and Skills Council was created comprehensively to reform post-compulsory learning below higher education, by combining in one strategic organisation the planning, funding and quality assurance of provision. Such reform needs to be based upon the best understanding of current provision and needs. The Adult and Community Learning Review follows on from the 16 – 19 Review and a number of area-wide sector reviews by seeking to establish the scope, range and diversity of provision targeted primarily at adults and which does not have a specific, vocational focus.

It is…the first time that a public body has had a statutory duty placed upon it to encourage participation in learning, and I look to the Council to keep this sense of purpose at the heart of all its work and to aim to make a real difference to people's lives. [And to] work closely with LEAs and others to plan for significant improvements to the integrated provision of Adult and Community Learning.
The Secretary of State's Remit Letter to the Learning and Skills Council

---

The purpose of Adult and Community Learning. We should *maintain* the existing balance in Adult and Community Learning provision which was established in *Learning to Succeed* and the LSC's Remit Letter. We should retain Adult and Community Learning's distinctive contribution; we should not seek greater emphasis, for example, on its role in our economic and skills agendas. We have other policies and programmes targeted towards those ends.

Quality and Standards. This does not mean that we should be soft on quality and standards. It *may* mean that we should define quality in different ways from other types of provision, e.g. that leading to qualifications. We need to determine a clear 'minimum expectation' of what we are looking for from Adult and Community Learning.

Adult and Community Learning forms a vital part of the Government's drive to widen participation in learning, to build community's self confidence and capacity, and to promote good citizenship and regeneration. Do not want to upset that balance by further targeting either towards social inclusion or economic/competitiveness agenda. We need to retain Adult and Community Learning's distinctive role.
It means we want to see Adult and Community Learning that is high quality, innovative and based on a clear assessment of local need. The drive for quality must not lead to additional bureaucracy which could deter both teachers and learners.

Ivan Lewis
July 2002

1.2 The Local Context:

Prior to the Adult and Community Learning Review, it was clear that there was a good deal of adult and community focused activity across Birmingham and Solihull, and that much of this was well received by learners. Excellent examples of learner achievement and innovation were highlighted in award nominations and local press. Assumptions were made about the scale and scope of provision, but there had been no attempt to break down information by curriculum, level or geographical area.

However, it became clear that the unregulated growth and diversity of Adult and Community Learning provision in the past has led to areas of duplication and gaps. The multiplicity of providers in close proximity to one another, insular planning, independent marketing and terminology is confusing to potential learners. Progression is frequently inadequately monitored, routes obscure, and movement between providers uncertain.

It was unclear how far certain factors influenced the curriculum offer, including proximity of alternative provision and customer feedback. Mechanisms for regularly collecting information about what potential learners request through Information, Advice and Guidance, (IAG), outlets are under-developed.

Examples of excellence are rarely sought or reported, and a mechanism is required for future sharing and building on the many strengths of the sector. Similarly, community-focused provision does not necessarily benefit from expertise and good practice elsewhere, e.g. centres of excellence.

2. Scope of the Review

The term 'ACL' has been open to interpretation. On the one hand, it represents a funding stream for provision secured (currently exclusively) through the Local Education Authorities. Within the LSC it is often understood to encompass outreach and associated first-rung activity within 'other provision' made by FE providers. In plain English, however, the term extends to all provision with an adult or community focus. This interpretation is especially complex, in as much as a significant proportion is not directly funded through the LSC. The ACL Review, therefore, has had to cast its net wide, and investigate beyond the boundaries of formal, accredited and funded provision. The Review informs the Council's Lifelong Learning, Skills, Participation and Inclusion strategies and ensures the full integration of adult and community-based learning into the Learning Plan. Its recommendations will rationalise and maximise learning opportunities at local area level through effective partnership working.

For the purpose of the Review, Adult and Community Learning has been defined as activities engaging adults in:

- First rung provision taking place on an institutional or an outreach basis organised by colleges, voluntary and community organisations or by the

LEAs, with encouragement to progress to higher level vocational or academic provision
- Non-vocational programmes organised by the colleges, voluntary and community organisations or by or the LEAs
- Basic Skills
- ESOL
- Basic ICT

3. Characteristics of Current Provision

Adult and Community Learning Providers
The LSC ACL funding stream is delivered by Birmingham Adult Education Service, (BAES), throughout Birmingham, and sub-contracted by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, (SMBC), to Solihull College. Both BAES and Solihull College are also funded through LSC FE or 'core' funding for other delivery, primarily, but not exclusively, working towards qualifications.

However, the ACL funding stream represents only a relatively small proportion of the LSC funded provision that is adult and community focused, first rung learning opportunities. There are currently 15 FE funded providers, and some colleges offer a wider range of provision that falls within the scope of the Review than others.

The sub-region supports two UfI hubs, offering *learndirect*, non-accredited and usually free provision in community-based learning centres and access points. A number of organisations carry the *UK On-line* badging, having received Government/lottery funding for ICT equipment and/or short-term revenue funding to introduce learners to using computers and the internet.

As well as being a primary source of IAG, the Library Services have developed their role as a provider of education and training, and several libraries in the area boast excellent learning centres in addition to the internet access available throughout their service.

Beyond that, the Voluntary and Community Sub-group within the Review has highlighted a significant volume of learning that takes place either as sub-contracted provision, or without direct (LSC) funding, i.e. learning funded by other statutory bodies, such as Economic Development, Health, or with organisations' own resources, as charities, projects or with fund-raising. Other LSC monies substantially support adult and community learning, e.g. European Social Funding, Single Regeneration Budgets, BiteSize, etc.

Scale of Adult and Community Provision
Of the 185,000 learners enrolled on FE or ACL provision in 2001-01, 104,000, (56%), were aged 19 or over. The area of learning attracting most enrolments for those 19+ was ICT, closely followed by foundation programmes, including Basic Skills. Together they accounted for 43% of 2000–01 adult enrolments.   The Review research identified 900 voluntary and community sector organisations that were involved in delivering and/or signposting learning. It is likely that the majority of this is first rung learning, although some volunteer training can be delivered at a high level.

The Review has sought to extend understanding of this complex structure, and investigate how best to engage in its development. The LSC has inherited a complex

legacy of funding history, and is charged with maintaining an overall balance, whilst attempting to minimise artificial anomalies, working ultimately towards a simpler system and increased responsiveness to learners' needs at a local level. It celebrates and acknowledges the need for a broad base of first rung opportunities. These provide a gentle slope into learning for reluctant and lapsed learners, an opportunity to learn for its own sake, for well-being and personal development, as well as making significant contributions to skills development, economic activity, active citizenship and neighbourhood renewal.

4. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Review, (see Appendix 2),sought:

- comprehensive mapping and analysis of provision and penetration, (including Information, Advice and Guidance)
- learners' views on barriers, motivation, benefits, support, achievement and progression
- understanding of ACL, including the role of the voluntary sector
- identification of innovation, good practice, over and under provision
- recommendations for further research and/or change

The ACL Review aimed to:

- bring together representatives from the range of agencies who contribute to Adult and Community Learning

- define Adult and Community Learning and clear the way for improved understanding

- identify gaps in provision, duplication and over-provision

- identify good practice

- focus attention on the key requirement of Adult and Community Learning to engage new learners

- ensure opportunities for clear progression into further structured and, where appropriate, accredited learning

- inform strategic planning of Adult and Community Learning, 'organised on an area basis across colleges, the Adult Education Service and the voluntary sector'. (Local LSC Strategic Plan)

- support disadvantaged groups, including outreach and support services to remove barriers to participation

- strengthen the links between Information, Advice and Guidance and Adult and Community Learning provision, and highlight the necessity of two-way communication

- ensure that learning opportunities are responsive to local need and marketed in the most appropriate way for the locality
- support regeneration, community cohesion and neighbourhood renewal

FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. LOCAL AREA PLANNING

The curriculum offer across providers has evolved over time, based on a variety of factors. It has not been systematically planned in response to research or expressed need, nor considered holistically across a geographical area. This has resulted in the present degree of overlap of provision and inadequate progression between different levels of provision and between learning providers. Little evidence was found of local collaboration and coherent joint planning.

The Adult and Community Learning Review Data sub-group combined for the first time the ISR information from all colleges with Birmingham Adult Education Service management information. This was overlaid with the location of libraries, schools and the 900 community and voluntary organisations identified by the Voluntary Sector Group's researcher as being involved with learning. The resultant data was analysed at ward level, and later at enumeration district level. A similar mapping exercise was undertaken for IAG, and illustrative maps and key statistics produced. (see Appendix)

Provision was found to be patchy – with a large amount of Adult and Community Learning available in some wards and very little in others. In Ladywood, for example, 95 learning providers are believed to be active in the ward. However, in Perry Barr there are seven potential points of delivery within the ward.

Although ILR data from August 2002 onwards identifies the point of delivery of the provision, ISR data does not. From the current year August 2002 – July 2003 it will be possible to drill down into the mapping information to explore the area of learning and the level at which it is being offered by colleges. BAES information and Solihull MBC/College will make an ILR return to LSC for ACL from August 2003 onwards.
Whereas this will enable overlapping provision across providers to be clearly identified, it could be more difficult to identify gaps in provision. People tend to access what is available rather than what could be available, so demand for learning opportunities that currently do not exist or that are oversubscribed is not articulated.

The LSC has already begun to plan at local area level for 14 – 19 provision. This will be extended to parallel local area planning groups that include all stakeholders in Adult and Community Learning (adult education services, FE providers, voluntary and community providers, information, advice and guidance services). Area planning will also take account transport and travel patterns, and recognise that people may access learning in places other than those nearest to their home for reasons of personal convenience.

2. INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Information, Advice and Guidance, (IAG), services do not currently play a proactive role in the provision planning process for either the area or the sub-region. Their collection of data is not uniform and does not include information about what potential learners wish to access. IAG services for people across Birmingham and Solihull are not consistent either in terms of services available or number and type of venues.

Some wards have a range of information, advice and guidance services, whereas others may only have their local library. The IAG network maps have illustrated the geographical inconsistencies in access to information and advice. This has given a clear indication of areas where the partnership should concentrate its efforts to recruit local organisations into the network. IAG services have been concentrated in central and deprived areas, but representation of the network in outlying wards with relatively high deprivation levels is comparatively low.

The IAG network attempts to collect management information from all members, but those who are not receiving funding for delivery give this a low priority, and the resultant picture is patchy. Data required to facilitate responsive planning is complex and should be of a consistent, high standard.

The IAG Partnership does not routinely report learner needs that cannot be met, and there is no regular mechanism in place for consulting non-learners or would-be learners. Customer/learner satisfaction surveys, focus groups, end-of-course evaluations, etc. provide an inadequate picture of what is missing.

Non-learners are more likely to respond via promotional material to a central source of IAG (e.g. Learning Shop), access their library or local sources of information such as community groups. Whereas the first two provide an impartial source of information and advice, the latter may only be well briefed about local opportunities. Once learners are engaged in learning they are more likely to seek further information about learning opportunities from their current learning provider. Until cross-provider co-operation is underway, this may not adequately signpost all suitable provision. The IAG network can support community and voluntary organisations seeking to access new learners, and support progression for their learners into mainstream provision.

3. ENTITLEMENT

At present there is no entitlement to Adult and Community Learning or to information and advice. The articulation of an entitlement will be one of the actions for the strategic forum for adult and community learning.

As illustrated in the Review, access to information and provision varies widely across the sub-region, both geographically and across the different community and user groups. An area that appears to be well-served may exclude certain groups by the nature, level, time or venue of the provision. Factors such as transport, disability, language and religion impact significantly on learners' choices. For some, the venue may be more important than the subject or level, and learning aims can be compromised in order to study in a safe, familiar environment. This can inhibit progression away from that environment, with groups returning time and again to enrol for the same provision, or restricting their choice to what is available at the venue or with their peer group.

However, the standard of accommodation in which Adult and Community Learning takes place varies enormously. There can be a fine balance between offering an appropriate range of community-based provision that satisfies the various needs of the learner and restricting learning to venues with excellent facilities. Non-funded provision is not subject to LSC quality assurance procedures, and the signage, access and facilities can disadvantage potential learners.

4. THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The community/voluntary sector is uniquely placed to access new learners and respond to their needs in a very tailored way, yet the sector has not yet been given the prominence it deserves.

The ACL Review illustrated the significant level of Adult and Community Learning taking place that is not funded directly by the LSC, (e.g. funded via Regeneration funding, charity or fund-raising). In addition to a variety of non core-funded LSC contracts, the voluntary sector has also been subjected to haphazard franchise and partnership arrangements with mainstream providers that lack transparency. Arrangements appear random and ad-hoc, and demonstrate a need for voluntary/community organisations to feel their contribution is valued and that the real cost of their work is properly met.

A new set of arrangements is to be brokered by LSC between the community/voluntary sector delivering adult and community learning and the most appropriate, mainstream provider. The provider will fund the provision and take responsibility for developing the community/voluntary sector provider to a point where they may apply for mainstream LSC funds directly should they wish to do so.
Transparent agreements will show:
- The action needed to be taken by the community/voluntary sector provider in order that they may demonstrate to the LSC their ability to manage and deliver quality provision

- The support that the provider will give the community/voluntary sector provider in the achievement of their development actions

- The amount of mainstream funding being retained by the college and exactly how this is used to support the community / voluntary sector provider (e.g. ILR data entry, quality assurance processes, development of community / voluntary staff)

Voluntary and Community organisations will be encouraged to engage with the mainstream learning infrastructure in order to contribute to and support local planning, developing enhanced progression routes into mainstream learning.
The LSC will explore how funding may be used to enable community / voluntary organisations to support progression for their learners.

