

Effective Community Development
A strategic framework



Consultation

Background

The role of communities is gaining importance. In the new government's plans around the Big Society, communities are central. This comes as no surprise as grass roots decision making and devolved power to the citizen has been on the political agenda for some time. However, what has long been regarded as complementary support to public service delivery in some areas now could become the norm. Local community groups soon could be running libraries, kindergartens etc.

Such devolvement to the grass-roots level also puts new requirements on to learning providers. More than ever they are emerging as important place shapers and agents of social change. Here community involvement and engagement has a long tradition. However, the emerging emphasis on the role of providers in the locality requires a more strategic approach. Hence, LSIS in conversation with the sector is developing this strategic framework. Amongst its purpose is not to prescribe a certain approach to providers, but rather to support the development and identification of suitable strategies.

This Strategic Framework is considered to be an emerging document which will in the course of the year take into account new developments in the political landscape and more importantly feedback from the learning and skills sector on the shape of the strategic framework. Therefore, LSIS encourages you to take part in the consultation and help us to refine this framework further. You should note that community development is a fluid term and will take different forms in different localities. Fundamentally, it is more about a journey of working with communities so that they inform and shape their services and the environment in which they live, and create an environment where consultative and facilitative working is the norm.

The strategic framework currently is supported by two funding opportunities, the Community Development Fund and grant funding which has been recently released to Peer Review and Development groups. Both funding activities will inform this framework and provide the sector with best practice case studies later in the year.

This document is presented to the sector for consultation, comment and feedback. Following analysis of feedback it will be finalised and offered to the sector as a basis on which individual and/or groups of providers can develop their own approaches to community development.

1. The aim of the draft strategic framework

To support learning providers to identify and implement community development strategies that are sustainable, appropriate and effective

2. The objectives of the draft strategic framework

- To support learning providers to identify, plan and take the steps needed to position them as key drivers of and partners in community development
- To support providers to identify and develop key partnerships in order to drive community development
- To support providers to define and manage the relationships between short medium and long term community development objectives
- To support providers to manage the relationship between neighbourhood, local and regional community development objectives
- To support providers to identify and use appropriate methods of measuring the effectiveness and impact of their community development activities.

3. Defining Community Development

- A community can be defined in a variety of ways: by identity/culture, place/ space, boundaries and sites of conflict, citizenship and governance, shared needs/aspirations. Advancement in technology has witnessed the rise of virtual communities defined by a shared interest.
- Learning providers can best contribute to the development of such communities by understanding the learning and employment needs of those who make them up and finding appropriate ways of meeting them
- Learning providers should also explore how they might contribute towards capacity building within their communities
- To better meet the needs of learners and potential learners from communities, learning providers will need to understand the fit between their mission and local community strategic priorities
- To better meet the needs of learners and potential learners from communities learning providers will need to engineer an appropriate fit between their mission and local community strategic priorities
- This will need to be supported by wide ranging regional, local and neighbourhood level consultation and partnership with employers and other community partners
- Learning providers will need to underpin all of this by accessing understanding and maximising use of all available information from their communities to shape their mix of provision
- All of this should be driven by a commitment to public service, social justice, equality and diversity and supporting those with greatest need in combination with a strategic long-term view of where the interests of the organisation may lie

