Adult and Community Learning: What? Why? Who? Where?

A literature review on Adult and Community Learning

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DEPARTMENT FOR
EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report summarises the literature on adult and community learning (ACL), giving the findings of a literature review undertaken between December 2000 and March 2001. It aims to inform policy and to provide the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and its local arms, and the DfES, with information on what works in ACL. The literature reviewed ranged from academic studies to unpublished accounts of local practice.

Key points

Excellence in ACL involves an approach that:

- engages creatively with groups and individuals and meets them on their own terms and their own territory;

- involves the voluntary and community sectors in staff development;

- focuses efforts to improve the retention of learners on the early stages of the learning experience;

- helps individuals to make progress, taking a well-structured but gradual approach to involving learners where appropriate in further, more formal provision; and uses accreditation where it motivates rather than deters the learner.

Local authorities are major players, but ACL takes place in a very wide range of settings. It is a mass system, with estimates of annual participation ranging from 1.6 million to 2.5 million in LEA provision alone, depending on whether the contribution of all departments is counted, or that of the education department alone.

The learning often has a significant impact on the skills and employability of individuals even though much of it is non-vocational and non-accredited.

Social benefits are numerous and varied, and in some cases there are fairly robust measures of these. Measurement of the economic benefits of ACL is difficult, though more could be done through longitudinal research.

A strand of social action or regeneration is often present, and ACL is particularly suitable for outreach to disadvantaged people. If the learner does not come to the tutor, the tutor must go to the learner.

Non-standard locations such as museums, sound-studios, health centres or pubs can help to make adult learning attractive and accessible.

Surveys of adult learning in general tell a story of low participation among older people and the economically inactive. However, administrative statistics on LEA-secured adult education reveal relatively high participation by older people. Women represent the majority of enrolments in the LEA sector.

Background

The Secretary of State's remit letter to the Learning and Skills Council (DfEE 2000f) describes ACL as a

> *great heritage .. which developed in the 19th Century, when the pioneering efforts of the community movements helped many men and women to improve their lives through the power of learning.*

The letter states the task of the LSC as being to build on this tradition to restore a culture of commitment to learning, through working in partnership with others. This literature review summarises the key themes in ACL: its definition and character; the rationale for its public funding; participation patterns; strategies for overcoming barriers to participation and progression; and ways of ensuring quality of provision.

What is Adult and Community Learning?

ACL is a narrower category than 'adult learning' in general. A succinct definition is elusive, but ACL takes place in a very wide range of settings; local authorities are major players; a strand of social action or regeneration is often present; much of the learning is non-vocational and non-accredited, though by

no means unconcerned with the skills and employability of individuals; and this mode of learning is particularly suitable for outreach to disadvantaged people.

ACL at its best takes the community aspect as central, and explicitly aims to play a central role in the efforts of communities to take control of their own destinies. The importance of adult and community learning is summed up well in the report of the Policy Action Team on Skills, Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal (DfEE, 1999): 'Where learning really engages people's interests, it can have a pivotal role in helping communities to cohere, to identify what they have in common in terms of both needs and opportunities and to work together.'

What are the benefits and why does ACL merit public funding?

Participation in ACL has significant benefits to individuals, communities and the economy. Exact quantification of economic benefits is difficult, but one survey of ACL participants revealed that despite the largely social, recreational and self-developmental reasons given by many for their enrolment in adult education leisure courses, a significant proportion had practical and economic purposes in mind. Work on family learning showed that many of the adults moved into employment from these courses, and those in work progressed to more demanding jobs.

Social and personal benefits are well documented. Benefits to the individual include health and active ageing, self-esteem, communication skills, and improvements in family relationships. Studies also show that engagement in ACL is associated with increased participation in community activities. One of the most important benefits of ACL is that it acts as a way back into more formal learning for individuals who would not initially consider entering such an environment.

A further benefit is to the cultural infrastucture. The case study material included examples of imaginative approaches to learning in cultural contexts such as museums, galleries and arts centres. These experiences enrich the learning experience for participants and help to create and broaden interest in the arts within deprived communities.

Participation levels and patterns

Surveys of adult learning in general tell a story of low participation among older people and the economically inactive. However, administrative statistics on LEA-secured adult education reveal relatively high participation by older people. Women represent the majority of enrolments in the LEA sector.

It is a mass system, with estimates of annual participation ranging from 1.6 million to 2.5 million in LEA provision alone, depending on whether the contribution of all departments is counted, or that of the education department alone.

Looking at the problem of low participation, there is no general consensus among policymakers on which groups are 'hard-to-reach', but lists often include: those in disadvantaged communities, older people, ex-offenders, minority ethnic and linguistic communities, and those with disabilities or learning difficulties. Widening participation concerns not only an individual's initial decision to take part in learning, but also retention, progression and achievement. Certain groups have lower completion and achievement rates than others.

Barriers to participation

The main barriers to participation in learning are: pressures on time at home and at work; location; finance; domestic and caring responsibilities; lack of information; absence of opportunity; a belief that learning has little to offer; and unhappy memories of school. A distinction must be drawn between attitudes to learning which may have deep roots in personal history, and practical obstacles which may be overcome with imagination and (usually) funding.

Overcoming barriers

There are many inspiring examples in the literature of successfully addressing even the most formidable of these barriers, to reach some of the most socially excluded groups, and to overcome negative attitudes towards learning. Strategies include outreach in local community venues, targeting groups rather

than individuals in order to avoid negative peer pressure, encouraging mutually beneficial intergenerational learning, and combining creative and artistic expression with basic skills.

The most successful approaches show an engagement with the real needs of individuals and communities, and aim to offer learning as an environment of empowerment to people to improve the quality of their lives. They also aim to build on positive qualities to reach areas of weakness (thinking in terms of 'opportunities rather than needs') and show flexibility in meeting individual and group requirements for location, course content and delivery. Qualitative feedback obtained in many evaluation reports abounds with anecdotal evidence of transformational changes in individuals' lives. However, a need remains for more systematic evidence showing longer term benefits for individuals and communities.

Partnerships

A large amount of provision is delivered through *ad hoc* partnerships between the various sectors, and there is a growing recognition on the ground of the need to move to more strategic partnership arrangements, since a lack of coherence and flexibility – especially in funding – limits the ability of organisations to develop serious and sustained approaches. There are early indications of the potential success of formal partnerships, both in ACL itself and in information, advice and guidance. An early evaluation of Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships suggests that they are helping to bring about a more concentrated and collaborative identification of priority groups, their needs, and the range of local provision; and to stimulate outreach activity with disadvantaged groups.

Conclusion

The general impression emerging from the literature is of a mass system involving millions of learners, which nevertheless displays huge variety between localities in terms particularly of quantity, and to some extent of quality as well. Despite a degree of vagueness about purpose and direction, and some unresolved problems in achieving coherent delivery and funding,

there is an encouraging degree of optimism and creativity in the ACL "sector" which bodes well for its future in the era of the Learning and Skills Council.

Method

The authors reviewed several distinct types of literature, ranging from academic studies to unpublished accounts of local practice. The search strategy included an online trawl using keywords, hand searching of journals, retrieval of papers on the Web, and a mail-shot to practitioners, local managers and national organisations asking for good practice examples.

Concerning practice in the field there is a significant body of studies that have gathered the experience of practitioners and placed it in an analytical framework. Unpublished literature produced locally contains some vivid and inspiring examples of ACL in practice, and there are several examples of systematic evaluation procedure.

1. Introduction

In December 2000 the Department for Education and Employment commissioned Eldwick Research Associates to review the literature on adult and community learning (ACL).

1.1 Aims of the review

The review's purpose is to set out the evidence base for local and national action to improve access to ACL, develop coherent provision, and assure quality. The work aims to distil the experience and knowledge of researchers and reflective practitioners. An immediate purpose is to equip the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and its local arms with the knowledge and understanding to foster good practice and approaches that work.

1.2   Definitions of Adult and Community Learning

1.2.1. ACL is a much narrower category than 'adult learning' in general. However, it is not a single, easily defined sector like (for example) Higher Education. In a discussion of the review's scope, the Steering Group suggested four components of a definition, pointing out that some elements may not apply to all instances of ACL in practice.

1.2.2. Firstly, we can define ACL in terms of the provider. ACL is sometimes seen as adult learning provided by Local Education Authorities. Certainly the bulk of Government support for ACL goes to LEAs; currently as unhypothecated funding via the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, and from April 2001 as a dedicated funding stream via the LSC. However, substantial areas of ACL are wholly or partly provided by organisations other than LEAs, so this definition is not wholly satisfactory.

1.2.3. A second element refers to the venue. ACL thus defined is learning that happens in certain types of community-based settings, often outside the traditional framework of educational institutions. Examples are neighbourhood learning centres organised by community and voluntary groups; health centres and leisure centres; libraries, museums, galleries and heritage centres; churches; pubs; LEA adult education centres; schools,

sometimes as a base for inter-generational work such as Family Literacy or parenting classes; other centres such as those run by the WEA; and workplace-based provision with a community dimension, e.g. some Union Learning Fund projects. Some of the growth in learning opportunities mediated by Information and Communication Technologies has a local community focus; the UK Online Learning Centres are a notable example. However, venue as a defining characteristic of ACL has fuzzy edges. ACL forms part of the offer of many 'mainstream' institutions, whether bringing people in to their central facilities, or undertaking outreach work in local areas, with adults in general or with particular 'target' groups. Examples are University extra-mural provision, and partnerships between Further Education colleges and community groups.

1.2.4 A third strand of a definition concerns target populations, or priority client groups for widening participation (for example, those who live in areas of multiple deprivation). Policymakers and practitioners see ACL as particularly effective in engaging such groups in learning. In ACL at its best, the learning experience is flexible in time and location; and its friendly, informal approach overcomes the fear and mistrust of 'education' that many adults have learned from earlier, unhappy experiences. In this sense, ACL is a weapon in the armoury to combat social exclusion.

1.2.5 Fourthly, the learning content and process of ACL is usually not focused on a job-specific vocational purpose; and much of the learning (especially for new learners) is not formally accredited (though qualifications are often available as an option). This encourages participation for some, since the idea of testing can be a deterrent to those not yet confident in their ability to learn. (However, ACL may have important vocational outcomes and economic value: for example, through progress in basic literacy and numeracy, or where the learning process develops communication skills and self-esteem.) In addition to non-formal provision, there is a further category of ACL: informal learning, which describes learning not following a 'course' structure but emerging, typically, from a group interest or social action of some kind (Cullen *et al.*, 2000; Coffield ed., 2000; Thompson, Shaw and Bane eds., 2000). Because of the need for relevance to practical policy, the review treats informal learning as in scope insofar as the learning is deliberate, but not

where it is wholly contingent or 'accidental'. If defining ACL by exclusion, we could say that it does not include employer-provided training; learning interventions grounded in active labour market policy, such as Work Based Learning for Adults or the learning strand in the New Deals; and (generally speaking) full-time Higher Education or Further Education.

1.2.6 In addition, it is worth saying that ACL at its best takes the community aspect as central, and explicitly aims to play a central role in the efforts of communities to take control of their own destinies. The importance of adult and community learning is summed up well in the report of the Policy Action Team on Skills, *Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal* (DfEE, 1999): 'Where learning really engages people's interests, it can have a pivotal role in helping communities to cohere, to identify what they have in common in terms of both needs and opportunities and to work together.'

1.2.7 The review addresses adult and community learning, but there are competing definitions of adulthood. In the UK the acquisition of adult status is essentially a process starting at 16 with the end of compulsory pupil status, and complete by 21 with the legal attainment of full adult rights, roles and responsibilities. In terms of learning, the definition of 'adult' tends to come later rather than earlier (Squires, 1993) because there has been distinct provision for 16-18-year-olds in the Further Education sector and for 16-24-year-olds in work-based routes such as Modern Apprenticeships. Higher Education has traditionally been seen as mainly for 18-21-year-olds, though of course age-related assumptions around FE and HE are now strongly challenged. International definitions of 'adult' learning tend to steer clear of all provision that could possibly be considered 'initial'. For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) imposes a divide at age 25 (Hillage *et al.*, 2000). Finally, a definition can be grounded in participation rather than age. For example, most of the analyses in the National Adult Learning Survey (Beinart and Smith, 1998) cover all those no longer in initial continuing full-time education, regardless of age. Definitions of 'adult' in ACL cannot be clear-cut. As a best compromise we take all aged 19 and over as in scope, whilst remembering that family learning (a key strand of ACL) involves people of all ages.

1.2.8 To summarise, adult and community learning for the purposes of this review is aimed at those aged over 19, is provided in widely differing types of venue by LEAs and other organisations both within and outside mainstream educational provision, may have a dimension of community capacity-building, and is largely non-vocational and non-accredited though by no means unconcerned with the skills and employability of individuals.

1.3 Approach to the review

1.3.1 The report addresses why LEAs and other organisations offer adult learning opportunities; what they offer in total and how well the elements hang together; who takes part in adult learning (and where and when), and who does not; and how managers and practitioners set about their task. Chapter titles reflect the DfEE's guidance (DfEE, 2000) on key points to be covered in LEAs' Adult Learning Plans, though we interpret these themes as relevant not only to LEAs but to all ACL in scope for the review. The points are:

- **Rationale**, and justification for funding
- **Quality** in provision, and assuring it
- **Access** to learning and equal opportunities
- **Coherence** of adult learning opportunities

We also cover aspects of management and monitoring, mainly in the Quality and Coherence chapters.

1.3.2 We reviewed several distinct types of literature, ranging from academic studies to unpublished accounts of local practice. The search strategy included an online trawl using keywords, hand searching of journals, retrieval of papers on the Web, and a mail-shot to practitioners, local managers and national organisations asking for good practice examples. A technical account of the methodology is at Appendix 1.

2. The rationale for adult and community learning

In the context of public policy, a rationale needs to demonstrate that an activity brings about benefits that justify the investment made. To build a rationale for ACL, it is important to assess how it promotes economic and social well-being (whilst acknowledging that some benefits may be difficult to measure). Therefore the review begins with an evaluation of evidence on economic and social benefits. We turn next to survey findings on patterns of participation by different groups in adult learning generally. Such evidence underpins the rationale by identifying those groups of adults currently under-represented in learning who are therefore of high priority for the 'targeting' of ACL. We look at the available administrative statistics on ACL, and place this evidence in the broad context of adult participation in learning. Finally we explore a range of perspectives on the aims of ACL, and describe the strategic framework set out in recent documents from Government and its advisory bodies.

2.1 Economic and social benefits of ACL

2.1.1. Compared with the substantial literature on the economic returns to schooling and to vocational training (Cohn and Addison, 1998) and to higher education (McMahon, 1998), there is little evidence on the impact of ACL on participants' earnings and employability. Quantifying economic benefits is necessarily less precise for ACL than for other routes. Analysis of returns typically relates levels of skill to earnings levels and employability. Such measures of skill use qualifications or tests as a proxy, and learning in ACL tends to be non-accredited. Further, the equation for a rate of return has to include the investment cost, and such data are less readily available in ACL (especially in informal learning) than, for example, in higher education where fees are precisely known. In principle some quantitative evidence on ACL's economic impact could be gathered through longitudinal surveys to measure the effects of adult learning participation (as distinct from attainment); or through follow-up studies of participants in particular ACL programmes but, disappointingly, this does not seem to have been attempted. Such an exercise would need to take place on a substantial scale, probably only feasible for central Government.

2.1.2 There is some evidence on economic purpose in ACL. McGivney (1994a) reports on a self-completion questionnaire survey of individuals[1] involved in adult continuing education provision provided by Gloucestershire LEA. This revealed that despite the largely social, recreational and self-developmental reasons given by many for their enrolment in adult education leisure courses, a significant proportion had practical and economic purposes in mind. Between 10 per cent and 40 per cent of participants in foreign language classes used the skills in their job.

2.1.3 There is much more evidence on social benefits. At its simplest, social contact is a benefit in itself. Over 50 per cent of survey respondents who had attended flower-arranging classes in Gloucestershire cited social reasons as a major motive for attending. For some the class was a vitally important relief from the 'unbearable loneliness' of life in a small village.

2.1.4 Social benefits reported in the literature go far beyond simple contact, however. Retired people were the majority of students in many of the Gloucestershire courses surveyed, and McGivney (1994b) cites one of these older learners: 'Courses of this type are important to the continuing welfare of an ageing population. Without them, retired people would find time on their hands and vegetate and eventually become a burden on the state.' Dench and Regan (2000) researched the social and health benefits of learning for people aged 50-71 through extensive face-to-face interviews [2]. In principle the results cover all forms of learning, but much of the learning can be assumed to fit our definitions of ACL since people in this age group are less likely than others to take part in our out-of-scope categories such as workplace learning or full-time higher education. Eighty per cent of learners reported a positive impact of learning on at least one of the following areas:
- their enjoyment of life
- their self-confidence
- how they felt about themselves
- satisfaction with other areas of their life

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[1] The achieved sample was just under 1,000. The response rate is not given.

[2] Dench and Regan's achieved sample was 336 individuals who had already agreed in an earlier survey to be re-contacted.

- their ability to cope with everyday life

Forty-two per cent of learners reported an improvement in their ability to stand up and be heard and/or their willingness to take responsibility. Twenty-eight per cent reported an increase in their involvement in social, voluntary or community activities. Although being in poor health is a barrier to participation in learning, higher proportions of learners with a disability or health problem reported various benefits of learning, compared to those in good health.

2.1.5 Aldridge and Lavender (2000) assess the impact of learning on health through a self-completion postal survey[3] of adults actively involved in ACL (individuals and groups nominated for an Adult Learners' Week Award). The greatest benefits experienced include confidence; new friends; direct health benefits; and new employment or voluntary work. 25 per cent of respondents were surprised by an unexpected increase in self-confidence. 87 per cent reported benefits to physical health including feeling less ill or less tired, and managing pain more effectively. 89 per cent reported emotional or mental health benefits. Most learners also reported 'disbenefits', though these were usually outweighed by benefits. Among the most significant were stress, anxiety and mental ill health (reported by 39 per cent) and broken relationships (9 per cent). A possible interpretation of the apparently contradictory findings on mental health effects, simultaneously positive and negative for some individuals, is that adult learning can be a process of transformation, necessarily involving both types of impact. For example, the report cites learners' dissatisfaction with a former way of life as a 'disbenefit', but such dissatisfaction clearly has positive implications for personal development.

2.1.6 The website of the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning (Institute of Education/Birkbeck College) contains an 'initial synthesis' (2000) of the social benefits of learning. This draws on a literature review and three meetings of practitioners convened by the National Institute

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[3] Aldridge and Lavender's achieved sample was 473 individuals from an issued sample of 2000, and 47 groups from an issued sample of 750. The response rate for individuals is fairly good by the standards of postal surveys in general.

of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), and sets out a framework covering several domains: cross-cutting issues, health, ageing, the family, crime, and citizenship. The cross-cutting issues include:

- **Self-esteem**: this has a pervasive effect in a range of areas, from employment to citizenship and 'from youth (where criminal activity may be associated with low self-esteem), to old people where learning can prevent collapse into depression and feelings of worthlessness.'
- **Future orientation**: the behavioural impact of learning may be mediated through a greater engagement with long-term rather than immediate gains, and 'the sense of personal agency and optimism which encourages investment in the future'.
- **Coping and resilience**: learning can equip people with the capacity to handle problems, through technical skills such as financial management or through developing attributes such as interpersonal skills. Such skills are at a premium at times of upheaval in personal life, or in circumstances such as redundancy or factory closure.
- **Attitudes and values**: higher levels of learning attainment are associated with tolerance and support for democracy, which support social cohesion.
- **Communication**: learning is associated with communications and these are increasingly valued in an occupational context, but the relevance is wider: for example, relationships between members of the public and health professionals depend heavily on their ability to understand each other and have confidence in each others' ability to understand.

The findings on specific domains include the following:

- **Health**: well-being and happiness as well as curative effects; a shift from reactive to proactive approaches to life management; the preventive effect of early intervention; and promoting engagement with the delivery and quality of services. The website cites Dench and Regan (2000) who report that in an area of Britain, doctors referred patients to an adult education worker who was attached to three health centres. Over half those who took courses reported psychological benefits such as increased confidence, greater motivation and a reduced sense of isolation.
- **Ageing**: the practitioner groups reported psychological benefits similar to those outlined by Aldridge and Lavender (2000) and Dench and Regan (2000), mentioning in addition physical improvement, better self-care, linking into the

local community, and (re-)discovery of skills. One study cited on the website raises a general issue of selection effects in provision for older adults, which may influence the findings on benefits; people who have been consistent learners earlier in life will tend to continue into old age and may therefore be rather atypical of older people in general. Neikrug *et al* (1995) interviewed 43 subjects aged between 81 and 91 years who were studying in a University-based lifelong learning programme. These people had lived rich lives as active adults and as intellectuals. They had continued the social contacts of their earlier lives whenever possible and, when necessary, established additional supportive associations to meet their needs, and they were involved in planning and directing their lives.