Staff working in the community / voluntary sector do not in general hold professional teaching qualifications. Similarly, staff working within the FE sector, focusing on adult and community learning, do not hold qualifications in community development work.
The LSC will explore the potential of accredited staff development in both community work and teaching to bring the two sectors closer together to enable interchange of staff, and higher levels of professional credibility in both sectors

5. CELEBRATING AND SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Illustrations of good practice include the Best Value Review of Birmingham's Adult Education Service, in which the inspection team praised the IT provision offered as part of Adult and Community Learning, and Solihull College having received a Grade1 for their community provision as part of their recent OFSTED inspection. No

action had been taken or was planned to disseminate this good practice amongst other providers.

Adult and community learning services could benefit from links to vocational specialisation and Centres of Vocational Excellence in colleges. They also need to develop ways of recognising excellence within their own provision, and to enhance their contribution to skills acquisition within the local economy, both through accredited and non-accredited provision.

In order to drive up quality and improve cross-sector cohesion, Adult and Community Learning providers will be encouraged to link proactively with recognised college vocational lead specialisms for curriculum enrichment.
Adult and Community Learning provision will become a standard feature of mainstream curriculum reviews – particularly in curriculum areas where adult and community learning providers are more active (e.g. languages, arts, care, and information technology)
The way in which skills gained in recreational classes are a stepping stone for progression to higher level skills acquisition relevant to employment will be more widely reflected.

6. ENGAGING NEW LEARNERS

Feedback from learners and non-learners during the Review highlights the need for:

- Information that is clear and attractive
- Sufficient information for a decision to be made
- Information that recognises that people may need the same opportunity explained in different ways according to their level of motivation and language requirements.

Learners hear about their learning opportunities through a wide variety of media. Information about cost is crucial in persuading potential learners to pay attention. Current publicity material tends to be general and does not attempt to segment the market. Local area planning will address this issue by considering appropriate, local publicity materials to reach under-represented groups.

Providers, who are focused on recruitment and programme delivery, are sometimes tolerant of poor retention. Research commissioned for the Review has highlighted the positive response of recent learners who failed to complete their courses to being asked their opinion and consulted on the reasons for their withdrawal. They welcomed an opportunity to explain the barriers and difficulties they had experienced. Disaffected learners can do tremendous harm through the 'ripple' effect of their poor experience. It is easier to reach out to disaffected learners and try to re-engage and/or minimise their negative experience than constantly seek to engage new learners. As part of provider quality processes more routine and better follow-up of early leavers is required, even where retention levels are relatively high.

Taster programmes are an effective way of engaging new learners. The enhanced BiteSize campaign will provide more opportunities for taster programmes with research into their effectiveness.

7. LEARNER SUPPORT

Learners have expressed anxiety about their ability to undertake and complete a course.

The Connexions Service has developed a model of support for young people that many organisations delivering Adult and Community Learning feel would add significant value to the work they do in engaging new learners. The model involves personal support, guidance, and mentoring delivered in ways that are attractive to Adult and Community Learning providers and clients. There has been considerable interest in exploring how such personal support may enhance progression from first rung provision into more structured learning.

Focus groups show that the tutor is the main source of induction, mentoring, support and information. Given the very wide base of part-time tutors employed in the sector, the quality of these functions will vary considerably across provision. Standardised induction procedures, and IAG intervention towards the end of a course, will be incorporated into the planning of provision, and adequate time and resources allowed to support this.

8. ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING CURRICULUM

There is little evidence of progression from non-accredited into accredited provision, despite a great deal of anecdotal information.

There is also a perceived gulf between learning in the community and mainstream college-based learning.

Research has shown that basic language and hobby-based learning are particularly attractive to potential learners. This demonstrates the value of a gentle slope into further learning. These learners are not initially interested in progressing to higher level programmes, but may be persuaded to move on, once they have had a positive initial experience in a non-threatening environment. Non-learners are also pre-disposed to participating in learning related to an interest or hobby as their motivation is high, and fear of failure is minimised.

Adult and Community Learning outcomes are not restricted to the subject matter of the provision. Independent research and learners themselves have reported on the wider benefits of learning, such as increased awareness of health and environmental issues, and especially increased confidence, self-esteem and inter-personal skills.

The benefits of learning should be broadcast more widely, and partnerships sought with outreach and professionals from other sectors, e.g. course publicity routinely supplied to health visitors.

The Review recommends that research be commissioned to track cohorts of new learners in non-accredited, first-rung provision, and report on the factors which encourage their progression.

Tutors of first rung provision should be familiar with progression routes, and able to speak with authority based on recent, personal experience. Links between tutors of first-rung community based provision, and tutors working in mainstream provision will be developed, with mainstream tutors visiting first-rung learners in their groups, and/or first-rung learners offered the opportunity to visit mainstream provision, where appropriate. Collaborative initiatives could extend to buddying community learners with learners on college-based provision.

STRATEGIC AIMS

1. TO OFFER TO ALL 19+ AN ENTITLEMENT TO LOCALLY PROVIDED, QUALITY ASSURED, APPROPRIATE BASIC SKILLS, (INCLUDING ESOL), FIRST RUNG ENGAGEMENT AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY:

- developing an entitlement stating what post 19 learners can expect within each locality of Birmingham and Solihull

- developing a local area planning framework to ensure that a broad and appropriate range of opportunities is available within each locality

- facilitating partnership working across providers and sectors

- defining a basic standard for outreach and community venues. Through the local area planning arrangements, an audit of learning venues will be undertaken, and an action plan drawn up to achieve the basic standard

2. TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS IN SHAPING LSC DECISIONS REGARDING ACL BY:

- maintaining an ongoing adult and community learning strategic forum to address area-wide issues

- developing coherent, local area plans with colleges, adult education services and other learning providers, voluntary/community agencies, library services and the IAG partnership

- ensuring responsiveness to local area learning needs

- developing a consensus definition of Adult and Community Learning

3. TO IMPROVE PARTICIPATION BY:

- strengthening the links between ACL and voluntary sector tutors, IAG staff, (especially community librarians), and other community outreach professionals

- identifying under-represented groups and specific action required

- facilitating collaborative marketing of learning in ways appropriate for reaching under-represented groups

- achieving IAG Partnership coverage in all wards in Birmingham and Solihull by targeting areas of under-representation and developing outreach and/or the capacity of local organisations to join the network.

- commissioning review work to determine the barriers to participation for those with disabilities and to advise on ways in which these might be overcome

- establishing a research project to examine the impact of information, advice and guidance services on how local adults make choices about learning

- monitoring penetration data and action planning

4. TO IMPROVE RETENTION AND PROGRESSION BY:

- establishing a working group to explore the transferability of the Connexions model of personal support through mentoring as a way of enhancing progression for adult students.