4. Strategic characteristics of effective community development

- It is likely to be informed by comprehensive analysis of community needs, rooted in intelligence from the communities themselves. Providers need to understand the population profile of the areas they serve underpinned by knowledge of local, regional and national community and economic strategies, using, for example, the protected characteristics defined by short, medium and long term economic and employment trends will affect the Equality Act 2010, or the NEET category. If they understand too how these groups, they will be able to assess how best they can work to support and empower these communities
- It is likely to require consistent, high level, high quality senior engagement with a range of regional and national agencies and partners
- It is likely to be informed by an engagement with relevant government policies and priorities
- It is likely to recognise that individuals may belong to a variety of communities with sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory needs and be able to respond appropriately to that complexity
- It is likely to develop and deliver responses and programmes that empower individuals and groups to find solutions and approaches to their own challenges, through skills development and through ways of networking and organising
- It encourages learning providers as employers to recognise the need to draw upon and aim to reflect the profile of the communities they serve
- It promotes procurement processes for learning providers as businesses that utilise skills and services within their communities thereby increasing economic and social wellbeing
- It is likely to be supported and driven by mutually beneficial regional and local sources of intelligence and partners in delivery; e.g., Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Enterprise Partnerships,
- It is likely to involve constant scanning of the funding environment to identify useable sources of short, medium and long term funding for community development activities
- It is likely to be engaged and delivering appropriately at local and neighbourhood (ward) levels and establishing linkage between these levels
- It is likely to have interlinked short, medium and long term objectives and strategies
- It is likely to be delivering a range of interventions, often in partnership with other agencies, that are aimed at both individuals and groups; e.g. Skills for Life programmes open to individuals, bespoke programmes of skills development for a range of agencies, or delivering support to a failing school with the National Challenge Trust

- It is likely to empower individuals and their organisations to influence and enrich public policies and services at a variety of levels, e.g. through individuals informing service improvements and organisations informing local strategic partnerships
- It is likely to build the strength and independence of community organisations, e.g. through community organisations becoming high quality providers in their localities
- It is likely that commitment to community development is embedded in provider and partner mission statements, strategic, financial and business plans and equality schemes

5. Operational activities that contribute to effective community development

- pooling information with other providers and partners to establish a comprehensive map of needs
- mapping existing service provision by all community capacity building providers, both statutory and non-statutory
- providing evidence to funders and agencies of the long term value of community capacity building and advising them on models for more sustained and consistent funding
- considering redeployment or rationalisation of provision to fill gaps, identified by communities and seeking additional resources to fill gaps which cannot be met by rationalisation amongst existing providers
- establishing common or reciprocal objectives with other providers and partners and organising networking and cross-referral to maximise impact
- agreeing ways of capturing outcomes of community development activities, and linking mandatory indicators with other community capacity building objectives, processes and measures, e.g., priorities under local area agreements, community cohesion and sustainable community strategies
- agreeing steps to bring all community development practice up to the standard of the best
- applying for funding from a variety of appropriate sources and managing a variety of financial audit systems related to this
- embedding community development activities and priorities in the job descriptions and appropriate skills in the person specifications of appropriate key staff
- providing appropriate community development related staff training for key staff to encourage cross sector working and to breakdown existing silos
- aiming to maximise community input into the development and review of existing and future provision

6. Underpinning values and commitments of effective community development

The key values of community development include:

- Equality and antidiscrimination – work with communities and organisations to challenge the oppression and exclusion of individuals and groups
- Social justice – work with communities and organisations to achieve change and the long-term goal of a more equal, non-sectarian society
- Collective action – work with communities to organise, influence and take action
- Community empowerment – work with communities and organisations to ‘work together’
- Working and learning together – support individuals and communities working and learning together¹

7. Capacity building in communities

As a central theme and outcome of effective community development providers may wish to consider a range of areas in which they can contribute to community capacity building with communities and community organisations. These could include offering support in the following areas:

- literacy and numeracy
- financial management and fundraising
- strategic communications
- strategic planning
- organisational development
- legal compliance
- advocacy
- leadership and management
- equality and diversity
- organisational skills
- IT skills

8. Legal and regulatory framework for community development

*The OFSTED Common Inspection Framework for FE and Skills 2009*² makes reference to providers promoting and improving the economic and social well being of learners and the local area. OFSTED takes this further through assessing how learners make a positive contribution to their communities and how providers use partnerships to inform provision that meets learners’ needs. Providers that use Community Development strategies to inform and deliver services are more likely to achieve in these areas (see Appendix 1).

*The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009*³ places on further education colleges a ‘duty to cooperate with other education institutions, employers and other organisations in the local area. “The local area” means the locality where the institution is established. In meeting this duty, the institution must have regard, to the objective of promoting the economic and social well-being of the local area.