- **The family**: family learning programmes, such as parent and child computer clubs and intergenerational literacy programmes, help parents to break the cycle of educational deprivation.
- **Crime**: the authors of the web document comment that the power of education in explaining crime can easily be over-estimated; relative poverty may be more important. However, they say that patterns of crime and deviance may be explained primarily by access to opportunities: employment, income, education and family stability. Human capital formation - essentially, learning of all kinds - decreases crime directly because it increases wages.
- **Citizenship**: the authors review a number of studies showing strong associations between level of education and active citizenship, but comment that the relationship may be 'circular', not conclusively showing an effect of learning.

The results are generally well-founded; many of the studies reviewed used multivariate statistical modelling to explore how far an independent effect of learning could be isolated.

2.2 Patterns of participation and exclusion

2.2.1 Sources of information on adult participation in learning differ by reference period and by the defined scope of 'learning'. For example, a snapshot of current participation can be taken, or alternatively surveys can ask about all learning over an extended period such as three years. 'Learning' can be defined as formal taught provision only, but can also include self-directed and informal learning. Even broader conceptions of learning are current

(Tight 1998a) according to which the idea of any adult being a "non-learner" is nonsensical and even insulting, since we all learn every day from experience. However, a broadly consistent story of polarisation emerges from research. As the House of Commons Education and Employment Committee (1999) points out, 'a side-effect of the substantial improvement in participation during the last two decades has been to widen the gap between the educational "haves" and the "have-nots".'

Learners tend to be younger people; those in non-manual occupations; those who stayed in full-time continuous education longer; and those who left with higher qualifications. Key points from the NALS include the following:

• Nearly three quarters of adults (74 per cent) have participated in some learning during the last three years (78 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women).

• Learners tend to be significantly younger than non-learners. Eight in ten under 40 years of age have participated in learning compared to six in ten of those aged over 50.

• Learners are more likely to be in paid work than non-learners (77 per cent compared with 39 per cent). Over nine in ten who work in managerial/professional occupations have participated in adult learning, compared to two thirds of those working as plant/machine operatives and nearly three quarters of those in craft and related occupations.

• 86 per cent of those who left full-time continuous education with academic qualifications were learners, compared to 55 per cent of those without such qualifications.

The NALS covered learning of all kinds; taught and non-taught, with or without a vocational purpose. The above findings refer to the totality of learning. In the context of ACL, it is of interest to look at vocational and non-vocational learning separately. Table 1 shows that the participation rate for non-vocational learning (common in ACL) is lower than for vocational learning, but is also less strongly influenced by age and other factors.

Table 1: Key differences in take-up of vocational and non-vocational learning

		Vocational (per cent)	Non-voc. (per cent)
Gender	Males	72	27
	Females	61	32
Age	16-19	76	29
	20-29	82	32
	30-39	78	29
	40-49	73	29
	50-59	60	30
	60-69	28	29
Activity status	In paid work	82	30
	Unemployed	66	25
	Looking after home and family	31	29
	Retired	20	33
	Long-term sickness	23	28
Terminal education age	Up to 16	56	25
	17-18	78	34
	19-20	79	36
	21 or older	88	40
Qualification level on leaving FT Education	NVQ: 5 (or equivalent)	92	44
	NVQ: 4	82	34
	NVQ: 3	84	35
	NVQ: 2	80	33
	NVQ: 1	65	26
	No qualifications	44	22

Source: *National Adult Learning Survey 1997* (methodology: face to face interviews with 5,653 adults in England and Wales)

2.2.2 The other main source of comprehensive data on adult learning is the series of surveys conducted by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). *The Learning Divide*[4] (Sargant *et al*, 1997) finds a pattern of participation and exclusion similar to that found in the NALS. With *The Learning Divide Revisited* [5](Sargant, 2000) a time series starts to become available. There has been little significant change in participation during the late 1990s, though there are minor causes for both pessimism (e.g. an increase from 55 per cent to 59 per cent in the proportion saying that they are very or fairly unlikely to take up any learning in the future) and optimism (e.g. a drop from 53 per cent to 40 per cent in the proportion who think that there is not enough help and advice about learning).

2.2.3 Patterns of individual participation are complex, and longitudinal evidence suggests that it is important both to encourage existing learners to continue, and to bring in new learners. La Valle and Finch (1999) report on a follow-up survey with just fewer than 1,000 individuals who had previously taken part in the NALS in 1997. Even a relatively short 'learning break' might have a negative influence on future learning behaviour: only 31 per cent of former (1997) learners who had not done any learning in the past 18 months (i.e. at the follow-up interview in late 98 / early 99) thought they might be doing some learning in the next two to three years. Over the 18 month period between NALS 97 and the follow-up interview, 28 per cent of those classed as non-learners had become learners, suggesting that even those out of learning for a long time are not an homogeneous hard-to-reach group. Yang (1998) reviews longitudinal work on adult learning participation. Knowledge about participation is surprisingly limited. A number of models have been developed to account for participation, of which the most readily comprehensible and applicable are:

- **the chain of response model**: participation is the result of a chain of responses to both psychological and external variables – self-evaluation; attitude to education; importance of goals and expectation that participation will meet them; life transition; opportunities and barriers; information about education.

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[4] Methodology: face-to-face interviews with 4673 UK adults aged 17 and over

[5] Methodology: face-to-face interviews with 5054 UK adults aged 17 and over

- **the interaction model**: emphasises the interaction between psychological variables and external forces, but gives priority to social context (socio-economic status, family background) as a predictor of participation. Other variables include learning process, perceived value, readiness to participate, stimuli to participate and barriers.

Longitudinal studies confirm that previous educational attainment is the single most important predictor of participation, according to Yang. Further, a recent study (Gorard *et al.*, 1998) of over 1,000 adults in South Wales argues that lifetime patterns of participation can be accurately predicted before individuals reach school-leaving age. The study identifies five key determinants of an individual's learning trajectory: the period in which the person was born, their place of birth and subsequent migration pattern, their gender, their family background and their experience of initial schooling. These 'trajectory determinants' are more significant than the current barriers people face, such as cost or domestic responsibility. Non-participation is a result of not seeing education or developmental training as appropriate, and it is unlikely that a learning society can be encouraged in the UK by simply making it easier for people to participate in more of what is already on offer. By implication this analysis calls for a 'joined up' approach linking participation in learning with much wider areas of life and the public and community bodies associated with these.

2.2.4 Field (1999) in an otherwise complimentary review of research on participation, asserts that such research is often based on the assumption that participants in adult learning are volunteers; when in fact many adults engage in learning activities only because they are subject to varying degrees of coercion from government departments and employers in particular.

2.2.5 McGivney (1997) sums up findings from participation research in general and points out that adults who have previously engaged in learning are always far more likely to be current participants than those who have not. 'Taken together the factors that influence participation suggest that participation in post-compulsory learning is a continuing rather than a remedial or catching-up activity.' She summarises the determinants as:
- length of schooling

- educational attainment
- current socio-economic circumstances
- cultural factors: work, social and family environment
- perception of the value of education
- awareness of educational needs
- familiarity with educational opportunities and processes
- possession or lack of time and autonomy
- possession or lack of basic, social and communication skills
- presence or absence of constraints such as lack of money, transport and childcare

2.2.6 There are administrative statistics on LEA-provided adult learning; this is the nearest we can get to a measure of participation in ACL specifically, though the statistics do not capture informal or non-LEA routes. The latest figures (DfEE, 2000a) show that:

- 68 per cent of LEA enrolments in England are on courses not leading to a formal qualification: e.g. painting, writers' workshops etc.;
- a quarter of those enrolled are aged 60 or over;
- more than 7 in 10 enrolments are female;
- the enrolment rate for individual LEAs varies from 0 per cent to 6 per cent of the adult population;
- enrolments are split equally between daytime (50 per cent) and evening / distance learning (50 per cent);
- on a whole year basis, about 1.6 million students take part.

York Consulting[6] (2000) estimates that (annually) at least 2.5 million people participate when the contribution of all departments of local authorities is included (leisure, social services, economic regeneration and others, complementing the education department's provision). There was a sharp fall in the number of LEA enrolments in the early 1990s, around the time that the FE colleges left LEA control. Since then there has been no clear, continuing

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[6] York Consulting surveyed local authorities; a responsible officer completing a proforma covering participation, funding, demand, promotion, quality assurance, internal involvement across departments, and external partnerships. 127 authorities responded.

trend in enrolment numbers. The figures in Table 2 are derived from an annual snapshot of those enrolled in November (not a whole year measure).

Table 2: LEA adult education enrolments in England (thousands)

		Part-time day	Evening, open and distance learning	Total
November	**1992**	504	775	1280
	1993	441	657	1097
	1994	456	628	1084
	1995*	514	639	1153
	1996*	553	679	1232
	1997*	509	553	1062
	1998*	550	565	1115
	1999*	527	527	1054

Source: Statistical First Release on Adult Education Enrolments (DfEE 2000)

Note: * includes contracted out provision.

2.3 Strategy and policy

2.3.1 The first report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, NAGCELL (Fryer, 1997b) identifies a number of changes that make lifelong learning (and by implication ACL as a major component of lifelong learning) an urgent priority:

• Economic globalisation, bringing about a shift in skill needs in the workplace;

• Demographic change, particularly in the age and sex profile of the workforce;

• New working practices such as team working and flatter management structures;

• A decline in unskilled employment;

• Greater need for key skills, at all levels;

• A need to recognise diversity and a range of cultures, with their associated needs for learning; and

• Shifts in traditional employment structures, which have often weakened communities and created a need for regeneration.

In addition to this largely economic and work-related agenda, the Government has recognised (DfEE, 1998c) the importance of learning as an end in itself and in supporting social inclusion, civic and public life and personal and spiritual fulfilment. The White Paper *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999a) sets out how the Government is working to extend and improve the demand for and supply of learning opportunities in order to ensure that everyone has access to high quality, relevant learning at times, locations and places that suit them. *Learning to Succeed* commits the Government to a National Learning Target for 2002, for a seven per cent reduction in non-learners. The White Paper notes that many adults are looking to learn in informal, self-directed and flexible ways, and the first NAGCELL report (Fryer, 1997b) says that more emphasis should be placed on the home, the community and the workplace, as places of learning.

The Remit Letter from the Secretary of State for Education and Employment to the Learning and Skills Council (DfEE 2000f) places a duty on the LSC to increase the demand for learning by adults, and to increase the supply of flexible, high-quality opportunities to meet their needs. In doing this, the LSC is to work with local authorities in the context of their continuing role in adult and community learning. Key features of ACL receive explicit support. For example, there is recognition of the value of learning which is not accredited through qualifications:

> *…not all learning should lead to awards. Encouraging adults back into learning and helping the more disadvantaged through relevant provision will also be important. Such first rung provision should, wherever practicable, act as a stepping stone into further learning leading to qualifications or units of qualifications, but 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.*

2.3.2 In recent theoretical writing on lifelong learning there is a predominant concern with 'globalisation'. This is often addressed from a 'human capital' perspective that focuses on issues of economic competitiveness, possibly at the cost of curricular breadth in the view of informed critics (Giere, 1994; Uden, 1996; Forrester, 1998; Bhola, 1998; Tight, 1998b; Ecclestone, 1999).

An alternative perspective concerns 'social learning' and raises issues of ecology and sustainability, in the words of Edwards *et al.* (1998), who go on to say that the very ambiguity of the term serves a purpose in 'uniting a diversity of interest groups behind a single banner proclaiming the need for change'.

The two core purposes of adult learning - social learning and economic competitiveness - both have deep historic roots. Fieldhouse (1996) in a survey of adult education over the last two centuries, highlights both the nineteenth century autodidactic working-class education tradition of organisations such as the Plebs League, and the need to respond to economic globalisation. He cites W.E.Forster who, introducing the 1870 Education Bill in the Commons, said: "Uneducated labourers – and many of our labourers are utterly uneducated – are, for the most part, unskilled labourers, and if we leave our work-folk any longer unskilled…they will become over-matched in the competition of the world."

Many commentators, for example Duman (1999) argue that the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, which removed FE colleges from LEA control, channeled resources towards work-related education and training and led to cuts in adult and community learning services. The statistics on LEA-secured provision were volatile during the 1990s rather than showing a continuous downward trend, but the number of enrolments was lower in 1999 (1,054,000) than in 1992 (1,280,000).

2.3.3 The idea of adult learning as a means of bringing communities together features prominently in the literature. The term 'community' in this context refers to various levels from national to local. Addressing the societal level, Schuller (1998) argues that the postponement of working life has been mirrored by a *de facto* reduction in the retirement age. From a societal perspective, not only is human capital lost when older people are ejected from the labour force, but social capital is eroded as networks and connections are broken. A learning society requires different patterns of working, which would allow a better mix of work and education. The more unevenly work is distributed, the more some categories of people are cut off from the training that goes with it and from the social learning that goes with being part of a workforce. Greater sharing of working time would increase social solidarity.

The concept of 'human capital' emphasises the individual as agent. It needs to be supplemented by a notion of 'social capital' and a recognition that learning is a social activity that depends for its value on being embedded within a social framework.

2.3.4 Commentators suggest that while EU policy places a strong emphasis upon lifelong learning, little progress has been made in developing a European dimension within the education systems of individual EU member states (Field 1997) or in creating a transparent and dynamic system of lifelong learning across the EU (Hake 1999).

2.4 Conclusion

2.4.1 The rationale for public investment in ACL rests on its economic, social and personal benefits, and is generally well proven. Measuring the economic benefits of ACL is difficult, though more could be done through longitudinal research. Social benefits are numerous and varied, and in some cases there are fairly robust measures of these. All substantial surveys statistics on adult learning *in general* tell a story of low participation among older people and the economically inactive; while administrative statistics on LEA-provided adult education reveal a markedly different pattern, with relatively high participation by women and by older people. Government statements and expert opinion on the value of adult learning strike varying balances between economic, social and personal benefits.

3. Aspects of quality

Our starting assumptions are that high-quality ACL provision involves effective recruitment and outreach; provides a learning experience that is directly relevant to learners' lives and interests; is successful in retaining learners; takes a serious though flexible approach to measuring learning gain; encourages continuation and progression; has effective arrangements for learner support; information, advice and guidance; and develops staff both within core organisations and in community settings, transferring good practice as widely as possible. We summarise what the literature has to say on these topics, and also cover material that directly addresses quality assurance.

3.1 Information, advice, guidance, outreach and recruitment

3.1.1 Community education in its purest form is a collective activity where a group in the community engages with a learning provider to design a programme that meets the group's specific needs, and delivered as close as possible to where people live.

Lovett (1997) suggests a number of models of community education, based on experience in Northern Ireland. The link between community education and community development has not been widely appreciated until recently. Those trained in traditional adult education methods, where the emphasis is on the class and the academic development of the individual student, have little understanding of the lifelong learning process involved in community development, where the emphasis is on individual and collective development and the achievement of certain social, economic and cultural objectives. There are three models of community education:

- *Education for the community*: takes the form of teaching formal classes and courses in the community. It meets a need for personal satisfaction and development, but is not closely linked to the process of community development, with its concern for collective action and tackling social, economic and cultural issues and problems.

- *Education about the community*: attempts to engage in dialogue and discussion with local groups about the sort of issues and problems around which

classes and courses might be organised. This model remains primarily educational.

- *Education with the community*: questions the assumption that the basis of community adult education is the class. Learning is aimed at solving problems and is based on motivation and goal orientation. It is about capacity building, group development and empowerment.

Field workers in an education and development project undertake exploration, investigation and networking. They explore the area they are working in, identifying the issues and problems facing local communities, especially disadvantaged groups. Most of the education and training provided is 'tailored' to meet the needs of specific community groups and organisations. They may:

- provide conventional adult education programmes, but with a broad menu that raises awareness of options;
- help groups and organisations and networks to clarify their aims and objectives and improve their internal organisation;
- establish links with and visit other community groups and organisations, helping groups and individuals to learn from each other;
- help groups to develop their own development plans or assist them in responding to government initiatives;
- organise training courses in specific areas of skill, e.g. community leadership or management.

Tutors and development workers need skills in networking, facilitating groups, curriculum development, educational guidance and tutoring.

Numerous examples of community-based learning are described in the literature: one is the Dearne Valley Project, set up during the mid-1980s by Northern College and the Workers' Educational Association in a declining mining area of South Yorkshire. Portwood (1988) cites the evaluation report on the project as ascribing its success to inter-personal contact and the communication channels of informal community networks: 'the fieldworker modified the nomenclature of formal education and used pubs, clubs, a local vicarage, and students' houses as launching sites for more structured

educational activities.' With help from local support networks such as the miners' wives group, PTA and church, courses ran in local facilities such as the Youth Club. Outreach can be the first step in a process that brings new learners in to use the main, central resources of the learning provider. A video (Northern College, 2000) is available illustrating the use of short residential courses. These are integrated with learning programmes before and after the residential period, ensuring that an expensive resource gives good value. Northern College (Jackson, 1989) has used a number of approaches to achieve integrated learning programmes of this type, collaborating with a range of partners:

- organising courses for voluntary organisations and community groups, some with national structures and others entirely local:
- arranging courses as an integral part of the curriculum in other adult education institutions;
- joint work with outreach staff on community adult education programmes, based in local authority services or voluntary organisations; and
- college staff themselves playing a primary role in building community groups, (for example the Dearne Valley Project).

Informal learning is often the starting point for such activity. McGivney (1999a) defines informal learning as:

- Learning which takes place outside a dedicated learning environment, arising out of the interests of individuals and groups but not necessarily recognised as learning.
- Non-course-based learning activities provided in response to needs by a range of sectors and organisations
- Planned and structured learning delivered in flexible and informal ways and in informal settings.

The benefits of informal learning are increasingly being recognised. A number of Government documents have outlined its benefits; for example (DfEE 2000c): 'There are lessons to be learned from…the Adult and Community Learning Fund. It is important to provide learning for adults in the communities where they live in a way that helps build local capacity; to ensure that the learning that is provided engages people's interests; and to

make sure that there is sufficient 'first-rung' and informal learning available to help engage adults who may not be attracted by more formal provision.'

Cullen *et al.* (2000) describe how the concept of informal learning encompasses a diversity of arrangements, actors and practices. Learners are frequently self-selecting, rather than a 'target group'. They can be highly differentiated and united only by a common need rather than class, age or ethnicity – but can be highly homogeneous, e.g. people living with HIV. A broad, grass-roots 'social movement' may provide a context in which informal learning emerges and takes place. Informal learning may also occur as a result of an initiative by a key 'mover and shaker' or a programme or project based on a defined policy agenda. An initial episode of informal learning may unearth other, latent needs that stimulate further learning. Significant changes that typically occur in the evolution of informal learning include: expansion of geographical coverage; diversification of client/participant base; the development of a professional management and organisational structure; formalisation of learning, through linkage to formal training providers and accreditation. Becoming more integrated within a mainstream framework can add value to informal learning initiatives, but may also be perceived as threatening, inappropriate or restrictive. For informal learning to become sustainable and transferable it must meet a continuing need; the learning must be incorporated into institutional practices and agencies; and there must be funding available to enable the initiative to continue or be replicated elsewhere.

Informal learning is the main source of learning for many people, and is crucial in widening participation to disadvantaged groups since it offers a stepping stone onto more formal mainstream provision for people with no experience of post-school learning. It is also important in its own right (Coffield ed. 2000). However by its nature its outcomes are difficult to assess. McGivney cites studies suggesting that there is a point at which informal community-based learning becomes conscious learning (i.e. recognised as learning) and deliberate. Typically a *group* goes through this process, initially coming together because of shared interests through, for example, a church, a tenants' association or a playgroup. Having identified needs, they seek information from community workers, group leaders or volunteers who meet

the need themselves or bring in others (guidance workers, education providers etc.). An immediate outcome can be informal learning activities such as discussion groups or visits. These may lead to short courses and tailored programmes, flexibly delivered and learner-centred. Finally confidence develops, opening up the possibility of entering formal learning programmes elsewhere. An outreach worker commented: 'The important thing is the first hook. Once you've got them through the door the possibilities are endless. It's the investment in that stage which is the most important.'

The group-based nature of much informal learning is associated with particular learning styles. Some commentators, for example Care and Udod (2000) characterise learning styles as "male" (individual, autonomous, competitive) or "female" (group-based, mutually supportive): "Feminist educators view collaboration as a fundamental principle and as an important teaching strategy. It is believed that collaborative learning practices promote contact, dialogue, and interaction. In a feminist context, collaborative learning involves sharing power, responsibility and experience, and a valuing of active participation and egalitarian principles." This source addresses the benefits of such learning styles for women, but does not discuss whether they would be beneficial for all learners regardless of sex.