- facilitating staff development for ACL tutors

- extending the role of centres of excellence to support and enrich ACL and to develop curriculum support and pathways for progression

- working with the IAG partnership to ensure access to information to inform progression

6. TO IMPROVE STANDARDS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING BY:

- supporting activities to encourage and facilitate joint staff and curriculum development, induction, advice and mentoring skills

- introducing a process of 'peer inspection' by community-based tutors within and across providers to facilitate the sharing of good practice and improve quality monitoring in a supportive, non-threatening way

- developing simple, generic, paper-based resources to support induction, guidance, and mentoring functions carried out by part-time teachers

7. TO DEVELOP THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR BY:

- ensuring appropriate representation at local area planning meetings

- promoting and facilitating collaborative delivery arrangements between the sector and core-funded providers

- brokering transparent arrangements between funded providers and voluntary organisations aspiring to direct funding, clearly identifying partner role and fee, and action required to satisfy LSC requirements

8. TO DEVELOP THE ROLE OF INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE BY:

- requiring the IAG network to play a pro-active role in the planning process by seeking and representing the views of learners

- encouraging partnership working leading to increased impartiality, better and more consistent dissemination of information

- encouraging IAG partnership support for community based provision to increase progression

- funding information, advice and guidance services to enable them to provide data for the planning process

- exploring the potential for the Information, Advice and Guidance network to support organisations in accessing new learners

- exploring how information, advice and guidance services offered by voluntary sector and other organisations such as trades unions could be enhanced to offer a "trusted" route into learning

- recognising and celebrating the role of students as learning ambassadors. Recent learners could be encouraged to support new learners. This might be informal or they could be accredited as learning supporters.

9. TO IMPROVE VISIBILITY AND MONITORING OF ACL ACTIVITY BY:

- establishing a central resource to provide planning data to local planning groups.
  This is to include baseline data on the local area as well as curriculum and participation data. Presentation of data should always be detailed enough to properly illustrate trends and to avoid giving an inaccurate impression. Broad reporting on target groups can mask anomalies, for example in reports on participation by ethnicity significant under participation by Asian women is masked by higher than average participation by Asian men. In gender reports high participation by older white women can mask under participation by women in the same age groups, but from other ethnic groups.

- developing local benchmarks to compare performance

- setting local and area-wide targets and monitoring performance against those targets

- reporting total ACL activity, regardless of funding source/stream, to provide an holistic overview

- celebrating achievement in ACL and promoting opportunities and 'case studies' through the media

- ensuring that the national advice line, *learndirect*, has accurate data about opportunities in Birmingham and Solihull.

ACTION PLAN

STRATEGIC AIM 1

**TO OFFER TO ALL 19+ AN ENTITLEMENT TO APPROPRIATE Adult and Community Learning
LSC Lead = Tim Atkinson, Learning Programmes**

Addresses the following issues for attention:-

(a) Agree basic entitlement
(b) Match entitlement against current provision and action plan to achieve
(c) Agree and implement floor standard for outreach and community venues

Action	Activities and Milestones	Timescales	Targets and Success Criteria	Partners
1.1 Agree minimum entitlement within a given vicinity	• Map existing provision • Analyse data • Agree Entitlement • Publicise entitlement	June - December 2003	• Entitlement agreed • Information disseminated throughout the sub-region	ACL Policy Group
1.2 Implement floor standard for venues	• Audit existing venues • Identify areas for improvement • Broker supportive partnerships between funded and non-funded providers of ACL to achieve standards	September – December 2003	• Action plan agreed and implemented • All venues used for ACL delivery comply with agreed minimum standards	As above

STRATEGIC AIM 2
TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS IN SHAPING LSC DECISIONS REGARDING ACL
LSC Lead = Tim Atkinson, Learning Programmes

Addresses the following issues for attention:-
   (a)   Maintain an on-going adult and community learning strategic forum to address area-wide issues
   (b)   Develop local area plans for Adult and Community provision
   (c)   Agree definition of Adult and Community Learning

Action	Activities and Milestones	Timescales	Targets and Success Criteria	Partners
2.1 Establish ACL PolicyGroup	• Agree Terms of Reference of ACL Policy Group • Define and agree representation of key stakeholders	June - August 2003	• Terms of Reference agreed by stakeholders • Schedule of meetings in place and operating	LEAs IAG Partnership Colleges Providers Libraries Voluntary Sector
2.2 Develop local area planning groups to produce local ACL plans and feed into Local Inclusion Plans	• Establish an ACL group in each local area (co-terminous with 14-19 areas) • Review local ACL provision, need and issues • Establish local baseline data • Agree local targets • Agree local strategy and action plan	May – December 2003	• Membership of local area ACL groups agreed • Structures in place for joint-working • Links established to Strategic Group • Under and Over-Provision identified • Targets for improvement agreed • Action Plans agreed	As above
2.3 Agree definition of ACL	• Local area planning groups feedback to Strategy Group	2003	• Working definition of ACL accepted throughout Birmingham and Solihull area	ACL Policy Group

STRATEGIC AIM 3
TO IMPROVE PARTICIPATION
LSC Lead = Ray Walker, Access and Participation, and Sue Reekie, Quality

Addresses the following issues for attention:-

(a) Improve communications between outreach and community focused professionals
(b) Facilitate collaborative marketing
(c) Extend IAG partnership cover across the sub-region
(d) Research barriers and motivating factors

Action	Activities and Milestones	Timescales	Targets and Success Criteria	Partners
3.1 Establish networks for community-focused professionals	• Networking event within local areas • Joint staff development as appropriate • Impact study of IAG on choices for local learning	June - August 2003 On-going July – Dec 2003	• Increased awareness at operations level of area-wide opportunities • Comprehensive understanding of local opportunities and appropriate progression routes • Research findings to inform action plan for IAG	ACL Policy Group
3.2 Access under-represented groups	• Produce relevant, local/targeted marketing materials • Cross-provider group to explore simplified fees policy for all types of ACL • Extend IAG network coverage through buddying with local organisations	On-going	• Collaborative, cross-provider information tailored to specific needs • Transparent fees structure for ACL across all providers • Outreach IAG accessing non-learners	As above
3.3 Extend IAG Partnership coverage	• Recruit and develop new members of the network	On-going	• Representation in all geographical areas and for all specific target groups	Local Area ACL planning groups

3.4 Conduct review of barriers to participation for under-represented groups, especially those with disability	• Scope and methodology agreed • Researchers appointed • Review undertaken, results analysed and fed into IAG plans, area ACL plans and Local Inclusion Plan	September - December 2003	• Better understanding of barriers to participation • Issues addressed in area plans and ACL Policy Group planning • Increased participation by previously under-represented groups	Local Area ACL planning groups ACL Policy Group
3.5 Commission research to examine impact of IAG on adult choices about learning	• Scope and methodology agreed • Researchers appointed • Review undertaken, results analysed and fed into IAG plans, area ACL plans and Local Inclusion Plan	July – December 2003	• Better understanding of factors contributing to learning choices • Issues addressed in Connexions IAG Partnership strategic planning • Issues addressed in local area plans • IAG responsive to needs of local communities	IAG Partnership Local Area ACL planning groups
3.6 Monitor penetration data	• Establish base-line data. Map existing provision and delivery mechanisms • Analyse data to identify issues to develop Local Inclusion Plan • Agree collaboration of key partners to develop and take forward plans • Establish delivery mechanisms for access, support and learning where gaps identified	Apr – Sept 2003 October 2003 2003 - 04 2004 - 05	• Clear picture of status quo • Identification of priorities • Action Plan to remedy under-participation • Joint-working across the area, responsive to local need • Increased participation and improved penetration rates	ACL Policy Group

STRATEGIC AIM 4
TO IMPROVE RETENTION AND PROGRESSION
LSC Lead = Sue Reekie, Quality
Addresses the following issues for attention:-
(a) explore the transferability of the Connexions model of personal support to 19+
(b) staff development for ACL tutors
(c) links between ACL and centres of excellence
(d) improve ACL exit IAG to inform progression

Action	Activities and Milestones	Timescales	Targets and Success Criteria	Partners
4.1 Explore transferability of Connexions model to adults	• Establish working group • Identify issues • Produce recommendations and costings • Agree action plan • Implement pilot	July – Dec 2003	• Transferable good practice identified • Impact on adult retention and progression quantified • Costs established • Action Plan for implementation agreed • Trial completed and evaluated • Implementation across the sub-region	IAG Partnership ACL Policy Group
4.2 Facilitate front-line IAG staff development for ACL tutors	• Develop and implement cross-sector training programme • Broker enhanced links between ACL tutors and staff delivering appropriate progression opportunities	July – Aug 2003 onwards	• Up-skilling of tutor base • Increased support for ACL learners • Increased staff awareness and direct experience of progression opportunities • Higher percentage of ACL learners progressing into mainstream provision	ACL Providers
4.3 Enrich ACL curriculum through links with Centres of Excellence	• Centres of Vocational Excellence and local FE leads in curriculum areas to establish protocol to work with ACL • Joint curriculum planning • ACL curriculum planners to identify opportunities for enrichment	2003 on-going	• Protocol to include ACL in CoVE and curriculum lead activity • Contact points established • Action plans in place • ACL curriculum enhanced • Progression opportunities maximised	ACL Providers FE curriculum lead colleges and CoVEs

4.4 Ensure access to IAG to facilitate progression	• Identify IAG input appropriate across the range of ACL provision • Establish referral mechanism where appropriate • Timetable sufficient time and resource for learners to access IAG	August 2003 – July 2004	• IAG explicitly incorporated into ACL provision planning • Enhanced links between delivery staff and IAG network • ACL learners better informed about progression • Increased level of progression from ACL	IAG network

STRATEGIC AIM 5
TO IMPROVE STANDARDS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
LSC Lead = Sue Reekie, Quality
Addresses the following issues for attention:-
(a) Establish joint staff development
(b) Establish cross-provider local curriculum planning
(c) Introduce peer inspection
(d) Develop support resources

Action	Activities and Milestones	Timescales	Targets and Success Criteria	Partners
5.1 Facilitate staff development for ACL tutors	• Establish working group • Identify examples of good practice • Identify floor standard for pre-course advice, student induction, learning aim identification, on course support, mentoring, progression and exit advice • Develop and implement cross-sector training programme	July – Dec 2003	• Gaps in training identified • Sharing of good practice • Increased support for ACL learners • Identification of additional requirements of ACL tutor role • Increased professionalism and job satisfaction • Increased progression from ACL • Working links between first rung and progression provision tutors	ACL Providers
5.2 Joint curriculum development	• ACL curriculum planning to reflect role of first rung engagement linked to wider progression opportunities • Local area planning identifies and rationalises gaps and over provision	2003 – 04 onwards	• Joint planning ensures provision is not offered in isolation • Progression routes in place for all first-rung provision • First-rung and taster opportunities in place for all accredited provision • Arrangements in place to facilitate smooth transition between providers	Providers
5.3 Introduce Peer Inspection	• Community-based tutors across providers to share good practice by classroom observation and supportive feedback	2003 - 04	• Increased contact between operational staff • First hand involvement of operational staff in quality procedures • Sharing of good practice • Improved understanding of partner providers and wider issues	ACL Policy Group

| 5.4 Introduce resources to support part-time tutors in progressing their learners | • Establish working group
• Identify how paper resources can support part-time tutors
• Develop resources for ACL learners to supplement induction, on-course support and exit advice | August 2003 – July 2004 | • Resources designed
• Procedures and partnerships in place to supplement on-course tutor IAG role with in depth support when required
• Basic information on Next Steps, contact details for in-depth advice updated regularly and accessible by all ACL learners and tutors | IAG network

ACL providers |

STRATEGIC AIM 6
TO DEVELOP THE ROLE OF THE VOUNTARY SECTOR
LSC Lead = Tim Atkinson, Learning Programmes

Addresses the following issues for attention:-
   (a) Ensure appropriate representation at local area planning meetings
   (b) Promote and facilitate collaborative delivery arrangements
   (c) Broker transparent and fair funding arrangements

Action	Activities and Milestones	Timescales	Targets and Success Criteria	Partners
6.1 Ensure Voluntary Sector representation on local area planning groups	• Identify voluntary sector learning providers active within local areas • Establish adequate representation on local area planning groups • Ensure effective two-way communication channels are in place between the sector and the local planning groups	July 2003	• Voluntary sector representative(s) identified for each local area planning group • Procedure established to review representation on a regular basis • Feedback mechanism established to communicate planning group decisions to local organisations • Communication channel opened for voluntary organisations to input to local area planning	BVSC SCVS
6.2 Promote collaborative delivery between the sector and core-funded providers	• Identify voluntary sector organisations who engage target groups • Encourage joint-working with ACL providers	August – December 2003	• Duplication of provision minimised • Client group expertise acknowledged and fully utilised • Voluntary sector providers supported to deliver to ACL quality standards – venue, materials,tutoring, IAG input • ACL reaches under-represented groups • Increased in-depth knowledge of local community and understanding of target groups and voluntary sector organisation(s) by funded provider(s) • Enhanced career opportunities for voluntary sector staff wishing to move into ACL or other learning	As above

Ref	Action	Timescale	Outcomes	Partners
			delivery • potential for ACL providers to recruit community-focused, experienced staff	
6.3 Broker fair funding arrangements and identify development strategies for voluntary sector providers	• Introduce clear, 3-way agreements for voluntary sector providers to receive LSC funding through a funded provider • Identify what the funded provider supplies in return for any funding top-sliced • Identify action plan for voluntary organisation to be eligible to apply for direct funding, if desired	August – December 2003	• Transparent partnership funding arrangements in place throughout the sub-region • Voluntary sector capacity to deliver learning supported • Provider base for direct funding by LSC appropriately increased	Local area ACL planning groups Voluntary Sector Funded providers