3.1.2 Community outreach can be taken forward through the workplace. Several Union Learning Fund projects have a community learning dimension in addition to the primary focus of promoting learning in the workplace through partnerships of employers and trade unions. The first evaluation of the ULF by York Consulting (1999) listed families and communities among target participants and the expansion of the Ford EDAP Learning Centre for community use was cited as an example of linking community and workplace learning.

3.1.3 Of course, community outreach is only one facet of ACL. In practice a great deal of recruitment to ACL is a matter of individuals taking up a course at a standard venue such as an LEA centre. Important factors include the quality of the LEA adult education service, and that of the local information, advice and guidance services. The search found only one report of an Ofsted inspection of an LEA Adult Education Service (Banbury 2000). Provider and

local authority levels are treated separately. Quantitative data were gathered where available on: expenditure, unit costs, and rates of participation attendance and achievement, and these were combined with the results of an evidence-based inspection conducted over a range of work with particular focus on ICT, general adult education and widening participation initiatives. At provider level the inspectors reported on student achievements and teaching quality, accommodation, advice and guidance, curriculum coverage, use of external funding, collaboration with other providers, staff support and training, management, and quality assurance procedures. At local authority level the inspectors scrutinised the strategic direction and management of the service, covering areas such as target setting and funding, budgeting, quality assurance and data collection procedures, collaboration with external providers and profile of the service within the authority. The report identifies good practice, gaps and shortcomings, and delineates areas for improvement.

3.1.4 Clayton and McGill (2000) point out that information, advice and guidance services are especially important for those at risk of social exclusion, who have the most to lose from choosing learning that is inappropriate to their current needs and situation. Guidance on a lifelong basis requires the involvement of many agencies, and the most effective services tend to have collaborative relationships with a range of relevant organisations. Clayton and McGill describe examples where the full guidance service is offered on an outreach basis, either in fixed premises or in mobile form such as a guidance bus. Outreach workers for other services may co-operate in helping clients to access a guidance service. A key feature is the use of familiar, non-threatening locations. One interesting initiative is the use of 'barefoot guidance workers', where local people as well as the personnel of various agencies are given basic guidance training.

3.1.5 ACL will bring about significant development in individuals and communities only where it has a strong resonance in people's lives. A study of lifelong learning in Finland (Antikainen, 1998) addressed the meaning of education and learning in the lives of Finnish adults. The study focused on the way people use education in constructing their life-courses; what educational and learning experiences mean in the production and formation of individual and group identity; what substance, form and social context

significant learning experiences take. Significant learning experiences are defined as 'those which appeared to guide the [person's] life-course or to have changed or strengthened his or her identity'. A major finding was that such experiences rarely take place in formal educational settings. Such episodes are experiences of empowerment, or (Hobson and Welbourne 1998) transformation.

Lalljee, Kearney and West (1989) give a practical example. 'Second Chance to Learn' courses, pioneered in Liverpool during the mid 1970s, were developed by some districts of the Workers' Educational Association and university extra-mural departments to enable adults with little experience of formal education to develop their critical skills, confidence and personal autonomy within both the learning community and the wider society. Such courses employed a social learning perspective. Such a perspective is underpinned by an optimistic vision of personal development, and implies that the negative perceptions held by some individuals in relation to control may change, once they have positive experiences of control.

As part of an evaluation exercise in Oxford and Milton Keynes, students were asked to complete a set of three standard psychological questionnaires at the beginning of each course, and again some months after the course had ended, in order that any changes in their perceptions of control, confidence and well-being could be examined. The data demonstrated that respondents were significantly more positive about themselves, their interactions with others, and their employment prospects at the end of their course than at the beginning, and were similarly more likely to report psychological well-being. Lalljee, Kearney and West conclude that the social learning perspective adopted by the Second Chance to Learn programme led to psychological changes which persisted after the end of the course, and that the confidence and self-esteem of participants increased significantly. These findings provide evidence that adult education when appropriately conceived and delivered can act as a powerful agent for personal development.

A study by Tobias (1998) draws on a series of interviews conducted with working class adults with little or no experience of post compulsory education. It found that people's patterns of learning and education could only be

understood within the framework of their life experiences. It is incorrect to equate non-participation with non-learning, since many respondents had engaged in non-formal learning as adults. The study also found a strong relationship between the respondents' experiences of school, and their attitudes towards, and perceptions of, formal education, since all had experienced a sense of social distance, or separation, between home and school. All the respondents had parents with a low level of education, and none felt that their parents had had the capacity to actively support their own schooling. Similarly, a majority of respondents suggested that their parents had neither expected, nor encouraged them to continue their education, or to obtain middle class jobs.

These findings support the argument that individuals make decisions with respect to learning with reference to the prevailing opinions of the groups to which they belong; and that learning that is 'done to' people according to an official agenda will not work. The Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire (Allman and Wallis, 1997) is the best-known exponent of the thesis that all meaningful adult education must draw its impetus from the community itself. According to Freire (1996):

> *Often, educators and politicians speak and are not understood because their language is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people they address…In order to communicate effectively, educator and politician must understand the structural conditions in which the thought and language of the people are dialectically framed.*

Brookfield (1983) gives an account of the work of the U.S. educationalist Eduard Lindeman, probably the other main twentieth-century thinker on the subject along with Freire. Lindeman was an early advocate of experiential learning, this being reflected in the four principles he held to be central to adult education. The first of these is that 'education is life'. He did not mean merely that life experiences provide learning opportunities however, but also that education can have no ending, because people learn throughout their entire lives. His second principle is that this learning is non-vocational in character. Indeed he suggests that adult education properly begins at the point where vocational learning ends, thus providing a counter to the dehumanising effects of industrial employment. His third principle is that

adult education should emphasise situations rather than subjects, whilst his fourth emphasised the importance of a student centred approach.

Cara (1999) poses a question: whether, in the interests of equity between social classes, there should be substantial public provision of non-vocational curriculum areas such as arts, which more privileged people can choose to fund for themselves. Community educators working with disadvantaged groups complain that the emphasis on accreditation by funding bodies makes the provision of traditional non-vocational subjects such as arts and crafts difficult for them. However, Cara notes that the omission of any requirement for accreditation in the bidding criteria for the Adult and Community Learning Fund has *not* resulted in a blossoming of bids for projects in this area. Most bids cover the usual areas of basic skills, parenting, IT and helping children get the most out of school. She argues that the question of whether the arts are relevant to disadvantaged groups, or whether they are predominantly 'leisure pursuits for the middle classes', needs to be faced by those responsible for publicly funded provision, so that resources can be seriously targeted towards 'developing access to pleasure'.

DfEE statistics do not capture the social class of participants, but do provide a general picture of the balance between utilitarian and 'leisure' provision. To illustrate the take-up of various curriculum areas, Table 3 shows the distribution of LEA learning opportunities, accredited and non-accredited, across the various curriculum areas.

Table 3: Enrolments in LEA adult education by subject and mode

	Daytime	Evening & ODL
Office/business	22238	21657
Languages	22403	32221
Humanities	20509	16445
Phys Ed/Sport/Fitness	85845	137409
Practical crafts/Skills	135439	113299
Role education (exc. Indep. Living)	6813	5072
Independent Living & Communication Skills	14798	3970
All other non-schedule 2	43043	40844
Sub-total (non-schedule 2)	**351088**	**370917**
Office/business	51005	52254
Other vocational	45169	51954
GCSE Arts	1110	1623
GCSE Languages	2199	6727
GCSE Social Sciences	1500	4898
GCSE Sciences	2141	6965
GCE A & AS Arts	995	1607
GCE A & AS Languages	808	2146
GCE A & AS Social Sciences	1250	3116
GCE A & AS Sciences	614	1004
Access to HE	2012	808
Access to FE	8187	6195
Basic Education	51326	14711
Indep. Living & Communication Skills	7224	2626
Sub total (Schedule 2)	**175540**	**156634**
Total	**526628**	**527551**

Source: DfEE 2000a

It is at any rate indisputable that the community must be meaningfully *consulted* about the content of the learning offered to them. The agenda of officials and professionals may not chime with what people themselves want from a learning experience. Disadvantaged people need to know that their wishes are taken seriously. There are some examples of good practice in consultation; the case study material shows a number of different approaches to analysing the needs of specific groups of learners at local levels.

Action research in Bristol

Dissatisfaction with standard consultation procedures, which tend to operate in an information vacuum and produce simplistic results, has prompted Bristol Community Education to produce a new model for analysing the learning needs of communities. The work has been developed in the context of a wider aim to involve local groups in decision-making and planning, and is based on the assumption that local residents are key stakeholders and experts in relation to their own needs and requirements.

In this action research model, members of the community are employed to investigate the needs of their own local areas. They formulate the questions, analyse the results and report on the findings of their research. This produces a better quality of response, since many individuals feel more able to share their thoughts and feelings with those they perceive to be 'like them' and who are 'non-authority'.

A training course has been written and accredited by the Open College Network to equip the researchers with the necessary skills, for example setting aims and objectives, planning and using different methods of investigation, as well as wider skills such as communication and inter-personal skills. This has been used in a flexible manner to suit individual requirements.

Outcomes of the work have been very positive: very informative feedback has been gained from a large number of local residents, and from this it has been possible to draw clear priorities to improve the development and delivery of local services.

Source: Bristol Community Education (2000) *Community Research and Consultation: a report outlining a pilot community involvement and capacity* **building project** Bristol **Community Education**

For example, one approach (Heald, 2000) was to investigate the needs of a sample of communities with a known low take-up of learning opportunities using focus group discussions and individual interviews. This yielded 'rich and detailed information about the perceptions, attitudes and aspirations of the participants'; for example there were clear gender differences in attitudes towards learning in all groups; misinformation regarding current opportunities for adults, and a strong dislike of the terminology of adult learning. Quantitative methods (Hartlepool Borough Council, 1999; Mason, 2000) generated information on the skills levels in the local community compared with the national picture. One sample survey of IT needs in a group of villages incidentally generated useful information on potential volunteer help within the community.

3.2 Learner support and retention

3.2.1 McGivney (1996a) says that studies of completion of adult learning courses have always found the highest rates of withdrawal to be from academic (qualifying) courses, rather than from general unaccredited programmes. Distance learning has higher withdrawal rates than other forms of provision; McGivney comments that this is unsurprising given that distance learners are working on their own and juggling learning with other commitments. Greater flexibility aids access, but not retention. Some HE staff say that modular and combined courses are associated with student isolation and dropout.

Evidence on the relationship of age to completion is inconclusive; the balance of studies showing a slightly higher likelihood of dropout among older learners, but studies specifically on adult learning tending to show younger learners more likely to drop out. The generality of evidence points to women being more likely to complete than men. The balance of findings *in the context of qualifying courses* is that those entering with lower qualifications are less likely to complete. Those unemployed are more likely to drop out, in all sectors. And in FE, this is true of those on low incomes. There are few studies on the relationship of ethnicity to retention rates. Even where differences are significant, none are strong enough to be reliable predictors of retention in individual cases.

McGivney goes on to note that attrition is higher, and often much higher, in the early stages of a course. Successful retention strategies lay strong emphasis on the part of the cycle from pre-enrolment advice to induction and encompass pre-course contact, information and advice; support and encouragement during the transition into "learner status"; and simple enrolment procedures. Pre-entry guidance should thoroughly cover:

- subjects
- suitability in relation to the learner's experience and goals
- entry qualifications
- type and frequency of assessment
- workload
- recommended reading
- staff contact
- dates, times
- costs
- career advice
- opportunity to meet current or past students

Staff need to take account of any psychological baggage such as a legacy of failure at school. The keys to success lie in the tutor's hands: approachability, accessibility and a friendly classroom atmosphere are essential. A pastoral role is appropriate. Regular contact with absentees helps to prevent people leaving through embarrassment at having missed sessions.

3.3 Staff development

3.3.1 Volunteers can play a vital role. Montagu (2000) reviews a wide range of literature dealing with community involvement of employees and their employers, both large and small enterprises. The paper identifies the value of employee volunteering for training and skills development, especially through project-based development assignments that assist community organisations with particular work, whilst developing the skills of those seconded. Volunteers can also play a vital role in promoting learning within the community. Suffolk County Council, in material submitted for the review, highlights its intention to support voluntary sector providers through joint

programme development and delivery, staff development and the establishment of effective quality assurance mechanisms.

3.3.2 Martinez, Houghton and Krupska (1998), in a study of staff development for student retention, suggest that the "process" model of staff development, triggered by events such as annual appraisal, needs complementing with a professional development model recognising the difficulty and desirability of "deep" learning. The kinds of tutor behaviour that McGivney identifies (see paragraph 3.2.1) as vital (for learner retention) tend to develop after sustained reflection and effort. Successful retention strategies tend to combine top-down with bottom-up approaches.

3.3.3 Group learning, central to community-based provision, makes particular demands on tutors, who in this context are effectively facilitators for groups. Staff development programmes need to address the requisite skills (Chiva and Webster 1998). Facilitator education and training is often about helping would-be facilitators let go of their desire to be in total control of the knowledge to be imparted. This letting-go of the teacher-centred style can be very difficult, because both the would-be facilitator and/or the group may revert to a more familiar and comfortable teacher-led style when seeking 'solutions' to perceived problems, concerns or issues.

3.4 Attainment, learning gain and progression to further learning
3.4.1 Ainley (1999) forcefully makes a case against the idea that all forms of learning should be accredited through qualifications. Government recognises that qualifications are not always the most appropriate way to measure learning gain. The report of the Policy Action Team on Skills (DfEE 1999b) says that 'not enough is done to provide first-rung provision of the kind that is most likely to appeal to adults with low self-confidence and to help them take the first steps back into learning and the labour market. In part, that is because public policy has concentrated strongly in recent years on providing education and training which leads to qualifications. This has led to a significant mismatch between the provision that is available and what is actually needed.'

Foster, Howard and Reisenberger (1997) start from the assumption that it is feasible and useful to identify and assess learning outcomes without necessarily going through a process of formal accreditation. There are benefits for all involved: for learners in boosting confidence, for tutors in reviewing group and individual objectives, for providers in improving frameworks for learner progression, and national organisations as a means of recognising the broader outcomes of adult learning. The authors advance the interesting view that there is a consistent philosophy underpinning both National Vocational Qualifications and liberal adult education. Relevant to both are considerations that learning is personal and that standardisation is not the best way for a group to attain learning outcomes. Individuals need to manage their own learning in their preferred learning styles, in their own time, within the opportunities available to them and the constraints they face. This is true at all stages but even more important for adult learners, among whom individual differences of characteristic and opportunity are even wider. Thus for both NVQs and non-vocational learning it is appropriate to build flexible accreditation regimes that are not tightly tied to a curriculum or a timetable. The basic framework offered by the authors for gathering evidence on the outcomes of adult learning is that tutors produce syllabi making the proposed learning outcomes explicit; these are agreed and acknowledged by class members, forming a learning contract; and at the end of the course students are asked to judge how far they have achieved the agreed outcomes, or any others.

Daines (1996) discusses the approach of the Workers' Educational Association to the measurement of learning outcomes. The WEA is aware both that education providers have a responsibility to monitor the quality of provision, and that a major objective of such evaluations is to demonstrate that learning has taken place. For the FEFC, evidence of learning is expressed through accreditation and awards, with funding being linked to these criteria. Much WEA activity, however, is concerned with a liberal studies agenda and the provision of learning opportunities for those who do not traditionally participate in learning. As a consequence it does not easily lend itself to accreditation and certification.

The learning outcomes approach was developed by the WEA in order to provide evidence that its activities had resulted in learning by participants. This approach was based around student self-description forms, which enabled learners to both plan and evaluate their own learning outcomes. Implementing the learning outcomes approach was somewhat problematic for the WEA, because many learners and tutors regarded the initiative as an external bureaucratic imposition, and needed to be convinced of its educational benefits. Nevertheless the 1995 FEFC inspection of the WEA reported favourably on the learning outcomes approach. The learning outcomes approach has improved WEA provision, as it has firstly, given rise to syllabuses that focus on teaching and learning in ways that benefit both tutors and learners, and secondly, has provided clear evidence of student learning. The anxiety of providers to satisfy external agencies can drive the choice of measures in unhelpful directions. OFSTED (2000), in a survey of practice in family learning, comments that: 'at the provider level there has been a focus on quantitative measures, in response to the requirements of external funders or grant regimes, particularly in relation to literacy; qualitative aspects of family learning have largely been ignored.'

3.4.2 Flexible, modular qualifications (Wilson, 1999) can play a significant role in measuring learning gain and progress, in ways consistent with enhancing rather than crushing learners' morale. It is good practice with new learners to take a gradual approach to introducing the idea of taking part in an accreditation programme (Havering College, ND). Learners use the credit based qualifications offered by the National Open College Network (NOCN) in a number of different ways (Davies, 1999): as an opportunity to gain accreditation for learning which had not previously been certificated; as a way of supplementing their learning in other courses, such as GCSEs; and as a bridge into other education and training opportunities. Accreditation builds links between informal and non-formal learning and the formal domain of education and training.

Accreditation through Open College Networks is particularly suitable for helping those initially involved in informal learning to progress. The number of learners registered annually with the NOCN grew from 90,000 in 1993-94 to 355,000 in 1996-97. It has increasingly attracted learners from traditionally

non-participant or under represented groups: unemployed adults, adults inactive in the labour market, those with low basic skills. In 1996-97, 49 per cent of registered learners were unemployed or unwaged and 45 per cent were in employment (33 per cent full-time and 12 per cent part-time). Only 6 per cent were full-time students. During the same period, the national average number of credits achieved by each learner fell from 3.4 to 2.6, showing an

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'Breaking the Ice' - **overcoming attitudinal barriers to participation**

This project focused on two of the problems surrounding widening access: fear of exams and reluctance to enter a college environment. It adopted the approach that these feelings are capable of being overcome.

The dilemma faced by providers is that, although it is felt to be ultimately beneficial to students' self esteem, confidence and increased prospects for employability for them to undertake accreditation, many potential students are alienated by the prospect. To address this, a gradual introduction to the idea of exams was developed, which delayed any mention of the subject for several weeks until the students were felt to be ready to cope with it. By this point it was found that 'the mention of exams …then excited them rather than frightened them off'. This approach has been consistently successful across a range of courses. It has succeeded in enrolling thirty five students, all registered for exams.

A similar gradual approach to overcoming attitudinal barriers to participation is used for enrolment, to overcome reluctance to enter the college building ('A visit to the College in the early weeks would have been too high risk'). Students are introduced to the college only after six weeks. At this time they, and their families if they wish, are escorted into college and taken through the enrolment procedure; this is combined with a tour of the buildings and a complimentary visit to the refectory. Again it has proved to be highly effective.

Source: Havering College (n.d.) *Application for TES/AoC – Beacon Award For Widening Participation* (mimeo)

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increasing proportion of 'small steps' for part-time learners. It should be borne in mind however that 75 per cent of local authority provision is in areas where a qualification is not the end point (York Consulting, 2000). Non-accredited learning also has value.

McGivney (1999) studies progression from informal learning settings, and argues that progression should not be taken in a narrow sense of a learning pathway to other courses, but encompasses the range of outcomes, covering the personal, social, ecomonic and educational dimensions of people's lives.

The personal benefits are enormous, as increased self-confidence and self-esteem lead in turn to improvements in the quality of life and engagement with new learning. The nature of the progression seems to relate to the type of informal learning activity; that arranged by educational providers for instance tending to result in high rates of educational progression, whereas voluntary work tends to lead to economic progression into paid work. A difficulty in measuring progression is the varying significance of outcomes. What seems a small step for one person could represent a major achievement for another. Also this type of learning is often undertaken in a collaborative manner, presenting challenges to measurement of outcomes.

3.5 Progression to the labour market

3.5.1 There is some evidence on the direct impact of ACL on employability, but no large or rigorous studies. The Gloucester LEA study (McGivney, 1994) found that students in craft, pottery, upholstery or textiles classes were accepting commissions, making things to sell or setting up their own businesses.

3.6 Conclusion

We have described good practice in reaching out to involve in learning those who do not currently take part. The principles are:

- to avoid the learning process being construed as something "done to" disadvantaged people for their own good;
- to engage creatively with groups and individuals and meet them on their own terms and their own territory, both for the provision of information, advice and guidance and of learning itself;
- in staff development to encourage serious reflection on practice and avoid superficial 'quick fixes';
- to focus efforts to improve retention on the early stages of the learning experience; and

- to take a gradual approach to involving learners in increasingly formal provision leading to measurable learning gain and, further, to accreditation where appropriate.

4. Improving access

To widen participation in adult learning, providers need to tackle both *attitudinal* and *practical* issues. The second report of the National Advisory Group on Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (NAGCELL, 1999) usefully summarises the barriers to adult learning as: a preference to make other use of free time; pressures on time at home and at work; location; finance; domestic and caring responsibilities; lack of information; absence of opportunity; a belief that learning has little to offer; and unhappy memories of school. In addition to these generalities, there are specific factors that deter members of particular groups in the population. We address the 'obstacles' in more detail. We then look at general strategies to overcome the obstacles, including the use of Information and Communication Technologies and of a variety of settings for learning such as museums and libraries. Finally we describe approaches tailored to particular audiences such as older people, members of ethnic minorities, and families.

4.1 Attitudes, obstacles and motivation

4.1.1 There is a substantial literature on motivation to learn; examples of findings follow.

- 'I couldn't wait to leave full-time education': among adults, a third of recent learners but nearly half of non-learners agreed with this statement (Park, 1994b).

- Non-learners (47 per cent) were more likely (Beinart and Smith, 1998) to say they preferred to spend their free time doing things other than learning (36 per cent of learners) and that they lacked time to participate in learning due to family commitments (32 per cent of non-learners and 25 per cent of learners).

- 28 per cent of long term non-learners (La Valle and Finch, 1999) felt too old to learn (8 per cent of learners) and 18 per cent said health problems prevented them participating (8 per cent of learners).

- 22 per cent of long-term non-learners (La Valle and Finch, 1999) felt they might not keep up with others compared to 10 per cent of learners.

- McGivney, cited by FEDA (1999) points out that surveys may under-estimate the extent of sheer lack of interest in learning, because education is seen as a worthy pursuit and interviewees prefer to suggest that they are too busy or the college is too far away, rather than admit that they are not interested.

- Of those in paid work, 41 per cent are too busy with work (Beinart and Smith, 1998) to spend time learning (less than a tenth for other groups).
- Those unemployed (31 per cent) are more likely to say they don't have the qualifications needed to get on most courses (the proportion is a fifth for other groups).
- Nearly half of respondents with basic skills problems (Tremlett, Park and Dundon-Smith, 1995) compared to just over a quarter of people without problems believe they do not have the necessary motivation to learn on their own at home.
- Accounts of focus groups submitted for the review include the following:
  - "I'm too old to get a job." (man aged 27)
  - Respondents on benefits were worried about "being called in by the Nash".

Considerations of "consumer culture" are relevant to the issue of motivation to learn. Johnston and Usher (1997) say that it is no longer possible to understand the significance of the contemporary nature of adult learning without an understanding of the part played by consumption and consumer culture. Consumer culture is linked with changes in identity formation. Consumer choices become socially communicative acts and markers of difference. Learning becomes an expressive means of self development, a central part of the process whereby individuals differentiate themselves from others, in the process shaping and re-shaping identity. For adults, it increasingly becomes the case that learning is considered as 'education' if to be an 'educated' person is important to their identity.

4.2 Strategies to engage learners

4.2.1 Clarke (1996) proposes a threefold model of the key issues in access. Firstly, *information* about learning opportunities must be both available and accessible to non-participant individuals and groups. Secondly, learning opportunities should be provided in locations that are both convenient and comfortable for the learners. Thirdly, there must be access to support to overcome barriers to learning that stem from things that people lack, such as self-confidence, childcare, resources, time, or basic skills; or from attitudes that learning is not valuable or not appropriate.

Payne (1992) outlines the context that strategies to engage learners need to recognise. Different groups of students use adult education for very different purposes, reflecting their relationship to wider social forces such as the labour market, the domestic work role of women and the increasingly consumerised leisure market. Individual choices about study are constructed within common patterns of experience. Students from different types of background favour different types of class. The student body is fragmented according to

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Barriers Busters and the Personal Growth Barometer

Croydon LEA have run courses on personal development for women in areas of high deprivation. Many of these women, although having the skills required by local employers, lacked the opportunity to practice them or to demonstrate them to employers. The project staff realised that the women would not be able to make progress towards gaining employment unless they actually started to believe in themselves and had gone through a period of self-reflection and assessment. They therefore put together a course covering a range of skills that could be addressed in the classroom affecting the lives of the students. One of these was self-advocacy to reduce the effect and occurrence of abuse, a particular problem with this group. Students were required to keep a diary and complete a portfolio of written work. The London Open College Network provided an accreditation framework, giving the students opportunities to gain key skills credits in communication, using a computer, personal development, and other areas.

The Personal Growth Barometer was developed as a means of helping students to perceive the benefits they had gained, and what they needed to focus on next. It charts the responses to questions given at the start and finish of the course on a wheel diagram, forcing them to confront their own barriers to development from the start, and reflect on how well they have progressed.

Source: Croydon - Continuing Education and Training Service (CCET)

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age, race, gender and class. A critical approach to the curriculum has to take account of the political, economic and social contexts within which knowledge is generated. The adult education centre is a site of struggle of competing paradigms of adult education. Adult education provides space for a number of

alternative cultural formations, but they operate within a predominantly middle-class atmosphere. Equal opportunities and social justice can only be pursued through approaches to the curriculum that explicitly recognise and address social distinctions and inequalities.

4.2.2 Does ACL have the right public profile? How do people perceive it? The need to raise the profile of community education is hampered by the definitional vagueness of the term 'community education': those involved understand the term and its importance intuitively, but the difficulty lies in communicating this to the outside world. Todd (1996) uses four characteristics from a model for the marketing of services in an attempt to capture the essence of community education. Under the first of these: *intangibility*, comes the essentially person- and community- centred nature of the work which prevents prescription, since community educators have to be responsive to each local need and situation. The second, *inseparability,* points to the dependence of community education provision on the relationships between community educators and the people they serve, and the need to sell the service to both providers and consumers. Thirdly comes the difficulty of setting quality assurance procedures which take account of the *variability* of provision, particularly where the work is with people who may not demonstrate any easily measurable achievements (e.g. accreditation) afterwards. *Perishability* of service capacity is also a problem since the low profile of this work means that precious staffing resources are often directed elsewhere. The author observes that terminology is central in marketing, whether product or service, and he believes that the community of educators should arrive at a brand name for the important and valuable service they offer. Observations made in focus groups include these:

- "You have to sell it in layman's terms and get away from high falutin' words" (re advertising for adult education courses)

- "I'm in too much of a hurry when I'm shopping to stand and look in the windows" (at the advertisements for adult learning courses)

4.2.3 McGivney (2000) suggests that strategies to engage learners are best developed in a multi-agency context, to avoid creating isolated and duplicated

initiatives. Outreach works best with groups rather than individuals, because this helps to lessen any anti-learning peer pressure; group learning also provides psychological support at a time of embarking upon something new and possibly intimidating.   Outreach workers are often most effective when they share the characteristics and background of the target group. Relationships with gatekeepers must be cultivated: this very diverse set of people includes religious leaders, health visitors, hostel wardens and probation officers.   Learner support needs careful design; participation is volatile and sensitive to little things such as courtesy or lack of it in response to a person's first telephone enquiry. Regular guidance, feedback and small group work typically feature as parts of successful support programmes.

4.3 Making it easier to participate

4.3.1 McGivney (2000) identifies the location of learning programmes as crucial: 'even a mile down the road may be out of reach not just because of lack of transport…but psychologically and culturally' for many people in disadvantaged areas.   Smith (2000) says that 'for people in isolated and previously self-sufficient communities (e.g. the old mining communities of South Yorkshire) there may be a cultural barrier to travelling outside their own town or village.'   Therefore if the people will not travel to the learning, the learning must travel to the people.   Learning opportunities must also be available in a place where people feel comfortable; for example, in a multicultural venue where that consideration is relevant. In rural areas there may be no dedicated local adult education facilities; practitioners need to explore the possibilities of opening up the facilities of schools and enterprises. The best examples of mobile education services (Liverpool, Bolton and the Dove Valley in Derbyshire are cited) provide services such as basic education, IT training, and information on learning opportunities.

Complementing outreach, 'inreach' can be an important element in acclimatising people to learning: an example submitted for the review concerns on-site taster courses and visits arranged between the WEA to Sheffield Hallam University, with the aim of breaking down perceptual barriers and raising awareness of what a university is like.

Barwuah and Andrews (1999) say that there is evidence of some good practice, but variable quality, in initiatives to widen participation in high-density housing areas. Three case studies conducted on housing estates in Liverpool, and in the London boroughs of Greenwich and Merton, confirm that the national pattern of participation and non-participation in adult education – low participation by disadvantaged individuals – is reflected in local geography; participation is low in disadvantaged areas.

Bowman, Burden and Konrad[7] (2000) sound a note of caution: some adults, who would benefit from local learning opportunities in disadvantaged areas,

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'Notorious', an exhibition of photographs and writing, Hastings

Following national media coverage in which their large housing estate was likened to Beirut, local residents wanted the opportunity to document their lives and confront the negative stereotypes presented about their neighbourhood. Courses in photographic skills were offered, and a writing group established. The participants mounted a mobile exhibition of their work, which they organised and publicised themselves. Although many participants had little formal education and self-confidence, having been unemployed for long periods and stigmatised because of their address, this project gave them the opportunity to recognise their own ability and potential whilst developing new skills. Some participants have now moved on to other learning opportunities, whilst others have enrolled with other local education providers.

Source: Coare, P. (1997) 'Opportunity and the Underclass', *Adults Learning* November: 6-8.

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feel that they do not belong there and may even deny that they live there, refuse to engage in education in the area, and take their children out of the area to do extra-curricular activities because they don't want to be associated with it.

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[7] Methodology: 9 focus groups and 88 individual interviews in an area of social disadvantage

Fletcher and Kirk (2000) point to the importance of transport arrangements, not least in rural areas, and say that the proportion of 16-19-year-olds benefiting from free or subsidised student transport is greater than the proportion of adults. The Further Education Unit (n.d.) give guidelines for organisations wishing to develop education and training opportunities for women in rural areas. These women have in general lower paid employment than those in urban areas, fewer job opportunities, and poorer working conditions, benefits and job security. They often lack a voice to express their needs. The guidelines recommend a series of staged activities: planning, market research, design and delivery, learner support, quality assurance and staff and institutional development. Rural-specific factors such as the seasonal nature of some rural employment, the difficulties of transport, the underdeveloped networking opportunities and limited childcare support are addressed. The authors suggest that many of the barriers to learning for people in rural communities can be overcome with the right approach. For example, the problem of lack of transport can at least be alleviated by initiating lift-sharing schemes, and transport sharing with other education and training providers.

4.3.2 Flexibility of timing is also important. Specific commitments such as shiftworking or caring call for tailored arrangements. McGivney (2000) cites weekend opening of colleges to offer TEC-funded courses to low-qualified workers. Transient groups such as homeless people may respond best to 'drop-in' provision or short taster courses; the same applies where unemployed people move in and out of the informal economy, making fixed timetables difficult to meet. A striking example (Nottingham City Council 2000) is a course on DJ and sound-mixing techniques which runs from midnight to 2am.

4.3.3 There are positive expectations among analysts and practitioners, for example Sargant and Tuckett (1997) of what Information and Communication Technologies (and Open Learning generally) can achieve in adult learning by enabling learning to be available any time, anywhere. A study of Adult Continuing Education at the University of Sheffield (Johnson 1994) found that the adoption of distance learning had served to widen participation as well as increase access, since groups such as pregnant women and people with

disabilities were better represented on the distance learning courses than had been the case on traditional programmes. Field (1997) provides checklists for design of ICT-mediated learning covering both individual and group modes of ICT-based learning. The elements of good practice include:

- hands-on induction programmes and guidance manuals on the technologies themselves;

- a student-centred approach including one-to-one online tutor contact for the substance of the learning, and a telephone hotline for technical issues; and

- in group learning, face-to-face contact at the start of the programme.

Shipley Communities Online Project

Shipley Communities Online is a partnership-based project using new technology to match skills development with new employment opportunities. The partners represent key agencies including the Local Authority, the TEC, the Careers Service, the Employment Service, an FE College, a local school, a cable TV company and a range of community organisations. The project was conceived as part of a broader strategy for community regeneration and development.

The project has provided a computer with Internet access in each of six community venues and trained staff in Internet and e-mail use. Community venues are linked via an ISDN connection to the FE College. Additional Internet access is available at the local Job Centre and Volunteer Bureau. A local website, www.shipleyonline.org.uk, acts as a gateway site providing information about jobs, training opportunities, childcare, travel, local goods and services, etc.

A local reminiscences group, of mainly older residents, has participated in the project and placed some of its material on the website. The website also facilitates the exchange of information and dissemination of good practice. The project has offered a number of ICT Awareness Days in community venues. These raise awareness of the range of uses of IT, stimulate interest and encourage word of mouth publicity. The events have aided staff development by enabling facilitators, key workers and volunteers to learn new skills from each other.

Source: documentation from Shipley College, West Yorkshire

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discuss the contribution of electronic courseware in adult learning situations. Many of the computer-based materials replicate printed material, which most

adults would prefer to use in a paper-based format in any case. Courseware materials can be developed to do much more than impart knowledge, and can actually support the learning process itself. The study describes one such model having a four-fold approach, encouraging study skills, giving explanations and tests of the material covered, and offering pointers to extension work in other related areas.

Allred and Allred (1999) report on an investigation of the use of open learning facilities in public libraries. Users had experienced a range of benefits, from directly educational ones, to improvements at work, and personal satisfaction. People who felt uncomfortable with other forms of learning often used the service; one respondent reported that they had started a course at a college, but found that the other students were a lot younger and had moved to the open learning centre at the suggestion of the college. More than sixty per cent of the sample had used the service to learn Information Technology.

Museums, too, provide forms of open and informal learning (Chadwick and Stannett eds., 1995 and 2000). Museums are essentially educational institutions, in that their mission is to create interest through knowledge and understanding, excitement and involvement, and as such are a significant resource for all kinds of learning across all age groups. They offer access to primary sources often in the form of handle-able objects which have an immediacy not available through books or TV. For adult community learning providers working with disadvantaged groups, this can be particularly beneficial, both as a means of drawing people into learning in general and as a means of developing other curriculum areas such as basic skills.

Provision does not necessarily have to be restricted to museum locations: displays and exhibitions from museums can be organised in local community settings. Furthermore, new technologies can overcome the problem of geographical access in remote locations by simulations and other programmes which give images of an object viewed from all sides. For example the new Museum of Scotland has developed a programme called MOSAICS which shows the artefacts displayed in the exhibition from every possible angle.

Museums can provide a non-threatening environment for adults and children to work on family learning projects. For English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners, using a museum instead of a classroom as a learning environment offers different expectations to students, and forces them into real-life situations in which they have to converse. Work on developing language skills can be delivered through working with the artefacts. Also cultural artefacts from other countries can help students from ethnic minority groups relate their own experiences to the learning material.

4.3.4 There is a certain amount of reservation and warning concerning open and distance learning (and by implication its application to community learning). Field (1994) sets out some ideas on the context in which this development is taking place, arguing that open and distance learning is a largely individualised activity. Participation in adult education and training can be understood as a form of consumption or as an aspect of consumer culture. There have been long-term changes in the ability of adults in western societies to exercise choice in the purchase of goods and services. Open and distance learning conform to important characteristics of the consumer culture. They are home-based and self-governing; they are individualised and privatised; they offer 'furtive' opportunities for personal change; and they use technologies that are changing rapidly and are easily absorbed into markets that thrive on fashion and obsolescence.

Critics of the optimist position on ICT and learning (Gorard, Selwyn and Williams, 2000) assert that the role of ICT remains untested. They say that claims that early University for Industry pilot projects have had 'huge success' in recruiting 'school failures, drop-outs and disadvantaged adult learners' are as yet tenuous. The use of new technology itself could become another basic skill barrier faced by non-participants. Furthermore, the culture of ICT continues to be primarily young, male, middle class and white, and therefore represents the traditional adult learning base that the government is keen to move beyond. These authors acknowledge, nevertheless, that the significance of ICT will continue to grow with respect to adult education. It is important for advocates of ICT to acknowledge the limitations of these media, whilst championing their strengths, if the potential of ICT is to be fully realised. Whatever the validity of these assertions, it is certain that the pattern of access

and participation raises concerns. A NIACE-sponsored survey (Allen 2000) finds that 43% of adults with internet access report that they are currently studying, compared to 18% without internet access, and that people with internet access are twice as likely to undertake learning in the next three years as those without access. Gorard, Selwyn and Williams (2000) point to the danger that technological change could further marginalise groups that are currently under-represented, by creating technological requirements which may be perceived as barriers to access.

4.4 'Target' groups

4.4.1 There is no general consensus among policymakers on an exact listing of 'hard-to-reach' groups. The 1990s saw a number of attempts at a definition. The report of the FEFC Widening Participation Committee (Kennedy 1996) identifies these target groups for widening participation:

- older workers;
- unskilled / semi-skilled socio-economic groups;
- those with poor basic skills; and
- those with low or no qualifications.

Kennedy also reports lower qualification levels among women and some ethnic minorities, though noting that current *participation* does not show major differences; and notes that FEFC statistics show that low income is associated with poor retention and low achievement on courses.

The groups identified in the first NAGCELL report (Fryer, 1997b) are:

- younger people;
- older people;
- ex-offenders;
- minority ethnic and linguistic communities; and
- those with learning difficulties.

Widening participation concerns not only an individual's initial decision to take part in learning, but also retention, progression and achievement. According to the FEFC (1997), in a report that addresses uneven completion and achievement rates as well as participation as such, key target groups in this respect are:

- those in receipt of benefits, who have higher withdrawal and lower achievement rates;

- those on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses, who have higher withdrawal rates; and
- some ethnic minority groups having higher withdrawal rates and others having lower achievement rates.

A further report by the FEFC (2000b) identifies the following adult groups as having low levels of participation:

- ex-offenders and probation clients
- lone parents
- those unemployed long-term
- those working in SMEs
- those with low levels of literacy and numeracy
- some ethnic minority groups
- refugees and asylum seekers
- travellers
- those recovering from mental illness
- people with disabilities
- those with severe learning difficulties
- those with drug or alcohol dependency, or recovering; and
- those with emotional or behavioural difficulties

Individuals may belong to more than one group under-represented in adult learning. For example, someone taking a course for older people might also belong to the semi-skilled / unskilled socio-economic group. The same applies to non-learners: indeed, for many, their non-participation is an outcome of multiple deprivation – in effect, social exclusion. Further, a group that could on casual inspection appear homogeneous may in fact be diverse. McGivney (2000) warns that 'target groups should not be too broad…"unemployed men" as a category can include people who differ widely in age, experience, educational and occupational background'. Further, the idea of 'target' groups is relevant not only at individual level, but in terms of families and of whole communities.

4.4.2 Members of ethnic minorities are much more likely than others to be keen on learning, but face more severe obstacles (Beinart and Smith, 1998). Only 24 per cent (compared to 40 per cent of those of white ethnic origin) cite as an obstacle 'I prefer to spend my free time doing things other than

learning'. Only 11 per cent (cf. 18 per cent of whites) say they did not enjoy learning at school. But members of ethnic minorities (30 per cent) have more problems with fees than do those of white origin (21 per cent). They are more likely to feel they know very little about local learning opportunities (27 per cent ethnic minority, 20 per cent white). And they are more likely (23 per cent) to cite not having the qualifications needed to get on most courses, than whites (15 per cent).

Participation varies widely between groups. Sargant[8] (1993) found participation (studying currently or recently) ranging from 60 per cent of the African group to 20 per cent of the Pakistani group. Malach (1999) comments

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Education Fairs for Asian Women

Education and Training Fairs for Asian Women were held during Adult Learners' Week within the London boroughs of Newham and Redbridge. Strategically selected local education providers were involved in the organisation of the fairs, which were publicised in seven languages, and held in accessible community venues, with interpreters, and Asian food provided for potential learners. The fairs have attracted over one hundred Asian women to attend annually, providing information and advice on specific concerns affecting their education and training.

In order to build on the success of the fairs, short, community based 'New Directions' courses for Asian women have been introduced. Such courses are run at introductory and intermediate levels, are free to learners, and are taught by Asian women tutors. Such courses are a stepping stone for Asian women, who are able to access learning without family conflict. Because of this, they have proved to be very popular, and have always been fully subscribed.

Panesar, J. (1998) 'Widening Participation for Asian Women', *Adults Learning*, December: 25-27.