STRATEGIC AIM 7
TO DEVELOP THE ROLE OF INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE
LSC Lead = Ray Walker, Access and Participation

Addresses the following issues for attention:-

(a) Require the IAG Network to play a pro-active role in planning
(b) Widen the role of IAG to feedback views of learners
(c) Increase impartiality and consistency of IAG
(d) Support progression from community based provision
(e) Collect consistent data across the network
(f) Explore extension and enhancement of trusted route into learning
(g) Recognise and maximise the role of learners as learning ambassadors

7.1 IAG Network to be pro-active in planning process	• Ensure representation of IAG network on ACL Strategic Group • Ensure representation of IAG network on local area planning groups • LSC contract for IAG to reflect planning contribution	July – September 2003 July - December 2003	• IAG Partnership representative working with other stakeholders to plan strategic development of ACL in the sub-region • IAG Partnership representative working with other stakeholders to plan development of ACL at local area level • IAG partners contributing to and benefiting from joint planning processes	ACL Policy Group ACL local area planning groups IAG Partnership
7.2 Widen role of IAG to feedback learner demand	• Network members record learner requests for ACL provision • Network data reporting includes learner demand by area, level and curriculum area	2004 - 05	• Unmet learner demand identified • Potential for new/additional provision prioritised by local area planning groups	IAG Partnership + linked organisations e.g. TU reps, peripheral workers
7.3 Increase impartiality and consistency of information	• Extend IAG network through buddying with local organisations, (see 3.2) • Facilitate networking to share information on local opportunities and wider progression routes Maintain paper-based resources to inform progression (see 5.4)	2004 - 05	• Outreach IAG accessing non-learners • Networks and events to maintain information exchange at local and sub-regional level • Basic information on Next Steps, contact details for in-depth advice updated regularly and accessible by all ACL learners	ACL providers IAG Partnership

7.4 Collect consistent IAG data across the Network	• Fund data collection	2003 - 04	• Consistent data returns from all Partnership members	IAG Partnership
7.7 Extend and enhance trusted route into learning	• Review current 'trusted' routes into learning • Explore the use of Life Coaches • Identify potential to develop new routes • Feed into sub-regional and local area action plans	Sept 03 – Mar 06	• Key characteristics of trusted IAG identified • Potential to extend model identified • Appropriate action plans agreed	IAG Partnership
7.8 Extend the role of learners as learning ambassadors	• Investigate and establish a model of peer support for learning • Develop local training and accreditation for learning supporters • Pilot a programme of recruitment, training and working alongside new learners • Evaluate and recommend future action plan	2003 - 05	• Successful practice identified • Birmingham and Solihull pilot undertaken • Evaluation informs recommendations • Learning Ambassador role established and supported throughout the sub-region	Local area ACL planning groups Voluntary Sector Funded providers

STRATEGIC AIM 8
TO IMPROVE VISIBILITY AND MONITORING OF ACL
LSC Lead = Tim Atkinson, Learning Programmes

Addresses the following issues for attention:-
   (a) Establish a central resource to provide planning data
   (b) Develop local benchmarks to compare performance
   (c) Set local and area-wide targets and monitor performance
   (d) Report all ACL activity across funding streams
   (e) Celebrate and promote ACL achievement
   (f) Ensure accuracy of data available to learners

8.1 Establish a central resource for planning data	• Establish and update key population, deprivation, skills, participation and penetration data for all areas of the sub-region at area, ward, enumeration district level	Baseline data established. Updated with census and ILR information - ongoing	• Information to inform local planning decisions • Data to enable prioritisation and action planning	LSC
8.2 Develop local benchmarks for performance	• Establish baseline data • Monitor participation • Identify trends and priorities for intervention	Complete for 2000 – 01 ongoing	• Data accepted and understood by partners • Commitment to improve quality of data collection wherever possible	ACL Policy Group
8.3 Set local and area-wide targets	• Sub-regional planning targets and monitoring established • Local area planning targets and monitoring arrangements established	2003 - 04	• Identification of gaps in provision, duplication and/or over-provision • Action identified at appropriate level	ACL Policy Group
8.4 Report total ACL activity	• Establish holistic approach to reporting ACL activity across all funding streams	2004 - 05	• Reflect widest picture of ACL activity • Share information with other sectors, stakeholders and strategic partners within the sub-region • Improve cross-sector working at community level	Local area ACL planning groups
8.5 Celebrate achievement in ACL	• Raise profile of ACL and its potential to impact on people's achievement • Co-ordinate promotion and reporting of 'good news' to the	2004 - 05	• Increased awareness of opportunities for residents and workers in Birmingham and Solihull • Enhanced status of ACL as vital component of skills, employment,	Lifelong Learning Partnerships

	media to maximise coverage		regeneration and mental health strategies	
8.6 Ensure accuracy of data available to learners	• Review arrangements to supply course data to national helpline at learndirect • Ensure all providers regularly update the Learning Shop • Promote learninginformationpoint web information	2003 - 04	• Quality, up-to-date information available to potential learners and IAG practitioners	Local area ACL planning groups Voluntary Sector Funded providers

Appendices

Appendix 1 Conduct of the Review
          Membership of the Review Group
          Sub-Groups

Appendix 2 Terms of Reference

Appendix 3   Membership of the Review Group

CD Rom:

- The Learners' Perspective – Report by Helen Payton for the Voice of the Learner Sub-group

- Vector Research Report – Adult Learning Survey Autumn 2002

- Adult Community Learning Review – a report by Marilyn Shields for the Voluntary and Community Sector Sub-Group

- Data Sub-Group Report

- Ward level planning data

- IAG area maps

Appendix 1

Conduct of the Review

Membership of the Review Group

Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council wished to approach the review of Adult and Community Learning in full consultation with the widest range of appropriate agencies. For this reason, the LSC invited existing partners and stakeholders to be represented on a Review Group, chaired by an independent, nationally respected figure from outside the geographical area, to ensure objectivity. Tom Schuller, Dean of the Faculty of Continuing Education at Birkbeck College, London, accepted the invitation to chair the group.

Given the large number of providers active in Birmingham and Solihull, it was decided to ask the local Association of Colleges to ensure appropriate representation, and senior representatives from mainstream and specialist colleges were welcomed to the Review Group. The Adult Education services of both Local Authorities were regularly represented, as were the library services, the Information, Advice and Guidance network and the Birmingham Core Skills Partnership. The Voluntary Sector has been championed through Fircroft College and The Birmingham Voluntary Services Council, and both the Castle Vale Housing Action Trust and the Handsworth Area Regeneration Trust have attended meetings.
LSC officers included the Executive Director, Senior Managers of both the Access and Learning Programmes teams, and 2 respective team members.
(Please see Appendix 2 for full list of membership of the Review Group)

The inaugural meeting took place on 30 May 2002. A further 5 meetings in total took place between June and December 2002, when the final conclusions and recommendations were agreed.