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that it is necessary to increase the proportion of tutors and managers from black and ethnic minority communities, who will then act as role models for

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[8] Methodology: face-to-face interviews with 800 adults of Caribbean, Black African, Indian sub-continent and Chinese origin, sampled in localities of high ethnic minority clustering.

their communities. Education providers should offer a curriculum that is inclusive, culturally appropriate, relevant to a multi-racial society, and that values the personal experience, knowledge and cultural perspectives of black and ethnic minority groups. Education providers should also introduce anti-racist strategies in relation to delivery, student recruitment and support, and staff recruitment.

There are issues of content and curriculum specific to ethnic minorities. Particularly important are the needs of adults who, because it is not their first language, need to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. A working group on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) recommends that the DfES/LSC should look to an expansion of ESOL provision through colleges, Local Education Authorities and the voluntary and community sector (DfEE 2000d). It is estimated that there are between a half and one million adults needing this type of help. They are not a homogeneous or static group but a diverse and dynamic one which encompasses both long-settled minority ethnic communities and groups of refugees who have arrived in this country more recently. Potential learners range from those who may lack basic literacy and numeracy skills in their first language to those with a high level of education and qualifications in their home country, and from those who are not keen to re-enter formal education to those who are highly motivated to learn. In all cases, their principal need is to improve their command of English. All the evidence suggests that lack of fluency in English is a very significant factor in poverty and under-achievement in many minority ethnic communities, and a major barrier to employment and workplace opportunities and further and higher education.

However, in work with disadvantaged "target groups" such as ethnic minority adults, it is particularly important not to assume that they should mainly receive worthy learning programmes directed at them on the basis of official notions of "need". Consultation on the content of learning programmes should involve both groups and individuals, and it is not enough to consult individual community leaders, as the Further Education Unit (1989) points out, for example, in a study of black perspectives on adult education.

4.4.3

The Further Education Unit (1987) voiced wide-ranging criticism of existing provision of continuing education for adults with learning difficulties, drawing particular attention to the need for better multi-agency co-ordination. For

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Distance learning for disabled people in Sweden

The Asa folk high school (i.e. adult learning centre) in Sweden began developing new modes of open distance learning, since many disabled learners were unable to access classroom based learning.

The first initiative involved three teachers and a librarian, who worked as a close team in order to support the students. Students studied Swedish, Computer Science and Social Science. The course was delivered via a combination of classroom based activities and distance learning, but no written manual was used, and instead students were encouraged to use *FirstClass* electronic conferences, which enabled them to organise their time as they wished.

The second initiative was borne of student concerns relating to the legal position of disabled students. A student centred course was developed entitled 'Studies for democracy and change', which aimed to give participants an understanding about local democracy, and how to initiate change. Students undertook practical activities from which they learned how to change policy. For example, one group of students keen to change the law regulating eligibility for personal assistance contacted the Ministry of Social Affairs, and became involved with a preliminary enquiry paving the way for new legislation in relation to this issue. After both these empowering initiatives had been implemented, the confidence of many of the disabled students had increased.

The ultimate goal of the Asa folk high school initiatives was to enable participants to enter the labour market, or progress to further study, and indeed a majority of students who participated in the two initiatives are now in employment, or engaged in education. Five students have joined a third Asa initiative, which centres on training disabled participants for careers in web design. This work is suitable for disabled people, because it can be home based, freelance and flexible.

Source: Svensson, I. (1999) 'Open Distance Learning with Disabled Students', *Lifelong Learning in Europe*, 3: 165-167.

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example, analysis of learning needs 'may have to be increasingly regarded as an inter-agency team exercise'. However, according to Sutcliffe and Jacobsen

(1998) there are still only isolated examples of comprehensive provision in this area. Moreover, funding for such provision is often short-term and especially vulnerable to cuts. Some commentators argue that learning services for people with disabilities or learning difficulties tend to have an ethos of "normalisation" and to place limits on who can be a learner and what she or he can learn (Stuart and Thomson 1995; Baron, Riddell and Wilkinson 1997). Institutions providing learning opportunities for adults with learning difficulties tend to specialise in provision for a small number of specific difficulties/conditions, rather than providing for all marginalised groups, however, a small number of colleges have developed a fully inclusive approach and provide learning activities for adults with a wide variety of learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual learners with multiple disadvantages/ disabilities find it especially difficult to access appropriate learning

Beacon Award Winner: Llandrillo College

Llandrillo College was joint winner of the 1998/99 Professor John Tomlinson Award for Inclusive Learning. This is awarded for developments in provision for the needs of students with learning difficulties/disabilities.

Llandrillo's Vocational Preparation Course for students with learning difficulties has been running since 1991. The special features of this course include; individually tailored timetables for students, student-centred roll-on, roll-off programmes, appropriate and flexible support for students both in college and during periods of work experience, weekly one-to-one tutorials, no age restrictions and realistic working hours.

Pamela was 33 when she began the Vocational Preparation Course. She wanted to work in catering, and tutors developed a timetable for her that encompassed work experience in the kitchen of a local nursing home, and attendance on a mainstream NVQ Food Preparation and Cooking Course.

Three years later Pamela has gained several certificates including NVQ Level 1 Food Preparation and Cooking, and the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate. Pamela was also offered a permanent job at the nursing home where she worked.

Source: 'Examples of good practice', *Adults Learning* January 2000: 23-25

opportunities. Learning difficulties such as those caused by poor short-term

memory, poor sequencing skills or language dysfunction require specialist high-quality teaching. Currently, this is not available to many learners because of a shortage of skilled and qualified teachers (DfEE 2000e).

The outreach activities of colleges and other mainstream institutions may in some circumstances be aimed not just at learners, but also at staff of other organizations, or carers (Sutcliffe 2000). Barker (1995) addresses how learning opportunities are provided (or denied) to Day Centre users with disabilities or learning difficulties. Many Day Centre users were considered to be unsuitable candidates for learning opportunities by Day Centre staff, and/or their carers (who were often unaware of the nature of the FE provision available), and were thus not offered learning opportunities, whilst Day Centre staff felt

The Archer Project, Sheffield

The Archer Project was established in 1994 by Sheffield Cathedral, with the intention of working with people in the city centre who were rough sleepers, needed tenancy support, had mental health or dependency problems, or were in need of companionship and support. A partnership was formed with the WEA, and the curriculum evolved by offering 'tasters', and by identifying the needs and interests of project beneficiaries. In 1998, the project obtained lottery funding, and a half -time education development officer was engaged to formulate an educational development plan. The resultant strategy has focused on building a mixed programme of short courses, which both responds to, and creates demand. The programme has included a focus on group learning; through European funding the WEA has also been able to offer provision to extremely small groups, which has been essential to overcoming some of the barriers faced by the learners. The Archer Project has provided learning opportunities to many homeless people that would have been otherwise unavailable, which has both improved their immediate lives, and opened up longer term opportunities for participation in learning activities.

Source: Miskin, J. (1999) 'Help the Homeless', *Adults Learning,* May: 25-26.

obliged to respect the wishes of other users who stated that they did not want to attend FE college. The decision with respect to whether or not a Day

Centre user attends FE college should be an informed choice, and it is therefore vital that those guiding the decision of potential learners have the necessary information for that task. FE colleges should therefore be integral to the decision making process, via outreach programmes.

4.4.4 Coare (1997) acknowledges that educational institutions have a commitment to providing 'second chance' education for working-class adults. However, outreach needs to go further, turning to those who are particularly hard to reach. Curricula in such settings need to be imaginative, offering learners the chance to develop the skills they need, whilst working within a framework that satisfies the demands of more traditional institutions.

4.4.5 Family learning[9] is another route back into education for adults with low basic skills, since for this group their aspirations for their children often act as a stronger motivator than any they may have for themselves. However it is not presented in the literature merely as a minority activity for the disadvantaged and socially excluded, but as a central element in the learning experiences of the whole population.

Alexander and Clyne (1995) emphasise the potential role of family learning as a facet of social policy, concluding that its prime importance lies in its capacity to develop those crucial skills, knowledge and values about personal and social roles and development which are no longer being automatically transmitted through family and community activity. The family is an ideal setting for this type of learning, being " often more intimate, intense and continuous than any other". They argue that lack of these personal and social skills results in poor parenting which in turn causes social problems, crime, mental illness, child abuse and underachievement. Investment as a preventative measure to support the universal provision of learning within the family would therefore benefit society as a whole as well as individual family members.

Reviewing the provision for parenting education they identify two strands: the development of initiatives to arrest the inter-generational cycle of deprivation, and the wider interest in parenting in the context of psychotherapy and

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[9] Family learning refers to "inter-generational learning based on kinship, however defined".

personal growth of more affluent groups. Broadly the participant groups are mothers and young children, with the role of fathers, and issues surrounding adolescents and the elderly being largely ignored. Looking to the future, they see developments in new technology resources for learning within the home as presenting further untold possibilities for family learning.

Family Learning in Essex 1999-2000

The Family Learning projects have covered literacy, numeracy and parenting. Each project was structured according to the needs of the parents/carers in the group. An example curriculum included sessions on play and games, books and print in the environment, the child's early writing, listening and talking with children, the computer, First Aid the Literacy Hour, and healthy eating. Projects were arranged into joint and separate sessions, and a variety of teaching approaches were used, including role-play, visits, practical activities, discussion, audio-visual presentations, worksheets and paired work.

Significant outcomes were achieved, such as communication skills, making new friends, gaining knowledge about how to help their children, and improving their own literacy and numeracy skills. Relationships with their children benefited, ("I've got more patience now") and the course helped them to identify school as belonging to them.

Many participants achieved accreditation, for example Wordpower (Entry level and Levels 1 and 2); Numberpower ; First Aid Attendance Certificate; Certificate of Attendance; Elementary Certificate in English; National Profile Scheme in IT.

A high proportion expressed their intention of going on to further study in RSA Maths, English, GCSE Maths, English, computer skills, Improve your Maths,and Brush up Your English. After one Family Literacy project all participants joined a Family Numeracy project. All twelve participants from another project continued on a computer course at the local adult community college.

Source: Essex County Council *Family Learning in Essex 1999-2000*

Government has up to now prioritised the role of family learning in raising standards in schools by allocating Standards Fund resources for LEA family literacy and numeracy initiatives. The rationale for these projects is the known

correlation between parental literacy and numeracy levels and the achievement of their children. In these projects parents learn themselves and learn how to support their children's learning. Groups targeted were in areas of social deprivation with low educational attainment and participation.

Evaluation of pilot studies for this initiative showed very clear benefits for both adults and children. (Brooks *et al.,*1996, NFER and Basic Skills Agency 1998).   Among the benefits to adults were significant improvements in literacy and numeracy, growth in confidence and development of social skills, increased involvement in their child's school and progression to further learning. (70% of the literacy group were doing a further course twelve weeks after the course finished.) A further benefit was an improvement in communication between parents and children. Furthermore, these gains were shown to be at least and for some improved nine months afterwards. There was a further pilot study (Brooks, G. et al. 1999) extending the model to linguistic minority groups, and older children (Years 4 and 7). This was found to be successful for the linguistic minorities in the sample (mainly Urdu and Punjabi speakers) and families with children in year 4, but not for the secondary aged children, largely because of problems retaining parents on the courses, and because of the very different circumstances of secondary schools.

It was acknowledged however that there had been under-representation of fathers in the pilot groups, for example in the literacy groups 96% of participants were women.   (The courses had actually functioned very effectively as women's access courses.)

Ofsted (2000) found evidence of similar benefits when it came to inspect the results of the initiative in 28 local authorities. Their remit was to assess its overall contribution to raising achievement, widening participation and countering social exclusion. Generally the model was found to work well with groups who are beyond the basic level of literacy, but retaining hard-to reach groups was identified as a problem. Attendance on a preliminary programme was one successful way of building sufficient confidence to participate in the groups, since "the more disadvantaged or alienated the parent group, the longer it will take to gain their confidence and restore their self-esteem in advance of setting up a programme of structured learning". They also found

evidence that the model of joint parent child provision did not work well for ethnic minority needs. As in parenting education generally, there was a notable absence of fathers in family literacy and numeracy, and very little evidence of successful work beyond the primary phase (the difficulty of working in this way with self-conscious adolescents is recognised[10]). In conclusion the inspectors pay tribute to the dedication and creativity of practitioners, saving their main criticism for lack of strategic planning for family learning and inadequacies in funding.

Haggart (2000) provides a practical up-to-date summary of the whole area of family learning, and identifies some important principles requiring further attention, among which are:

- the need to consider wider roles than those of nurturing and caring which tend to be associated with the mother's role,
- the recognition that parenting responsibilities are often shared among a wide group of people including grandparents, siblings, and childcare workers
- the inter-relatedness of each aspect of family learning, for example the issues about family relationships that can be triggered by a course in family literacy.

Campaign for Learning (2000) considers that future policy on this area should look for ways of supporting the normal family activities that contribute to learning, "to make the most of what people enjoy doing and to make learning part of the family lifestyle".

4.4.6 *"I'm not interested in anything much now – I've done it all"*

> *Although the participants said they did not want to participate in local history/remembrance groups, once the subject had been broached it was difficult to stop the flow of recollections: the atmosphere changed; previously bored and distracted men became engaged and animated. There was laughter and a high level of group interaction.*
> Source*: Report on a focus group seeking views on learning from older men aged 70-85.*

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[10] We have found one or two good examples of successful practice in the case study material

Concerning age-related exclusion from learning, Williamson (1997) argues that our models of education have to be re-thought in the light of current social, demographic and technological changes. The 'front-end' model is inadequate as the preparation for life and work, given factors such as job obsolescence, the knowledge explosion and the increasing complexities of everyday life. In a learning society, barriers to learning such as time and energy, affordability, lack of confidence and ease of access would be broken down. Formal, non-formal and informal learning would all be valued. Education would be learner-centred, flexibly delivered and accessed, and lifelong. Many propositions on lifelong learning relate to keeping up with new ideas in order to avoid obsolescence, whether in the workplace or elsewhere. This tends towards devaluing life-experience and denying cultural continuity and a sense of history as the life force of society. These ideas may reinforce prevailing views about retirement and ageing as processes of withdrawal and decline and ignore the potential of the Third Age for both personal fulfilment and social contribution. Third-Age attitudes emphasise wholeness and the continuity of life and the importance of understanding life's experiences. Older people have often developed the ability to reflect on experience and to tell stories as a medium for expressing their accumulated wisdom. The University of the Third Age offers a collaborative model of learning centred on the idea of 'growth in ageing', and this needs to be incorporated into a more holistic and inclusive concept of lifelong learning.

4.4.7 Carlton and Soulsby (1999) maintain that investing in more and better learning opportunities for older people might reduce health and social welfare costs now and in the future by encouraging the retention of independence for longer. Soulsby (2000)[11] considers if the same arguments apply to people in their fourth age - a stage of life where there is some level of dependency on others for care. The number and proportion of older people in the United Kingdom is increasing - some 2.3 million people were aged 80 and over in 1997 - and this is expected to rise to 3 million by 2021. The patterns of care for older people are changing. A number of care and housing agencies suggest that residential and nursing care is likely to be replaced by more 'very

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[11] Methodology: a literature review and small-scale questionnaire survey complemented a series of visits between October 1998 and October 1999.

sheltered' housing schemes. In addition, care-planning strategies will attempt to keep people in their own homes for longer. The time seems ripe to consider the potential for reducing dependency and the resulting costs. The research found almost universal acceptance that engagement in learning and similar activities enhances quality of life, lessens dependency and improves well-being.

However, the study also revealed that Fourth Age learning provision is inconsistent. Examples of best practice and strategic thinking contrasted sharply with an overall lack of meaningful activity and variable quality amongst the activities that do exist. There are many agencies with responsibility for providing care and/or activity. The study demonstrated that this plethora of agencies makes it difficult to develop a coherent picture of collaborative working, standardised training and consistency of qualifications. The main conclusions are that:

- the personal development of frail and dependent older people through learning opportunities is largely being ignored. Their individuality and potential is not acknowledged.

- Where activities are beginning to happen in private sector institutions it is often because there is a dawning realisation that such engagement reduces dependency and the concomitant costs and is also an effective marketing tool.

- Whilst funding is the most commonly quoted barrier by many institutions to making provision, several of those consulted felt the need for attitudinal change to be more important than more resources.

- Any meaningful improvement in care provision that enshrines learning and personal development requires dialogue between various sectors and agencies – in particular, those in health, housing, social care and education. However this joined-up approach is only beginning to touch care in later life. The multi-sectoral approach currently lacks co-ordination, rationale and planned funding.

- There is a lack of common understanding of the terms used to describe older people in care settings, and some of the issues discussed here. This confusion over terms may

- prevent or delay the development of collaborative services that enhance the personal development of older people in care settings.

- Equally, with the provision of activities coming from so many different agencies, there is little agreement on standards, assessment, qualifications and training of staff delivering activities.

- The curriculum - as planned and subsequently delivered – is only infrequently subject to any rigorous evaluation.

- In many institutional settings where the curriculum is delivered by care staff, they have little training to do so. Similarly, for many activity organisers, the entertainment of the resident is seen by their managers to be their responsibility alone, and not within the remit of other care staff. Learning activity may be seen as an 'add-on' exercise, with the delivery and learning outcomes not being shared with any of the staff, volunteers or residents' families. However, there are many examples of good practice.

Learning for the Housebound

The Housebound Learners' Project was set up in 1988 to provide free adult education for housebound people, the majority of whom are elderly, in Wandsworth. Each week a volunteer attends a free class at one of the centres of South Thames College in a subject of interest and then passes on what has been learnt to a housebound person. Feedback and opinion from the housebound learner is fed into the class the following week. The Project Director ensures compatibility between volunteer (for whom training is provided) and learner. Courses usually last for 2 hours and run for 10 weeks, with about 8 courses running each year. Where possible visits for volunteer and learner are arranged to places with relevance to the subject studied. Funding has been obtained form NLCB and other sources to support the work. Age Concern Wandsworth, the Multiple Sclerosis Society and the Carers' Centre refer potential students to the project.

Source: Soulsby, J. (2000) *Fourth Age Learning Report* London: DfEE

4.4.8 Rural learning calls for a tailored approach to analysing and meeting needs. Of course, much of the learning content will be the same as in urban settings. However, because of the distances between people's homes and the nearest learning facility, it is important to take advantage of what is available and take an imaginative approach to the curriculum. Norfolk County

Agricultural College has transformed itself into Easton College and now covers (in addition to agriculture) business studies, countryside management, floristry, interior design, equestrian courses and rural engineering (Payne 2000). Many Rural Community Councils run Community Development courses. Skills relevant to volunteering are the main focus. Sometimes there is a specific practical end such as a campaign to save a village post office.

4.5 Conclusion

4.5.1 In discussing why some people do not want to take part in learning activities, we have drawn a distinction between attitudes to learning which may have deep roots in personal history, and practical obstacles which may be overcome with imagination and (usually) funding. We have outlined why, if the learner does not come to the tutor, the tutor must go to the learner; or set up vivid learning opportunities in non-standard locations; or make uses of ICT which exploit its potential rather than merely transferring paper-based material into an electronic medium. Finally we have outlined deficiencies in current provision for some specific groups in the population, and suggested approaches for those groups which have been found to work.

5. Achieving coherent provision

In promoting coherence across the range of adult learning opportunities, there are issues for local authorities in making links between services that contribute to adult learning such as libraries, sports, arts, economic and social services, and local facilities such as schools and community centres. More widely, organisations having a concern with ACL range from educational providers, to intermediaries such as TECs and to voluntary and community groups of all kinds. It is easy enough to praise the idea of partnership, but there are substantial issues to work through, including the implications of different funding regimes.

5.1 Coherence within LEAs

5.1.1 York Consulting (2000) conclude on the basis of a comprehensive survey that for lifelong learning, local authorities are much more than education departments. A strength is that they engage learners also through economic development, social services and 'most significantly of all, their leisure services'. Smaller numbers of authorities also cite their libraries and housing departments as involved in the provision of learning opportunities for adults. The extent of conscious coherence within LEAs is less clear. No authority responding to the York Consulting survey appeared to have produced a plan covering the learning opportunities offered through all its departments. However, Capey (1999) describes a strategic process within an authority, and illustrates the scope of activities within an LEA's direct control that can be brought together to enhance its capacity. The example is the unitary authority of Torbay that had recently come into being. The authority set up a steering group to review its community education provision, comprising: a member of the Education Committee; the Head of Personal and Community Services, two Community Education Officers including a youth worker, five head teachers, the Heads of the Library and Museum Services, the Head of Children's Services in the Social Services Directorate, and a representative of the Association of Primary Schools. The group's remit covered adult continuing learning, children and families, and youth work. The organising principle here was 'community' rather than 'adulthood'. Nevertheless, coherence along these lines is directly relevant to family learning, a key component of ACL.

5.2 Wider coherence

5.2.1 Hutchinson and Campbell (1998) draw together some general lessons about partnership working in the education and training context. There is no single definition of the term, but partnerships should bring together a coalition of interests; develop common aims; and build a strategy to achieve these by sharing risks, resources and skills. Motivators for organisations to engage in partnership include risk reduction, enlightened self-interest and leverage of resources. Partnerships need not last; they can fail of course, but they may also successfully complete their work and consciously decide to dissolve. The critical success factors are:

- clear objectives and commitment to an agreed strategy;
- focusing on the people in the partnership;
- having results-oriented procedures; and
- Recognition that partners may compete as well as collaborate.

'Policy synergy' – effectiveness improved by new approaches – is more significant than 'resource synergy' – efficiency gains from co-ordination of resources. Baert (2000) echoes this point: the demand for collaboration and coherence comes not merely from a need for efficiency, but from the scale and complexity of the challenges - unemployment, social exclusion and the marginalisation of low-skilled groups - which by their nature require integrated responses.

Groombridge (2000) says that the concept of 'the Learning City' shows promise for the formation of policy and provides an effective context for advances in practice; and that it fits with the reforms announced in the White Paper, *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE 1999a). A Learning City:

- promotes knowledge and competence not only in individuals throughout their lives, but also in institutions, businesses and the community;
- requires regional and civic strategies and the cost-effective combining of budgets and resources;
- encourages co-operation between the formal educational system and private and voluntary organisations;
- is supported by media and communications and ICT in particular;
- tries to identify what people may wish or need to know;

- audits what is on offer, assesses the extent to which these interests and needs are being met and tries to facilitate movement from one stage or part of the education system to another.

Learning Centre Network, Sheffield

CITINET, Sheffield's network of learning centres, was created in 1998 as a single learning network embracing local employers, community organisations, trade unions, college sites, schools and libraries. CITINET centres are owned and operated by different organisations working together in an inclusive partnership that is 'as habitable for small community organisations as for the bigger players'. CITINET has defined three levels of learning centre: Learning Information Points where learners can access basic information about what is available and get supported access to internet-based information or telephone hotlines; Learning Access Centres which offer information, sign-posting and some delivery, typically containing a handful of PCs connected to the Internet; Learning Centres which offer a larger network of internet-accessing computers and a wider range of support services, including childcare, guidance and refreshments. Each level of CITINET centre is defined by a set of agreed quality standards, which ensure that learners can expect the same service levels and resources. In the interests of inclusiveness all organisations, including the smaller ones, are assisted to achieve the standards. The CITINET network provides a structure to develop the use of ICT and online learning and has a strategy for developing an IT infrastructure that addresses the uneven distribution and ownership of IT facilities across the city.

Source: Wynne, A. (1999) 'A learning city', *Adults Learning*, 11,3: 18-20

The concept of the learning city as discussed in a useful 'toolkit' document (DfEE, 1998b) is relatively recent and was promoted by an OECD study in 1992 that became a major influence on the development of the UK's Learning City Network. The Network has grown steadily since 1996 from a small core of supporters to around 20 affiliated 'Cities'. It is an important forum for debate on the potential of partnerships to link lifelong learning with regeneration and local economic development. The Network's research, development and dissemination activities are said to constitute a significant contribution to widening participation in lifelong learning. The toolkit identifies three phases in creating a Learning City partnership: building (self-

explanatory); moving towards shared understanding (developing a shared vision, participative planning, dedicated budgets and joint systems); and cycles of learning (feedback and review loops, annual conference, evaluation, and citizen/user juries).

East Leeds Family Learning Centre

The East Leeds Family Learning Centre (ELFLC)'s aim is to address the two key issues of unemployment and poor educational attainment. In addition to work with local schools, they run a number of projects for local unemployed people. Highly successful partnerships with local employers have been formed in order to link local people to local job opportunities, and this work is supported by the development of skills through a wide range of adult education and training provision. For example, the Seacroft Parnership is a partnership with Tesco, a major employer involved in the redevelopment of the Seacroft Shopping Centre. 500 jobs for local people on programmes at ELFLC were guaranteed, subject to successful completion of an agreed programme covering not only basic skills, but workplace skills including confidence building, and customer liaison techniques. This has transformed the lives of many local people, enabling the long-term unemployed to get back into work – one man aged 34 had never had a full-time job before in his life.

> The project has gained national and international recognition as an example of successful public/private sector partnership. Similar partnerships are being arranged with other local employers such as the local Hospital Trust.
>
> *Source*: East Leeds Family Learning Centre publicity materials

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5.2.3 The difficulties in achieving coherence in central funding and support for Lifelong Learning (and by implication ACL specifically) are described in a DfEE report (Quality and Performance Improvement Dissemination Unit 1999)[12]. Tensions arise in partnerships where partners bring in their own agendas too strongly. Partners are bound by different funding regimes, which sometimes lack flexibility. Previous policies encouraged competition rather than partnership and joint planning. Organisations sometimes cover different geographical areas. Funding arrangements for lifelong learning have caused

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[12] Based on 88 interviews with staff of TECs, Careers Services, local authorities, Government Offices for the Regions, FE Colleges, employers and others.

difficulties: short-termism; a myriad of small pots of money with different criteria; uncertainty about future funding flows; the preference for development funding compared with support for sustainability; and the prevalence of competitive bidding exercises. This piecemeal approach leads to extra bureaucracy and cost in getting funding; inability to sustain good work from core funding after development is completed; being unable to pursue long-tem impact; and more difficulty in developing a long term strategy.

Crosson (1999) asserts that this lack of funding flexibility affects older learners in particular, since FEFC and EU funding are allegedly slanted towards learning opportunities leading to qualifications. Hooper (2000) points out that the Learning and Skills Bill suggests that voluntary and community groups may be encouraged to access funding directly from the local Learning and Skills Council; and goes on to say that it is possible that many voluntary sector groups will experience difficulties in coping with the bidding processes of the LSCs; given the size and diversity of the voluntary sector, it is also possible that the LSCs themselves may succumb to 'bid sclerosis'. Local Authorities are, it is argued, in a position to act as a conduit in this process, acting as objective mediators between the LSCs and voluntary sector in planning and delivering lifelong learning.

Hillman (1998) summarises the proposals of the 1998 Green Paper *The Learning Age: a Renaissance for a New Britain* concerning coherence in funding. Individual Learning Accounts could act as a vehicle for an 'investment coalition' between the state, employers and individuals and as a mechanism for unifying the funding of post-compulsory education and training. They could be used to link education finance with other areas of welfare provision and could make use of new technologies, such as smartcards. If individuals are given greater responsibility for their learning, they should also gain greater control over the location, content and processes of their learning.

5.3 Formal Partnerships
5.3.1 Learning Partnerships are now established throughout England with the aim of improving the coherence of local post-16 learning, building on the experience of the FEFC-funded Widening Participation Strategic Partnerships (FEDA 2000). Typically (Summers 2000) a partnership covers an LEA area

or links a group of smaller LEA areas. Further education colleges, careers service companies, Training and Enterprise Councils, local authorities and schools, and a wide range of other local organisations and employers, as appropriate to each local area, are involved in the Partnerships. The DfES-sponsored website *www.lifelonglearning.co.uk* says that the Partnerships 'are supporting action to widen participation in learning, increase attainment, improve standards and meet the skills challenge, and are contributing to the Government's social inclusion and regeneration agendas', and adds that 'specifically they are developing local learning targets linked to the new National Learning Targets.' An early evaluation (focusing on processes rather than outcomes) of the nine learning partnerships in the East of England[13] (Barry and Walsh 2000) found that agreeing a joint plan had enabled partners to find, and act on, more opportunities for working together. This had particularly enhanced the involvement of the voluntary and community sectors. To ensure that no single interest dominates it is important to plan meetings jointly, and to choose an independent chair (such as an employer) rather than one from a sector of learning provision. The partnership should involve those on the front line and not be a mere consultation forum.

5.3.2 In addition, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Partnerships are now in place to improve the coherence of the service adults receive. The DfEE consultative document on IAG (DfEE 1999c) says that local partnerships should aspire 'to avoid competition between different local agencies, where that detracts from the quality of service available to local people. Effective local partnerships should amount to more than the sum of their parts and should include substantial participation by community and voluntary groups, which are often the most accessible agencies for local people.' An early evaluation of Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships[14] (Sims, Lines and Lewis, 2000) suggests that the partnerships are helping to bring about a more concentrated and collaborative identification of priority groups, their needs, and the range of local provision; and to stimulate

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[13] Methodology: comparative analysis of Learning Plans; semi-structured discussions with 3-5 key players in each Learning Partnership; and observation of partnership meetings.

[14] Methodology: case study visits (two rounds) to twelve partnerships; interviews with staff in constituent organisations; 50 client interviews.

outreach activity with disadvantaged groups. Of fifty clients interviewed, 35 had acted on the information and advice given, mostly by enrolling on education or training courses. There are doubts about initial take-up of IAG by learners, however: an evaluation of early development activity on Individual Learning Accounts (SWA Consulting 1999) found that (although local TEC projects ensured that information, advice and guidance was available on demand) where optional, take-up of IAG was 'fairly low'.

An example of partnership in action in the area of IAG (*Individual Learning News* Autumn 2000) is Sunderland's *The Learning Place*, which represents a partnership between Sunderland City TEC, City of Sunderland College, Sunderland City Council and the University of Sunderland. The centre houses the Sunderland adult guidance service and an Information Zone, containing literature on all aspects of careers, education and training. Clients also have access to a wide range of career software. Outreach provision in the community enables clients to access impartial information and advice without having to travel to the centre of the city.

5.3.3 Hunt (1999) gives an account of a failed experiment in local coherence and consultation. Between 1987 and 1994 Derbyshire County Council implemented a community education policy that involved employing over one hundred new professional community educators and the creation of 37 Community Education Councils (CECs). Members of CECs were drawn from the local community and had the task of overseeing the management of community education and administering a substantial part of the budget. The more successful CECs were those whose members were drawn from community groups that continued to exist in their own right and that represented a variety of backgrounds and interests. Many local people showed a genuine commitment to working together and attempted to make contact with, and disseminate information to, other groups and individuals. They tried to see that scarce financial resources were allocated fairly on the basis of local knowledge of need. CECs were weakened by uncoordinated recruitment and excessively large number of people at early meetings which were often dominated by political nominees. There was little or no subsequent training for members (or Chairs) resulting in poor conduct of some meetings, an over-use of 'jargon' and 'insider knowledge' and insufficient opportunity to discuss

wider educational issues or policy in relation to the allocation of bids. There was too much emphasis on 'doing' at the expense of reflection or the identification of individual and collective needs. There was a sense that the CEC areas were too wide and there was little contact between CECs. There was a lack of clarity about the relationships between, and the real powers of, the CECs, governing bodies and headteachers of schools, professional community education workers and the County Council, resulting in an increasing separation of interests.

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1 We have seen that there are powerful drivers behind the idea of partnership. Intractable problems in society need multi-faceted responses from those who provide opportunities for learning. Further, a lack of coherence and flexibility – especially in funding – limits the ability of organisations to develop serious and sustained approaches. There are early indications of the potential success of formal partnerships, in learning and in information, advice and guidance.

6. Discussion

6.1 The quality of the evidence

On the benefits of adult learning, there is more evidence in the social domain than in the economic domain. Some of the evidence on social benefits is rigorous, and there are examples of worthwhile studies at the local level. National studies of participation are generally reliable, and they confirm one another's results in relative terms (e.g. when comparing groups in the population) although the absolute levels differ because the various surveys use different definitions of "learning". Theoretical debates on the aims and objectives of lifelong learning policy are essentially interpretive in nature, and not susceptible to resolution through the deployment of evidence. Concerning practice in the field there is a significant body of studies which have gathered the experience of practitioners and placed it in an analytical framework. The best of these studies, such as those of Veronica McGivney, have gathered the information from *reflective* practitioners, through proper qualitative methods, and deployed it in a useful analytical framework. Some other studies go beyond the evidence in making assertions, or state what appear to be truisms. Unpublished 'grey' literature contains some vivid and inspiring examples, which generally need to be taken as read, though there are some examples of rigorous evaluation procedure.

6.2 The content of the evidence

The general impression emerging from the literature is of a mass system involving millions of learners, which nevertheless displays huge variety between localities in terms particularly of quantity, and to some extent of quality also. Despite a degree of vagueness about purpose and direction, and some unresolved problems in achieving coherent delivery and funding, there is an encouraging degree of optimism and creativity in the ACL "sector" which bodes well for its future in the era of the Learning and Skills Council.

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Appendix 1: Project Methodology

Search strategy

The methodology for the project was determined by the requirement to produce a review that would pull together current wisdom on what is happening and what works in adult and community learning. This necessitated gathering two distinct kinds of information:

- published sources on themes and current state of knowledge; and
- material on current practice exemplifying these issues, of sufficient variety to give a 'flavour' of the whole area of adult community learning to the target readership.

Methods were established for each of these areas; search strategies for identifying published material, and a mail-shot to practitioners. Material was then analysed thematically as agreed at the first steering group meeting.

Search strategies for obtaining published findings

We used several sources to obtain the main published findings in each area of the study. Some of these also included material on current practice.

Library database searches

The following library databases were searched:

BIDS

British Education Index

ERIC

These keywords were used:

Adult education

Continuing Education

Lifelong learning

Community Learning

Adult learners

Each of the above was then combined with a further set:

Ethnic minorities

Race

Disability

Leaning difficulties

Poverty
Social disadvantage
Older learners
Access
Participation
Recruitment
Partnerships
Outcomes
Progression

Hand searching of journals
In addition some journals were hand searched:
Adults Learning
Studies in the Education of Adults
Scottish Journal of Adult and Continuing Education
Journal of Access and Credit Studies
Journal of Lifelong Learning Initiatives
International Journal of Lifelong Education

Websites
Useful websites were identified using search engines and utilising links between sites, and by secondary references in other published material.

Sites we examined largely fell into one of several categories:

- organisations' sites, containing information about the organisation, occasionally reports on projects, but generally little detail of the kind we required for the review;
- databases of projects in the form of listings;
- academic sites giving abstracts and full papers, of a similar kind to the material obtained in the library database searches;
- practitioner-oriented sites, giving a lot of useful material and contacts.

We give a brief review of sites that are practitioner-oriented and therefore most likely to be of interest to the target readers in Appendix
Sites consulted were:

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium

http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/alnarc/

Adult Numeracy in Australia

http://sunsite.anu.ed.au/language-australia/numeracy/index.html

Adult Numeracy Network

http://www.std.com/anpn/

Adult Numeracy Themes

http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Resc/Educ/ANTindex.html

Adult Returners Key Skills (ARKS)

http://www.ed.ac.uk/~calark/arks/indexe.html

ALM

http://www.alm-online.org/

The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education

http://www.cdlr.tamu.edu/tcall/aaace/

The Association of Teachers of Mathematics

http://www.atm.org.uk/index.htm

Australian Council for Adult Literacy

http://www.acal.edu.au/

Basic Skills Agency

http://:www.basic-skills.co.uk

DfES: Lifelong Learning

http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk

Disability Now

www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Disability Rights Commission

http://www.drc-gb.org/drc/default.asp

Disabled People's International

http://www.dpi.org/

Education-line

http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/

European Basic Skills Network

http://www.eurobasicskills.org/

European Society for Research on the Education of Adults

http://www.helsinki.fi/jarj/esrea/

Further Education Development Agency (020 7436 0020)

http://www.feda.ac.uk/

FEDA is now known as the Learning and Skills Development Agency

http://www.lsagency.org.uk/

The Internet TESL Journal

http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/

Language and Literacy

http://educ.queensu.ca/~landl/main.htm

The National Grid for Learning: Inclusion

http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk/

The National Literacy Trust

http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/

New Horizons in Adult Education

http://www.nova.edu/~aed/newhorizons.html

NIACE

http:/www.niace.org.uk/

The National Centre for Family Literacy

http://www.famlit.org

Northamptonshire People First

www.peoplefirst.org.uk

Research And Practice in Adult Literacy

http://www.literacy.lancaster.ac.uk/rapal/rapal.htm

Skill

www.skill.org.uk

Internet fora

Initially one internet group was approached: The Academy of Human Resource Management (this was chosen partly in order to widen the search to the international level), and this yielded nine reponses from around the world, including a useful pointers to material from one published expert in the field. However, since it was rapidly apparent that we were already obtaining sufficient material through the other search activities, we did not extend this activity further.

Through the above activities we obtained the main published material for the review, as well as several good case study examples. To complement this, and gather a range of examples of practice exemplifying the key themes, we also

conducted a mail-out to organisations engaged in community-based learning across the regions.

Mail-shot

Letters were sent out explaining the aims of the project and requesting information on the key themes to:

- LEAs
- Community/Residential Colleges
- Further Education Colleges (Beacon status only)
- University extra-mural departments
- Local Learning Partnerships (except where the named contact was already included in another category)[15]
- Government Offices for the Regions

Altogether out of 384 recipients, we received 119 responses, including other organisations onto which our request had been passed, for example a local training organisation, or a museums service.

Respondent Organisation	Number of responses
Family learning Centre	1
FE College	3
Government Office for the Regions	1
LEA	63
Local Learning Partnership	6
Museum Education Service	2
National Organisation	4
TEC	14
Training Organisation	2
University	23
Total	119

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[15] To avoid annoyance to personnel who act in several capacities, we tried to avoid writing to any individual more than once.

The documents received include:

- Internal reports such as Adult Learning Plans and supplementary information detailing examples of activities currently being delivered,
- Personal responses from individuals outlining relevant projects, references to Useful websites or further contacts
- Reports of research projects undertaken by the organisation.

We have obtained a large amount of very relevant material which both supplements ideas and findings in the published sources and offers a wide variety of illustrative practice. (At the time of writing material is still coming in, and we intend to include further items in the final version of the report.) This material is referenced in the database, together with the contact names and details of respondents. A wide range of material was obtained:

LEA Adult Learning Plan
LEA Lifelong Learning Plan
Project report
Listing of activities
Annual Report of organisation
Publicity material

We are very grateful for the excellent response rate from busy people at very short notice, many of whom took the trouble to write a short report specially tailored to our request.

Analysis
As far as possible we assess the quality and credibility of published material, for example by giving sample sizes (where reported) for quantitative surveys. With the exception of a few evaluation studies, the unpublished sources cannot be critically weighed in this way since they are not framed in an academic or research format. Material was identified in the unpublished sources that either exemplified aspects of provision, or supplemented ideas

and issues contained in the published findings. We include a selection of case study material at Appendix 2, the inclusion criterion being solely the need to present as complete and varied a picture as possible. The contributions from organisations on the ground and reflective practitioners have added an important dimension to the review, enabling it to convey a fully contextualised picture of adult and community learning in England.

Appendix 2: case studies

Sources are given immediately below the example. Many are unpublished; these are given in all italics. Published sources are in standard format.

Hard to Reach Groups

Late-Night learning and City Sounds, Nottingham
The Late-Night Learning programme is designed in consultation with African-Caribbean men aged 19-25, targeting those with low basic skills. It integrates teaching on basic skills with DJ techniques and sampling, and the courses run from midnight to 2am. City Sounds is a similar project targeting disaffected young men aged 19-25 which has achieved 100 per cent progression to FE programmes.
Nottingham City Council project report

Circuit training for young Asian offenders, Nottingham
Courses on circuit training are offered to young Asian offenders in venues around the city. They have links to professional gymnasiums.
Nottingham City Council project report

Spruce up for Spring,
The Spruce up for Spring project has been designed, in consultation with the women residents of hostels for the homeless, to teach interior design, sewing, soft-furnishing skills etc. The women are enabled to improve their surroundings and learn new skills and self-confidence.
Nottingham City Council project report

Somerset Dance Connections
This course aims to encourage young adults, particularly men, to develop physical and communication skills, team working and enhanced self-esteem through the medium of dance.
Somerset Local Education Authority Adult Learning Plan 2001 - 2002

Women Working in the Sex Industry, Somerset

This is a project led by Somerset County Youth Services, which aims to help women working in the sex industry develop methods for gaining greater control over themselves and their lives. The project has worked in collaboration with the local FE College, Somerset Sexual Health Service and a training and development centre.

Somerset Local Authority Lifelong Learning Development Plan

Language support for refugees, Stockport

Stockport English Language Service has worked in partnership with Social Services, Health Trusts and other organisations to provide free English language tuition for Kosovar refugees.

Stockport Local Education Authority, English as an Additional Language Provision for Schools and Adults

Young Offenders Institute Portland

HMYOI Portland is a training establishment for male young offenders. They are often underachievers and suffer from a lack of motivation, confidence, self- esteem and expectations. The approach involves mixing traditional learning formats with more informal ones that address the context and circumstances where the learning activities take place.

Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Laptops in the community

Laptops have been used in community settings to encourage participation in ICT learning by hard-to-reach groups. Oasis is a club run for elderly people at a church venue. There was an excellent response when the laptops were brought in to assess potential interest. One person has since signed up for a course at the local community college. Laptops have also been used with a group recovering from drug and alcohol addiction, on a one-to-one basis. At a Cancer Support Centre they have been used to encourage cancer sufferers to express their feelings and needs via the medium of information technology.

In general laptops have been found to be very beneficial in reaching new learners in the community. They have been found to be less threatening than PCs to new users and can be set up in a group rather than around the room.
Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Department of Community Development and Lifelong Learning

Examples of family learning

Family learning in the workplace - **Dagenham**
An Employee Development and Assistance Programme is run jointly by Ford and the Trade Unions. Its aim is to extend existing provision for Ford employees to the wider community, especially those taking a first step back into learning. Courses for Ford family members are organised in off-site locations, and there are on-site Saturday 'stress-buster' courses for employees to attend with a family member, covering health issues and relaxation techniques.
Grow through Learning Project Report September 1998 – March 1999

Positive Parenting
A Positive Parenting programme uses ongoing consultation to meet the particular needs of parents of African-Caribbean, Asian and dual heritage children, and address their major concerns.
Nottingham City Council project report

Young Mothers
Courses for young women new to motherhood have been run in collaboration with the WEA, recruiting young mothers for sessions with crèche facilities, on personal care; managing babies and toddlers; play work and learning through play.
Essex County Council Family Learning in Essex 1999-2000

Chinese family learning in Sunday schools
This course aims to support the Chinese community in their attempt to improve the quality of learning opportunity offered to their children through

their Sunday Chinese school. Parents work alongside the Chinese teacher as classroom assistants with the community's children.

Somerset Local Authority Adult Learning Plan 2001 – 2002

Laptop Learning in Worcestershire

Laptop Learning, part of a NIACE laptop initiative, provided free-of-charge basic ICT courses of ten weeks, in community venues including family centres and first schools. The location in a school enabled easy access to the course for mothers with children at the school, as they did not have to make special arrangements in order to attend. Among the benefits of the course, students reported that it had given them the confidence to help their children with schoolwork, and that they now felt better prepared for returning to work.

Worcestershire County Council

The Share Project for Punjabi mothers

This project aimed at reaching Punjabi speaking mothers of school aged children, in order to involve them in supporting their children's learning at home. Attendance was almost 100 per cent and 7 parents received Open College accreditation. The project used interpreters who worked with tutors.

A Fair Deal for Learning: Campaign Update Issue no 1

The Eating In Project

This is a collaborative project with Social Services, an FE college and NCH Family Centres, for residents on a housing estate, targeting young and single parents on a low income and non-traditional learners in particular. The aim was to enable learners to provide nutritious, economic and interesting diets for families, and the programme included cooking, budgeting, basic skills and cultural awareness.

Somerset Local Authority Lifelong Learning Development Plan

Family Learning in Secondary Schools

This is a relatively rare example of a family learning project with secondary aged children. The project focused on ICT, and the school students acted as

mentors to support the adults in their learning. This proved very successful for both groups.

Rooks Heath High School, Harrow, North West London Learning Partnership 99/00 – Learning Plan Activity – Narrative.

Basic skills for the workforce and their families

The TUC workforce development programme aims to promote education and training through the Trade Union movement, building on the Bargaining on Skills initiative. It targets employees and their families from those industrial sectors that are undergoing significant change, with an emphasis on developing basic skills.

TUC Bargaining on Skills Initiative

Families learning together

Hillingdon Adult Education Service offers families the opportunity to learn together in a wide range of subject areas, for example: Computing, Spanish, Sculpture, Arts, Drama, Family Cookery, Family Mosaic.

London Borough of Hillingdon Education Service

Family Learning with British Airways

A family learning with British Airways course gives older children (8-13) and their parents the chance to access exciting facilities away from the school environment. This is a Saturday afternoon course covering communication, environment and computing work, with alternate weeks spent at the British Airways Learning Centre. It staffed by adult education, children and families and BA personnel.

Hillingdon Adult Education Service

Art for All

Community arts projects provide some of the most interesting and stimulating learning experiences. A group from a family centre worked with an artist to create a mosaic for the new family centre building. This involved not only training in art skills but also an investigation of Roman mosaic techniques.

Gloucestershire County Council, Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999 – 2000

Digging for Dreams

A Family Learning Weekend had the theme of time travel, and this linked with the opening of an Egyptian exhibition: Digging for Dreams. There was other historical work on tracing the history of your house, and displays of local history photographs. Other activities included music, storytelling, drama and stage make-up.

Croydon Family Learning Forum (n.d.): Evaluation report.

Family learning in prison

A family learning project for women prisoners aimed to give them the opportunity to think about their role in their children's education and ways in which they could support them in their school work. The children joined their mothers on Saturday mornings, for activities around books and literacy. The prison officer present at the sessions commented that she had noticed a marked improvement in the children's speech and general confidence, and felt that both children and prisoners had benefited greatly. There is to be a similar project in a prison for young men, which enables mothers and children to join fathers for Saturday sessions, read books, play games and have lunch together.

South Bank University (1999) 'Family Learning in Prison' Strong Words: Communities learning together Issue 1

Family Maths at Ford Motors, Dagenham.

This aimed to engage parents (predominantly fathers) and children in working together on maths topics and activities. Unlike other models, it did not focus on maths deficiencies in either parent or child, but rather on fostering a positive, problem-solving approach to all maths learning. Families took part in a range of maths activities linked to National Curriculum areas, applying basic numeracy skills to tasks easy to replicate in the home. Parents were able to demonstrate to the children exactly how they applied number in the workplace, thus underscoring the importance and relevance of maths.

South Bank University, Language and Literacy Unit Annual Report 1998

Examples of locations

The learning minibus - **Bristol**
The Foundation Studies Unit at Bristol City College has a Learning Minibus that tours local estates providing information about learning opportunities. The minibus is equipped with a number of computers, so that potential learners can experiment with CD-ROM technology.
Clark, S. (1996) 'Access – The Heart of Adult Education', *Adults Learning*, September: 11-12.

Food, plants and green spaces –learning in allotments
This involves training and information sharing between the generations, with the aim to progress to further learning and to improve nutrition. Courses are run at allotments in the locality.
Somerset Local Authority Adult Learning Plan 2001 – 2002

Knowsley Community College, Merseyside
Knowsley College serves one of the most deprived areas in the country. The college works closely with the community. In 1999/2000 outreach co-ordinators from the college recruited around 4,800 LINC (Learning in Neighbourhood Centre) outreach students and organised programmes in 137 venues including primary schools, church halls, community centres, elderly persons' homes and a large supermarket. Courses include initiatives such as Maths for Mums, French and Computers for the Confused. Basic training is also offered for those seeking employment as Classroom Assistants or Volunteer Tutors with local education providers.
Knowsley Community College, Merseyside

Getting into the Past, Norfolk
Getting into the Past is a course devised by Adult Education and the Museum Education Service in Norfolk for non-traditional adult learners, aiming to capture their interest and commitment to learning. It develops students' basic skills, confidence and ability to become adult learners, as well as helping them to understand and appreciate the past. It also provides a route to other

learning opportunities. The students use artefacts and documentation to explore the history of food, engaging in individual and group work, discussion and practical exercises. The course is led by a museum educator and an adult basic education tutor. A similar course is planned in the area of textiles and fashion.

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service Educational Department

Library Learning Centres

Library Learning Centres aim to improve employability and skills levels, allowing people not only to progress into the workplace abut also enabling them to use ICT to access information that will support them in their everyday lives. All centres offer taster sessions, which are backed up by staff support, and internet quizzes that allow people to put their newly acquired skills to the test.

Four centres have been opened in 2000, and 1200 new learners have registered, studying a range of courses from beginners' computer taster sessions through to computer programming, and from customer care to performance management. All offer a vast range of online courses and open learning materials. Cambridge Careers Guidance has a permanent presence in two of the centres.

Cambridgeshire Library Service

Learning on the doorstep

This project offers an advice and guidance service for unemployed Asian women aged 19+, to enable them to obtain accurate and appropriate information about career progression routes within training and employment.

Its distinctive provision is the use of a specially adapted bus, complete with crèche and resources/computer area, which enables information and advice to be easily accessed by women on an informal and spontaneous basis, whenever the bus is in their area. It is staffed entirely by Asian women, (including the bus driver) who between them speak the range of Asian languages of the Oldham Asian community.

Training is also available on the bus, including spoken English classes, Computers @Work, and Introduction to Childcare, and Business Awareness. The Bus also occasionally hosts other local organisations, e.g. health agencies, to enable them to provide information and help in the communities. Services

are free to the users, and the project also pays travel expenses in full and contributes towards the cost of childcare.

R.V.A. Opportunities for Women Ltd, Oldham; The Asian Women's Project – doorstep outreach.

Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust

Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust employs a team responsible for learning which addresses issues of accessibility, lifelong learning and social inclusion. An existing art activities programme of workshops, lectures and short courses has been expanded to develop a broader audience and attract non-traditional gallery and museum visitors. All participants in events are invited to provide feedback which informs future developments.

Hague, S. 'Learning opportunities in Sheffield Galleries', *Individual Learning News,* Autumn 2000, p. 21

Learning in libraries - tackling the basic skills gap in Camden

Libraries are a good venue for the hard to reach learner, being perceived as friendly and accessible and having a long association with learning. Learning centres have therefore been set up in local libraries as part of an initiative to tackle unemployment in the area. There are also satellite centres working with the main library hub. Learning support is provided by the local college, together with basic skills support and a number of taught programmes in basic skills. Learndirect materials are available online.

Camden Adult Learning Plan

Golden Lane Community Education Centre

This offered a programme of adult education classes, family learning opportunities, homework clubs, and youth and play schemes. It operates in close collaboration with the local leisure centre, YMCA and nearby playgroups and schools.

Adult Education in the City of London

Health Centre project

The Adult Education Service has joined with GPs, health workers and voluntary organisations to pilot a project held in a local health centre, aimed at teaching about basic health issues. These include: first aid, fitness, exercise,

complementary medicine and yoga for parents and children. There are plans to extend this work to parenting and family literacy, classes on healthy eating and dieting, and courses for those who experience back pain.

Hounslow Community Education, (1999) The contribution of the Adult Education and Training Service to Community Development in Hounslow

Places of worship

Places of worship including temples have been used for the delivery of English classes to groups of individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds for whom this is an additional language. The Wolverhampton English for Adults scheme has worked with the Adult Education Service to co-ordinate locally accessible opportunities near to where people live and in places that are familiar and in which people feel comfortable. It has been found that success in this area often leads to individuals moving into less familiar environments to continue with their learning.

Wolverhampton LEA Adult Learning Plan April 2001 – June 2002

Examples of partnerships

Staffordshire University Lichfield Centre

This is a new learning environment created through a partnership between Staffordshire University and Tamworth and Lichfield College, with equal financial commitment from each, and receiving capital cost funding from the European Union, and ongoing funding from the ERDF.

The centre is purpose-built, enabling integration of the entire physical infrastructure to create a flexible learning environment. A big advantage of this is the absence of directly inherited cultures of learning, which can militate against the principles of lifelong learning.

Staffordshire University Lichfield Centre

The Moorlands Telecottage, Staffordshire

A telecottage is a rural site that provides a range of information technology facilities for the local population, including computers, printers, business software, and fax machines, with a social area for users to have discussions. Technical support is provided from a qualified supervisor.

The Moorlands Telecottage has been established within a community education framework, and is a key resource in the delivery of adult education. It is delivered through a partnership between Moorlands Community Education Project, Leek College and the Staffordshire TEC.

It has provided training opportunities in information technology and computing, and a specific vocational qualification in teleworking has been developed .

Learners are offered free access to self-tuition programmes, and short courses and evening classes are also run. The Staffordshire libraries STEP-IN computer-based information and advice point has been incorporated into the Telecottage.

Staffordshire County Council "Lifelong Learning in Staffordshire Eight Case studies" 1999

Learning Towns

County Durham has successfully worked in partnership to develop and build a number of Learning Towns . These operate according to local needs, and are run by Learning Town Partnerships, which have a formal constitution and elected officers. Examples of activities are: a learning shop, which offers careers guidance, C.V. workshops, interview skills etc. for job applicants, ICT workshop, town-wide network of study clubs, website, and course directory following an audit of learning provision. A survey of learning needs has been conducted.

Durham City Council

Examples of analysing barriers and needs
"I'm too old to learn" (man aged 27)

Adult learning in Hartlepool

A needs analysis was carried out on focus groups consisting of representative sets of individuals in communities with known low participation. The work yielded rich and detailed information on participants' attitudes, perceptions and aspirations. Reasons for lack of participation in learning activities were: lack of information, irrelevance of courses, embarrassment about lack of skills in some areas and fear of being stigmatised for lack of basic skills, unwillingness to enter any learning that seemed to be connected with schools

due to negative school experiences. Gender differences were found in all four research projects. Men displayed a reluctance to become involved in any activity without a direct economic benefit. The terminology of adult learning was also found to be alienating to many potential participants. The work established the range of interests and needs that could be met by learning provision. For example in the ethnic minority group a very strong need among the young women was to combat the isolation they were experiencing in the home, whereas for the men's group an economic rather than social rationale was predominant. Possible areas which could be developed into learning opportunities were identified, for example the interest in fitness and gym-style activities among young men in particular.

Hartlepool Borough Council (1999) Adult learning in Hartlepool: Four reports examining the different needs of communities in Hartlepool

Analysis of progression routes

This project investigated the progression routes of WEA students on Return to Learn courses. Information was collected through questionnaires, interviews and visits to courses. It was found that although students' reasons for joining courses are often mixed and may not initially stem from any interest in progression, by the end of the course a large majority are interested in progression. These students felt that accreditation of learning would both provide them with a sense of achievement and facilitate any progression they made. Progression was seen in terms of further courses by 70% of the students, but for a sizeable group it meant developing participation in community activities, and for others getting paid employment. Crucially, it is the confidence gained on the Return to Learn course which often provides the impetus to move on to new challenges. The main barriers to progression were perceived as being a lack of qualifications and lack of knowledge of what was available.

Where Next? Project Report on Progression Routes for Adult Learners, Workers' Educational Association, Cheshire, Merseyside and West Lancashire District

Non-accredited learning in the East Riding of Yorkshire

The East Riding of Yorkshire Community Education Service conducted a small case study into the value of non-accredited learning (forming part of the

evaluation process to which the Community Education Service was committed under the Lifelong Learning Development Plan). It concluded that non-accredited learning is important for many students, for whom accreditation is simply not relevant. One example cited is a student with mental and physical health problems on a confidence-building course who described her learning experiences as 'a lifeline', enabling her to move forward in her life:

> "From your point of view, it might be sticking here and not moving on, but for me health issues are part of my life. This sort of programme is constantly a matter of moving on.'

The study found that whilst some students were indifferent as to accreditation, others were positively hostile; one student reported that she changed classes every year specifically to avoid it! However there were also many who welcomed it as a challenge.

The report also noted that in some subjects like Art, progression in terms of improved technique and broadening out into other media could take place within one course pursued over time, and did not necessarily require a move to another course. One student had been on the same Art course for 15 years!

Ann Jackson and Belinda Whitwell (n.d.) Opening pathways to inclusion: the importance of non-accredited learning in the lives of students in the Local Authority sector, East Riding of Yorkshire County Council

Needs analysis of learning provision for the hard of hearing

Adults with hearing loss experience particular barriers to participation in learning activities. This reports on an investigation into these students' experiences and views of provision. Findings were used to produce a training package for tutors.

Barriers, Hurdles or Gateways? Hearing Loss and Adult Learning in Gloucestershire 1996

Examples of providing Information, Advice and Guidance

Courses in Vocational Guidance, Norfolk

Norfolk IAG Partnership runs a series of Open College Network courses in Initial Adult Education and Vocational Guidance. Students are recruited from statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and community organisations, such as

Fairstead Community House Information and Advice Centre. The house is a community-based project staffed by unpaid volunteers from community and residents' associations. Staff act as 'signposters' into various services.

'Information, advice and guidance', *Individual Learning News*, Autumn 2000, pp. 11-16

The Multi-lingual Careers Resource Centre

A refugees project was developed to cater for the careers guidance needs of the unemployed refugee and migrant population in Lambeth and adjacent boroughs. This provided careers information in 8 languages in written packs, on audiocassette and videotape. The success of the project has led to the extension of its use from community groups to FE colleges and Higher education establishments.

Improving Employment for refugee and migrant workers: a European handbook of good practice Lambeth Education may 2000

The Learning Place, Sunderland

The Learning Place represents a partnership between Sunderland City TEC, City of Sunderland College, the City Council and the University of Sunderland. The centre houses the adult guidance service and an Information Zone, containing literature on all aspects of careers, education and training. Clients also have access to a wide range of career software. Outreach provision in the community enables clients to access impartial information and advice without having to travel to the centre of the city.

'Information, advice and guidance', *Individual Learning News*, Autumn 2000, pp. 11-16

The Bridge Project

This is a course for people with overseas qualifications or experience who want to find suitable work in this country. It covers IT, English, job search and personal development, and students have access to career advisers on a one-to-one basis. The course has been very successful, with many students finding employment or carrying out training to re-qualify or improve work related skills in this country.

Coventry Adult Education Service: Active Learning 1999

IAG in Lancashire North West

Lancashire North West's IAG - the 'now! Network' - is based on a consortium of colleges, libraries and community outreach centres. IAG services are available in easily accessible locations. Participating organisations receive a free franchise package to help them deliver *now!* services, including a free PC, internet access and e-mail, branded furniture and ongoing staff training.

'Information, advice and guidance', *Individual Learning News*, Autumn 2000, pp. 11-16

Future Prospects, York

York's Future Prospects offers advice and runs workshops in confidence building, basic skills support, advice on funding, and counselling. These services are available through outreach as well as through the city centre shop front. Outreach staff make home visits as well as running drop-in advice sessions in community venues.

'Information, advice and guidance', *Individual Learning News*, Autumn 2000, pp. 11-16

Capacity building for key workers in the community,

The Norwich project to increase participation in learning includes a strand 'Capacity building for key workers' which trains workers with existing links at community level, including groups such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. These workers already have contact with people in disadvantaged areas and the course aimed to provide them with the skills and information necessary to direct their existing clients towards the relevant services in the fields of guidance and education. The course ran for three hours a week for six weeks, and a resource pack was provided to students on completion of the course. Accreditation was also offered. There has been follow up work to update information, and help create a group identity. Further similar courses are planned, one specialising in supporting work with young deaf people.

Norfolk County Council Education Service

Examples of informal learning

Peabody Trust
The Peabody run a range of learning projects that are embedded within other initiatives designed to improve the environmental and social conditions on Peabody housing estates, with particular reference to 'empowerment' of the residents themselves. In one case this involves the use of new technologies in developing informal learning.
Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Surfers Against Sewage
SAS is a pressure group campaigning for cleaner bathing waters. It runs a range of campaigns/learning opportunities through the national and local media, lobbying, poster campaigns, protests and demonstrations as well as using surfing contests and festival to encourage participation and membership. The movement has evolved from a marginalized group interrupting water company shareholder meetings into a mainstream consultation forum.
Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Heart n' Soul
Heart n' Soul is the only professional music-theatre company for people with learning disabilities. The members write their own music and lyrics and have devised and toured ten full-scale musical productions across the UK and Europe. The company aims to broaden the skills and employability of learning disabled people by training them to work in various arts activities.
Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Brookie Basics
Brookie Basics was a national initiative designed to increase participation in learning and facilitate conventional learning. It provided basic literacy training

mainly through community colleges. The content was linked to events that happened in the channel 4 'soap opera', Brookside.

Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Faith in the Community

Faith in the Community aims to facilitate dialogue about the quality of life, sustainability and Local Agenda 21 across different spiritual groups around Nottingham. A key 'knowledge entrepreneur' or core group was important in initiating and sustaining the informal learning process.

Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

DJ Masterclass

The DJ workshop provides hands-on technical skills for DJs via FE colleges, youth clubs and local authorities. Its philosophy is about an alternative approach to education, which mainly addresses young people who have left mainstream education. The long term aim is to encourage some of the young people who left school to go back to some form of education.

Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Northern Animateurs

Trade unions play a role in community regeneration by training members of the community to become 'animateurs' or catalysts in community empowerment.

Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Downham Young

Activities are aimed at increasing the level of young people's participation in their own community. The ethos of the groups focuses on empowerment. The group organises activities with local youth clubs such as the Graffitit project and residential weekends away with young people living on the estate.