Sub-Groups

Four sub-groups were created, to take forward key elements of the Review. Curriculum and Data Analysis looked at what data was available, interpretation of the data, and the content of the current curriculum offer. The IAG Partnership Steering Group was tasked with exploring how and where learners hear about and select learning opportunities. The Learner Experience sub-group was created to explore, through focus groups and other research, how learners and non-learners perceive and react to current provision. The remaining group invited/co-opted further, specialist representation to explore the role of the voluntary and community sector in adult and community learning provision, as users, providers and signposting organisations.

The detailed reports of the 4 sub-groups were circulated to all Review Group members, and discussed in depth at the latter meetings to produce synthesised conclusions and recommendations. The individual, full reports are included in the Appendices on CD Rom, accompanying this text.

Terms of Reference

REVIEW OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING
IN BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL

1.   *PURPOSE*

To undertake a comprehensive review of Adult and Community Learning provision in Birmingham and Solihull with the aim of:

- Informing the future strategy and planning processes of Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council as well as individual providers and partner agencies

- Meeting the obligations of the Learning and Skills Council as outlined in the Remit letter from the Secretary of State to the Learning and Skills Council

- Ensuring that learning opportunities are available at appropriate times and venues for local people to access first rung provision

- Furthering the development of a Lifelong Learning strategy by enabling progression for learners into structured accredited learning,

2.   *DEFINING ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING*

In its Strategic Plan Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council defines Adult and Community Learning as:

Adults participating in:

- *Basic Skills*
- *ESOL*
- *ICT*
- *First rung provision taking place on an institutional or an outreach basis organised by colleges, voluntary and community organisations or by the LEAs, with encouragement to progress to higher level vocational or academic provision.*
- *Non-vocational programmes organised by the colleges or the LEAs*

3.   *PRINCIPLES*

The Secretary of State's Remit Letter to the Learning and Skills Council:

It is…the first time that a public body has had a statutory duty placed upon it to encourage participation in learning, and I look to the Council to keep this sense of purpose at the heart of all its work and to aim to make a real difference to people's lives..[and to] work closely with LEAs and others to plan for significant improvements to the integrated provision of Adult and Community Learning.

The Local Learning and Skills Council's Strategic Plan:

- *Local and community-based provision should offer the opportunities for clear progression into further structured and, where appropriate, accredited learning.*

- *Adult and community learning should be planned and organised on an area basis across colleges, the Adult Education Service and the voluntary sector. Where possible, area partnerships should be aligned with wider area regeneration and neighbourhood renewal initiatives (see above).*

- *Area partnerships should develop a clear strategy for targeting disadvantaged groups, including a range of outreach and support services to remove barriers to participation (see below – Local Area Participation Plans).*

4.   SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

4.1   ACCESS

The Review will examine the extent to which current provision actively engages new learners and will seek to recommend how this principle may be reflected in future activity.

Marketing

The review will establish what individuals see as beneficial about learning in order that such opportunities may be better marketed and learning made more attractive.

To this end activities will be undertaken to ascertain learner and potential learner feedback. These will include learner surveys and focus groups with individuals.

Information, Advice and Guidance

In its Strategic Plan, Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council says:

"The provision of better information, advice and guidance is key to increasing participation, especially among groups and communities who are currently not participating in learning. Through the work of the Birmingham and Solihull Information, Advice and Guidance Consortium we will ensure that there is comprehensive and systematic

collection of information on all available learning opportunities. This will support a broad-based public service through a wide range of public outlets, especially the two local authority library services, and progressively through on-line information and advice services. This service will be complemented by a much more targeted set of services co-ordinated and delivered by local area/neighbourhood partnerships aimed especially at disadvantaged groups and communities currently not participating in learning and/or employment. This will form an integral part of the development of local/neighbourhood inclusion plans."

The Review will identify what support exists to help people select courses that best meet their learning needs. The Review will examine how adults make decisions about what learning they wish to pursue, what information, advice and guidance is available and what support exists to help them access that learning. Within this element the Review will seek to determine the scope of information, advice and guidance services and the extent to which these services are meeting the needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods communities and client groups

Availability

The Review will look at access to learning in its broadest sense by seeking to identify how available learning is to local people, focusing particularly on:

- Times that learning takes place
- Places in which learning occurs
- Modes of delivery available
- Support available to learners (particularly but not exclusively specialist support such as is needed to accommodate people with disabilities)

Within this the Review will seek to identify what barriers to access exist and make recommendations as to how these may be removed.

4.2   PARTICIPATION

I look to the Council ………to increase the supply of flexible, high-quality opportunities to meet their needs. This is central to our goal of a learning society - a society in which everyone can share in the benefits of learning, enabling people to discover new talents, stretching their creativity and widening their opportunities. (Remit Letter)

Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council has as a key strategic priority :

"To establish a coherent, area-based strategy and delivery system for adult and community learning to improve access and exponentially increase participation in learning across the LSC area and especially amongst non-participating groups and communities."

This Review will encompass all Adult and Community Learning provision currently contracted through Local Authorities, all first rung and short course provision offered through colleges and all learning delivered through the voluntary and community sector.

The Review will examine current participation in Adult and Community Learning, seeking particularly to examine participation :

- By local area/neighbourhood
- By ethnicity
- By gender
- By target client groups (eg lone parents, people with disabilities)
- By age

The Review will identify the opportunities for and desirability of specialist centres for particular curriculum areas (eg languages, other specialist vocational subjects)

4.3   RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT (where appropriate)

The Review will examine retention rates in Adult and Community Learning provision, drawing conclusions and recommendations about the adoption of best practice.

Not all Adult and Community Learning provision leads to qualifications. However where such provision aims to provide accreditation the Review will examine the extent to which individuals find accreditation attractive and achievable.

4.4   PROGRESSION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

First rung provision should, wherever practicable, act as a stepping stone into further learning leading to qualifications or units of qualifications, (Remit Letter)

Within its local strategic plan Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council identifies several actions that will support progression from Adult and Community Learning into mainstream activity:

- *Establishing clear processes to support and promote progression into further structured and, where appropriate, accredited learning.*

- *Supporting the involvement and development of voluntary and community organisations either as a conduit for improving access for disadvantaged groups or as learning providers.*

- *Developing local area "infrastructure" plans to ensure availability of and access to appropriate facilities and support across the area.*

- Agreeing designated area responsibilities for FE colleges to develop local learning networks with community based providers. The designated FE College will act as a hub attracting individuals into more structured and formal learning leading to higher level qualifications through community based providers.

- Supporting the development of local providers to enable them to act as a feeder for attracting local residents into learning at community venues and by offering informal learning opportunities as a means of engagement.