Cullen, J. et al. (2000) Informal Learning and Widening Participation RR 191 London: DfEE

UK Coalition – Back to Work Project

This is a pilot project set up by the UK Coalition of people living with HIV and Aids. A wide set of training options is offered to clients through the HIV/Aids agencies involved. In addition to some skill-based training according to their own interests, clients are also given the opportunity to have a job placement with a number of employers.

Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Pubs

Pubs constitute a focus for informal learning through activities like 'pub quizzes'. This can provide the basis for more structured programmes. The Miners Arms scheme provides course delivery in a shopping precinct, a teleworking centre and a cybercafe in Matlock.

Cullen, J. et al. (2000) *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* RR 191 London: DfEE

Examples of older learners

"I came at first for something to do".

Lifelong Learning for the elderly

A museum education department has been involved in lifelong learning programmes in residential homes for older people, funded by the local Council. Staff have worked in homes on a combination of reminiscence work and creative craft workshops stimulated by museum objects, and a range of choice is offered. A professional artist works alongside the museum staff.

Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service Educational Department

On Your Doorstep project

This was based in a neighbourhood renewal area, and brought together older learners and younger unemployed people from the Cheltenham Centre for Unemployed People. The groups have carried out research based on documentary records and oral history and have provided a photographic

record of the area. These have fed into a series of events at the Library and Art Gallery and Museum.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education and Training Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999-2000

NAPA

The *National Association for Providers of Activities for Older people* (NAPA) is developing a training programme for activity organisers and seeking accreditation through the Open College Network.

Soulsby, J. (2000) *Fourth Age Learning Report – Summary* London: DfEE

Nightingale Lane

Nightingale Lane in Balham, South London, is a large complex comprising residential and nursing care, sheltered housing and day care for over 300 Jewish elders. The Jewish community supports the scheme very generously. There has been a home on the site for 100 years but it has recently been extended to house a theatre and a synagogue. There is a very well appointed arts and crafts centre with two teaching staff, which in the main is viewed as providing therapy. There is also a paid activity and leisure manager who facilitates, or runs the clubs, discussion groups, theatre and other outings, residents' forum, the magazine (containing poetry, reminiscence and topical articles produced by residents, visitors and volunteers) and the choir.

Soulsby, J. (2000) *Fourth Age Learning Report – Summary* London: DfEE

Open Age Project, West London.

This is a charitable agency specialising in 'Active Leisure'. It operates through a paid up membership system and currently has over 450 members and 600 users of project activities. Members are encouraged to lead in the management of projects, and their input to new ideas for courses is crucial. About 30 different groups are run over the year, with funding from a variety of sources. Opportunities include: philosophy , tai chi, gentle exercise, walking for health, creative writing, art, current affairs, yoga, line dancing, art appreciation, music appreciation, singing, Computers, and guided tours of London.

These courses are non-accredited, and the emphasis is on enjoyment and stimulation. The project has built up a reputation for exciting work with older people.

Open Age Project, West London.

Textile Voices

This captures the unique contribution of older learners to the documentation of oral history. The purpose of the project was to document the experiences and folklore of the almost vanished textile industry. Stories and folklore going back more than a century were recorded, and a significant outcome was the production of a vivid set of materials for schools.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education and Training Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999-2000

The Reminiscence Centre, Blackheath

This centre offers a place in the community for older people to share memories of the past and compare experiences. Objects and photographs are used to trigger memories, and there are thematic displays which are regularly changed. The visitors often produce exhibitions of their work. The centre has now developed as a base for inter-generational work, as the centre is also used by schools. The exchange is mutually beneficial; the elderly people act as an extremely enriching resource for the children's work, by describing their own experiences to the children, and they in turn also learn something from the children about what their lives are like today.

"One exhibition we mounted on the subject of winter evenings at home in the 1930's was so comfortable and evocative that many of our visitors virtually moved in! "

The Reminiscence Centre, Blackheath

MAVERIC and the National Council for Volunteering

The NCV has established a nationwide project in partnership with the Local Government Association, which has considerable potential to promote community-based learning through volunteering. The MAVERIC Project, which is also supported by the National Association of Volunteer Bureaux and the Retired Senior Volunteer Programme, is situated in the changing context recognised by the White Paper *Winning the Generation Game.* In

particular, demographic trends leading to the 'greying' of the population and the trend towards early retirement are seen to involve the potential loss of experienced human capital, whilst creating opportunities and challenges for older volunteers. The project highlights the role of volunteers in promoting as well as participating in learning within the community.

MAVERIC encompasses themes from many current Government initiatives working towards truly active and dynamic communities and promotes:

Maximising all available resources in the community to achieve Best Value.

Active engagement by local authorities with the voluntary sector and like-minded private sector enterprises.

A role for older and retired local authority staff in helping themselves, their local authority and the community.

Fulfilling the goals of Modernisation, Local Compacts and Better Government for Older People.

Project coordinator: john.rodgers@thecentre.org.uk

Special needs and disabled learners

Training for advocates

The Gloucestershire Advocacy Trust together with Art Shape ran a highly successful series of training workshops for advocates. The role of advocates is not just to speak for people, but to help them speak for themselves. The training included a number of people with learning difficulties who have now set up a peer support network.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education and Training Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999-2000

Trading skills

A LETS Scheme (Local Exchange Trading System) has been set up for a local community in Lincolnshire. Grantham College provides a range of learning opportunities to enable participants to learn new skills which they can trade, as well as business skills to enable them to learn to run the scheme themselves. So far the recruitment target has been exceeded, and the benefits have been transformational for many participants. Health professionals working with this group have noted an increase in physical and emotional well-being and a

reduction in stress. Individuals have begun to feel empowered to address other problems in their lives, and some have gained employment as a result of their increased confidence. Progression to other learning is ongoing, with requests being made for specific courses such as drug awareness and more specialised IT skills.

Lincolnshire County Council Adult and Community Learning

Self-Advocacy Training Initiatives

Northampton People First is a self-advocacy organisation with its own website. Students with learning difficulties have received funding from the European Commission Leonardo da Vinci Programme to produce a newsletter about different kinds of employment opportunities. This project has therefore enabled students with learning difficulties to develop new skills in order to use emerging technologies to communicate with others.

Lawton, J. (1998) 'The Learning Age', *Adults Learning,* April: 19-21

Taurus Crafts

This is a rural crafts organisation working with people with learning difficulties, giving participants opportunity to recover skills and work as a team. The therapeutic aspect of the work is paramount.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education and Training Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999-2000

Neighbourhood college student newsletter development project.

This provided a motivating environment for people with basic skills needs, helped integrate them into the wider educational community, and provided a popular medium for the exchange of local news and information.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education and Training Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999-2000

Homeskills and Coping in the Kitchen

Homeskills was designed to enable adults with sever learning difficulties to transfer the skills learned at college to their home background and learn new skills necessary for independence. The students involved gained independence and self-confidence, and stronger links were forged between college and home staff.

Coping in the Kitchen is a similar project for adults with learning difficulties and the elderly to enable them to preserve their independence.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education and Training Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999-2000

Pass it On – storytelling workshops

A theatre and arts centre venue is used to provide storytelling workshops for adults with little or no literacy levels or those who are partially sighted.

Somerset Local Authority Adult Learning Plan 2001 – 2002

Other courses and projects

" If you think sport is competitive, try flower arranging."

The INIT project

The pilot INIT project in Kilburn, London offers free access to innovative and often expensive software to talented local people, who help other learners in return. The aim of the project is to encourage local people to develop their interests and take charge of their own learning. Rollo is a professional photographer, who has helped others use Photoshop, a graphics package, whilst Christian uses his knowledge of music and Cubase, a music recording package to help other local musicians record their work.

Wills, M. (2000) 'Beating the information divide', *Adults Learning* June: 14

Forest Artworks community radio project

This has been running for five years, helping rural communities set up and run community radio. Almost every organisation in the community gets involved, with nine out of ten participants having no previous experience of radio, and for many it is also their first experience of continuing education and training. A training pack has been produced to help others run a community radio project, and has attracted national and international interest.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education and Training Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999-2000

Courses for carers

Lancashire County Council Social Services with the support of the adult education service and others runs courses for carers which include assertiveness training, self-protection, career development, reflexology, keep fit, coping with feelings and outings.

Soulsby, J. (2000) *Fourth Age Learning Report – Summary* London: DfEE

Prescribing Education

This project aimed to encourage GPs to offer suitable patients a course of adult education. It was designed to reach people who might benefit from education, but might not seek learning opportunities readily, especially older people, the mentally ill, recovering patients etc. The GP chose patients who in their opinion should be referred for adult guidance. 40 participants were reached and there was a high level of progression into other areas.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education and Training Learning in the Community for adults in Gloucestershire 1999-2000

Get it in Writing

This is a creative writing course which offers students improved writing skills whatever their level, the confidence to express themselves in writing and experiment with different forms, and the opportunity to do an accredited course on writing and community publishing.

Brighton 2000 Programme Lifelong Learning in Action, University of Sussex

Learning about Health

A module on complementary therapies aims to help people to create a healthier lifestyle, enabling those with chronic complaints to learn more about the various complementary therapies which may help them, and encouraging the use of stress management techniques. Participants are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own health and to adopt a preventative approach wherever possible.

Non-award bearing, non-vocational community education provision1999-2000, Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Glamorgan.

Developing community involvement skills

Community involvement is strongly correlated with participation in education, but traditional progression routes don't meet the needs of learners from under-represented groups in education and there is a need for flexible progression routes designed to build on qualifications and experience through employment or voluntary work. Medway Adult and Community Learning Service run a course aimed to initiate the development of an accredited pathway into Project Management, providing an opportunity for non-traditional learners to progress through community involvement and capacity building initiatives.

Cressey, J. (n.d.) Report on the NOCN 'Working in Voluntary Organisations' (WIVO) course held at Chattendon Community Centre Medway Adult and Community Learning Service

Video conferencing in rural areas

Community Learning Utilities (CLUs) in Kent gives local people in rural areas access to information and a variety of learning opportunities. For example, video conferencing is used to give learners in a cluster of villages access to courses at an FE College. A CLU in a tenants' resource centre on a housing estate give residents access via video conferencing to the Kent Careers Service. Video conferencing is also used to provide a means of communication for deaf people.

Kent Community Learning Utilities 1998

Switch off the T.V. campaign

Two families from target groups were invited to give up their TVs for a week, in exchange for undertaking a number of LEAP programmes, including cooking, computing, arts & crafts and painting and decorating. This campaign was carried out in conjunction with Meridian TV.

Lifelong Education for Adults in Portsmouth: LEAP Report 99/00 (August 2000)

The role of volunteers in outreach work

A project managed by NIACE has trained 'learning promoters' to promote learning to residents of a very large estate in Croydon . Volunteers go around

the estate to public places or peoples' homes, to talk about the benefits of education and to find out what courses people want to see run.
Croydon's Continuing Education and Training Service (CCET)

Key Skills and Community Groups
The aim of this project was to enable those who had built up a range of skills through work in their local communities to gain formal recognition or accreditation for them. Since these skills (for example Working with Others and Communication) are highly applicable to employment, this enables those who had been excluded from the labour market for a long time to demonstrate their employability. One such course focused on developing Key Skills through volunteering and cycling.
City of Coventry, Key Skills for Tomorrow Project: Case Studies

Training outreach workers – Muslim women
This project offered training for outreach workers ('barefoot helpers') and combined classroom input and practical outreach activities. Training in outreach was viewed as a very important means of increasing the numbers of women attending basic skills classes in the area. The project was run in partnership with the Southwark Muslim Women's Association.
Shan Rees (2000) Report on Outreach Workers Training Course, Summer 2000 South Bank University

Learning Ambassadors
In this NIACE project, successful learners from hard to reach groups are trained as 'learning promoters' to promote learning in their community. The scheme which operates on a huge housing estate in Surrey, is designed to go out onto the estate and bring people back into education by showing them what is available. Volunteers go round the estate spreading the word, and successful learners are then used to bring in others.
The Fieldway Project, New Addington, Surrey

Widening provision in universities
A 'widening provision project' addresses the attitudinal barriers to engagement with learning in university settings, and is concerned with raising educational

aspirations and changing perceptions of higher education. There is also the need to counter common misinformation about entry requirements and course levels offered by Universities.

A number of projects are being undertaken to raise educational levels in the local community:

Introduction to Islamic Studies

'Group-building skills' and 'Behaviour Management and Conflict Resolution with Teenagers'

Older Men's Peer Health Group

Surviving Solo – a course for recently bereaved older people.

Leeds University School of Adult and Continuing Education: Raising Educational Aspirations: A Higher Education Perspective.

The Islamic Studies project

This Leeds University project aims to draw members of the local community into full-time programmes in the Departments of Arabic Studies and Theology. The course was designed following joint consultation with the local Muslim community and staff from both departments. Each had their own particular concerns and perspectives: the community practitioners wanted to know that aspects such as course content, assessment, tutors, and locations would meet the community's requirements; the academic staff were concerned about standards and quality assurance, impartiality and secularity in the approach of the course. Community discussions were held at every stage, mainly with the users of an Asian women's centre, and with the local FE college about integrating an Islamic studies and Arabic language GCSE into an Islamic studies pathway. Preliminary meetings resulted in a commitment to develop a certificate that could be delivered in the community. Unaccredited classes in Arabic language and study skills were delivered in community-based settings in preparation for level 1 study.

Lindsey Fraser and Pauline Kollontai, Widening Provision Project, University of Leeds

Appendix 3: Some Useful Websites

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium
http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/alnarc/

The Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium is a national collaboration between university-based centres for research into adult literacy and numeracy. Each state in Australia is represented. ALNARC builds on the work of the former Adult Literacy Research Network (Language Australia) which had research nodes in the states and territories. Their site carries reports on conferences, recent research and projects, with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy in a training context. The site also carries a publications list. It offers direct access to powerpoint presentations given at recent conferences.

Adult Numeracy Network
http://www.std.com/anpn/

The Adult Numeracy Network is an American organisation affiliated to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. It carries an electronic newsletter, 'Focus on Basics', with its own archive, papers on topics such as Adult Numeracy Standards and links to Internet resources and related sites.

Adult Returners Key Skills (ARKS)
http://www.ed.ac.uk/~calark/arks/indexe.html

The Arks project is a transnational Adult Education project funded under the European Union Socrates and Leonardo Programmes. Its aim is to produce and disseminate teaching and learning materials targeted at people who left school without qualifications and who lack the confidence and key skills to take an active role in their community and workplace. The ARKS website provides access online to five packs of learning materials: Keys to Learning; Keys to Information Technology; Keys to Communications; Keys to Numeracy; Keys to Participation. The site also provides a limited number of links to other adult education sites.

ALM

http://www.alm-online.org/

ALM is a UK-based international research forum bringing together researchers and practitioners in adult mathematics/numeracy teaching and learning. The forum is designed to facilitate the sharing of ideas and information, particularly through the dissemination and discussion of its annual conference proceedings.

The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education

http://www.cdlr.tamu.edu/tcall/aaace/

The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education is the leading national organisation dedicated to enhancing adult learning. In addition to information about the organisation and its activities, the site carries a publications archive and bookstore, including current and back-issues of Online, News and Notes and Professional Tips. It also carries previews of Adult Learning, Adult Basic Education and Adult Education Quarterly.

Australian Council for Adult Literacy

http://www.acal.edu.au/

The site carries current and archived papers as well as the organisations newsletter, Literacy Link.

Basic Skills Agency

http://www.basic-skills.co.uk

The Basic Skills Agency is the national development agency for basic skills in England and Wales. The BSA covers literacy, numeracy and English as an Additional Language across all sectors from primary, secondary, FE and adult. Its site carries a number of current research and policy reports, reviews of resources and a link to the BSA's National Telephone Referral Service. Reports are carried in both summary and complete formats and can usually be downloaded using Adobe Acrobat.

Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning

http:// www.learningbenefits.net

DfEE: Lifelong Learning

http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk

This site carries up-to-date information about current government policies and initiatives. It includes complete and summary reports on, for example, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Breaking the Language Barriers, the basic skills needs of adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, Freedom to Learn and learning for older people, Fourth Age Learning Report. It also carries documents such as the second report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, Creating Learning Cultures. The site contains an on-line newsletter, Individual Learning and links to other related sites.

Disability Now

www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Disability Now describes itself as the UK's leading disability site. It provides a range of useful information, news and articles on current policy and other disability issues. The site also carries links, adverts and an archive.

Disability Rights Commission

http://www.drc-gb.org/drc/default.asp

This is the site of the newly-established Disability Rights Commission. It carries information about the commission's campaigns such as Actions Speak Louder Than Words and holds a large number of news items relating to disabled people. It also carries DRC Disability Briefing which provides up-to-date information and statistics about disabled people and disability rights.

Disabled People's International

http://www.dpi.org/

Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) is an international organisation to promote the Human Rights of People with Disabilities through full participation, equalization of opportunity and development. DPI is a grassroot, cross-disability network with member organizations in over 158

countries, over half of which are in the developing world. The site carries news items, policy papers and lists of useful publications.

European Basic Skills Network
http://www.eurobasicskills.org/

EBSN is a partnership of national agencies with responsibility for basic skills in six member countries, including the Basic Skills Agency. The network was active in 1999 with a view to sharing information about innovative practices, and developing and promoting effective basic skills strategies. ESBN's report, *Tackling Social Exclusion through Improved Basic Skills,* is available in full and in summary on the website. The site carries information about and provides access to other reports and research projects. The site also carries information about a limited number of resources, links to other sites and a sporadic news service.

European Society for Research on the Education of Adults
http://www.helsinki.fi/jarj/esrea/

The European Society for Research on the Education of Adults is a network of university-based researchers and academics. ESREA NEWS is the organisation's official newsletter and publishes information on forthcoming conferences, seminars and workshops, together with reports of such meetings; activities of European research networks; European Union programmes; information on ongoing research; the activities of national research associations; activities for postgraduate students.

The Internet TESL Journal
http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/

The Internet TESL Journal is a monthly web journal aimed at teachers of English as a Second Language. It carries lessons and lesson plans, discussions of teaching techniques, articles and research papers. The site carries an archive as well as information about projects and materials.

The National Grid for Learning: Inclusion

http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk/

Inclusion is a free, searchable catalogue of on-line resources that support teaching professionals, parents and carers in meeting individual learning needs. The Inclusion catalogue gives access to an increasing range of carefully catalogued resources. It provides the opportunity to find and review resources without first having to visit large numbers of Web sites or engage in free-text Web searches. For owners and providers of resources that meet individual learning needs, the site provides an opportunity to support and help a wide range of people involved with inclusive education.

The National Literacy Trust

http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/

The National Literacy Trust is a charity whose stated aim is 'to make an independent, strategic contribution to the creation of a society in which all can enjoy the skills, confidence and pleasures of literacy to support their educational, economic, social and cultural goals'. The site carries links to information about the organisation's strategic priorities. These include partnership promotion at national, local and regional levels; early years work, alongside family literacy and the role of parents and the home; reading promotion, through RIF, UK and the National Reading Campaign; literacy for the future, including the implications of ICT for skills development and motivation; and whole-school approaches to literacy. The Trust's quarterly magazine, ***Literacy Today***, offers a comprehensive listing of the latest literacy research, publications and resources. Articles by practitioners provide a cross-sector perspective from early years to adult. The site also caries information about resources and other publications.

NIACE

http:/www.niace.org.uk/

The NIACE website carries information about its publications, campaigns, conferences, promotions and projects. It provides information about *Adults Learning*, which is published 10 times a year, though not on-line. The site

carries news items and an information service as well as discussion papers on public policy issues.

The National Centre for Family Literacy

http://www.famlit.org

The National Centre for Family Literacy is an organisation supporting family literacy services across the United States. It is involved in running programmes, training, research, advocacy and dissemination. The site carries information about the organisation's policies and its current projects, research and publications.

Northamptonshire People First

www.peoplefirst.org.uk

This is the site Northamptonshire People First, a self-advocacy organisation of people with learning difficulties. The site provides information about the organisation's aims, policies and activities. It includes an on-line conference.

Research And Practice in Adult Literacy

http://www.literacy.lancaster.ac.uk/rapal/rapal.htm

RaPAL is a practitioner-based group of learners, teachers, managers and researchers in adult basic education. It is the only British national organisation that focuses on the role of literacy in adult life. The organisation provides critical perspectives on current policy and practise.   The site carries information about RaPAL publications and a number of on-line documents such as the group's response to the Moser Report and the National Curriculum for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Skill

www.skill.org.uk

SKILL is a UK organisation supporting students in further and higher education. It provides information, support and advocacy services. The site carries an information service and information about conferences and events.

It carries a comprehensive index of issues about which information is available.