- Supporting local learning networks to build their capacity, and fund activities to target promotion and recruitment at excluded and under-participating communities they work with.

- Planning for the provision of learning programmes that were previously not available in the area by developing local providers to a level where they can offer new learning provision to a high standard.

The Review will seek to establish the extent to which current provision acts as such a stepping-stone and will make recommendations as to how this principle may be developed further

The Review will also identify how Adult and Community Learning can contribute towards new routes into Higher Education.

Whilst recognising that not all learning will lead to progression, the review establish:

- How current systems and approaches may be enhanced in order that wherever progression is possible such progression takes place.

- How tutors may be helped better to understand the progression opportunities available to their learners

- How Adult and Community Learning opportunities may link to the Information, Advice and Guidance network

4.5 NON-VOCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL LEARNING

Many adults, including large numbers of older and retired learners will want to pursue high quality and rigorous study for its own sake, and I expect provision to be made available to meet their needs. (Remit Letter)

The Review will seek to establish recruitment levels, range of provision and the potential demand for this type of learning and will make recommendations about what provision should be made available to this group

4.6   PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIP

The Review will clarify what planning arrangements currently exist for the provision of Adult and Community Learning and what new arrangements would facilitate effective planning – particularly on an area basis.

The Review will recommend how the Voluntary and Community sector can be more actively engaged and have a clear role in planning and delivering Adult and Community Learning. Account will be taken of the development needs of this sector.

4.7   PROVIDERS

It is recognised that a wide range of providers offer the type of learning that may well fall into the definition of Adult and Community Learning. The review will actively seek all providers with experience and expertise in delivering Adult and Community Learning in order that future provision may be planned taking account of all provision.

4.8   LOCATION

If Adult and Community Learning is to engage learners within their own community then the locations used to deliver such learning become of considerable importance. The review will identify not only where such provision is currently located but will also seek to suggest alternative premises where such provision may have more impact.

The Review will take account of the physical infrastructure and facilities used to deliver Adult and Community Learning and determine the appropriateness or otherwise of this infrastructure.

4.9   CURRICULUM

Adult and Community Learning will contain within it a wide range of curriculum areas. The review will seek to identify these within the following broad areas:

- Learning that is clearly aimed at people progressing into further accredited learning

- Learning that is potentially aimed at progressing into further learning

- Learning that is of itself complete, where a skill is learnt and progression is not considered

- Learning that is more to do with enhancing one's appreciation of culture and the arts than vocational or academic in nature

- Learning that is aimed at enhancing social or citizenship abilities rather than academic or vocational skills

- Hobby based learning to develop non-work skills

- Health related activity

- Recreational activity

- Activities that appear to be more of a club than aimed at developing any skills or knowledge

4.10 STAFF COMPETENCE

Adult and Community Learning is delivered by a wide variety of tutors and facilitators. The review will work with institutions and other providers to establish minimum standards of training, qualification and experience of the workforce.

4.11 E-LEARNING

The Review will examine the extent to which e-learning is embedded within Adult and Community Learning provision, particularly that offered through Ufi / Learndirect and will make recommendations as to how e-learning could add value to Adult and Community Learning provision.

The review will examine current participation in learndirect as a discreet curriculum area and will identify barriers to wider participation.

5. OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW

Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council has made clear in its Strategic Plan the intention of moving to more coherent planning at local / neighbourhood level. In this context the Review will produce the following:

- A detailed map of provision and participation in Birmingham and Solihull

- A framework within which such provision may be planned, particularly at neighbourhood level

- A synopsis of curriculum and content areas covered by Adult and Community Learning with recommendations concerning new or alternative areas to be considered

- A breakdown of providers delivering Adult and Community Learning with recommendations concerning how this provider base may be further developed

- An overview of current staffing of Adult and Community Learning with recommendations concerning minimum standards for tutors and facilitators

- Recommendations concerning how progression from Adult and Community Learning to other learning may be facilitated and enhanced

- Structural recommendations concerning the links to be made between Adult and Community Learning and Information, Advice and Guidance.

- Alignment of Adult and Community Learning with wider regeneration strategies

6. IMPLEMENTATION

Adult and Community Learning Review Steering Group

A Steering Group will be set up to oversee the Review and support its implementation. Its membership will comprise:

- Chair (Independent)
- Senior representatives from Birmingham and Solihull Local Authorities
- Representative from Library Service across Birmingham and Solihull
- Executive Director, Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council
- Senior Manager, Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council
- 4 College Principals (nominated by the Birmingham and Solihull Colleges Forum) to include the Principal of Fircroft College and at least one principal from Solihull)
- 3 Representatives from the community and voluntary sector Adult and Community Learning provision
- 2 senior representatives from designated Regeneration areas
- 1 representative of the Information, Advice and Guidance network
- Representative from WEA

SUB-GROUPS

Subgroups will be formed as needed to look at the work of the review team in line with the principles of the review. These subgroups will be drawn from a wide variety of organisations delivering learning to adults in Birmingham and Solihull and those supporting local adults in other ways in order that all stakeholders are included in developing the proposals of the review. Subgroups will be chaired by members of the Steering Group.

TIMETABLE

March 02	Review Team Identified
	Review Steering Group Formed
March - May 2002	Broad consultation on Definitions of Adult and Community Learning
	Investigative visits to providers
	Initial research into leaner experiences
	Data evaluation
	Initial considerations on key
outcomes formed	
May	Consultation document on initial findings released, wide range of opinions sought
	More defined view on outcomes attained
June 2002	Collation of responses, consolidation of views
July 2002	Interim Report to Review Panel
	Initial recommendations outlined
	Assessment of need for further
Review Activity	

Appendix 3

Membership of the Birmingham and Solihull Adult and Community Learning Review Group:

Chair:
Professor Tom Schuller   Dean of The Faculty of Continuing Education at Birkbeck College, University of London

Members
Colin Flint   Solihull College and the Association of Colleges
Gill Hutchings   Solihull College
Chris Horton   Bournville College
Anne Goldman   Bournville College
Peter Davies   Queen Alexandra College
Sue Wright   Queen Alexandra College
Fiona Larden   Fircroft College
Mike Conwy-Jones   Fircroft College
Brendan Hartland   Josiah Mason College
Amerdeep Jakhu   Josiah Mason College
Brian Williams   Sutton Coldfield College
Vena Gogna   Workers' Educational Association
Linda Stead   Connexions/IAG Partnership
Gerry Box   Birmingham Library Service
Bob Malloy   Birmingham Adult Education Service
Javed Khan   Birmingham City Council
Nigel Ward   Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Geoff Bateson   Birmingham Core Skills Partnership
Maggie Pimley   Birmingham Voluntary Services Council
Julie Hayward   Castle Vale Housing Action Trust
Donald McIntyre   Castle Vale Housing Action Trust
David Cragg   Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council
Tim Atkinson   Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council
Ray Walker   Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council
Dawn McCracken   Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council
Pam Reay   Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council