¹ National Occupational Standards for Community Development 2009 LLUK

² OFSTED Common Inspection Framework for FE and Skills 2009

³ Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (c. 22) & Part 12 — Miscellaneous

*The Equality Act 2010*⁴ introduces a new public sector duty regarding socio-economic inequalities. It requires that a public institution looks at ways of exercising its functions so that it is likely to have the impact of reducing the inequalities of outcomes that result from socio-economic disadvantage'. This will cover seven equality strands (protected characteristics) namely, race, disability, gender, gender identity, religion/belief, age, and sexual orientation; but not marriage or civil partnership.

The duty will require institutions to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it

To advance equality of opportunity, institutions will need to have due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
- take steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it
- encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low

9. Policy framework for community development

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills' (UKCES) policy paper 'Towards Ambition 2020: skills, jobs, growth' - October 2009 sets out an intention to increase trust in, responsibility of and authority to, learning providers' as part of proposals for 'building a more strategic, employment and skills system' that is led by the demand for and supply of skills. This is to be achieved by requiring all publicly funded learning institutions to consult widely and collaboratively with employers and other stakeholders in their community, and utilise labour market information, to shape their mix of provision annually to best meet the needs of that labour market. It proposes learning providers are given more authority and autonomy to work in collaboration to better serve the needs of their community's labour market. It suggests a move towards a public quality and performance framework through the use of institutional scorecards which empower communities to drive up service quality and continuous improvement. There is emphasis on collaboration, tailoring provision to meet local need and focusing on outcomes; key elements of delivering effective community development.

The White Paper, 'The Learning Revolution',⁵ recognises that informal adult learning can bring people and communities together, contribute to community cohesion and boost well-being.⁵

It is too soon to be able to identify the key policy drivers which will shape community development under the new coalition government, but there is evidence that 'communities doing it for themselves' is at the heart of their thinking. "Trust people to take control of the decisions

⁴ Equality Act 2010, Section 149

⁵ The White Paper, 'The Learning Revolution', March 2009

that affect them by devolving power closer to neighbourhoods, increasing citizen participation, promoting community ownership, lifting inspection burdens on councils and removing regional government". This is one of the priorities within the Cabinet Office's Structural Reform Plan. The message of 'turning Government on its head' and placing power at the heart of communities and neighbourhoods can be found in the literature and language coming out of the new Government's departments, and seems to be the underpinning theme of the idea of 'Big Society'.

10. Benefits to providers from their involvement in effective community development and related activity

Benefits are likely to include:

- new streams of learner progression into and within the organisation
- new sources of paid and volunteer staff, and new sources of members of governing bodies
- direct and enhanced access to forward economic and related intelligence leading to enhanced strategic and operational planning
- access to a wide range of funding streams
- new and strengthened strategic and operational partnerships leading to increased future security and role-relevance
- contributing to the development of a positive local learning culture that stimulates ambition and encourages the demand for learning
- possible financial efficiencies arising from partnership and shared provision
- new sources of feedback on the organisation from local groups that can inform and enhance planning and delivery
- enhanced reputation
- enhanced influence
- improved inspection reports/grades

11. Benefits to the communities from their involvement in effective community development and related activity

- Communities are empowered and feel that they have influence over their localities
- Improved community led service delivery that meets the needs of those they serve
- Increased skill sets within community leading to increased individual and community economic and social well being

12. Challenges to providers seeking effective involvement in community development

Challenges can include

- funding that prioritises meeting the needs of younger learners
- managing and auditing the multiple, often relatively modest, sources of funding that can be used to drive community development
- success criteria based on qualifications gained – not getting credit for community development activity

- the difficulty of designing and agreeing widely accepted, rigorous methods of evaluating the success of community development activity when it is not plausible to base it on qualifications gained
- lack of learning provider understanding by the community and voluntary sector and lack of community and voluntary sector understanding by the learning provider
- possibility of uneven commitment to community development within the provider
- possibility of limited skills set related to effective community development within the provider's staff
- establishing an effective balance between engagement with regional and national partners and making an impact at neighbourhood level
- understanding the complexities of community structures; different communities sometimes exist within each other – sometimes in conflict: how to identify who, if anyone speaks, speaks for or represents a community legitimately
- Communities exist around the clock – providers only work limited hours

13. A basis for responding to some of the challenges

- critical organisational mass may be helpful if multiple sources of small scale funding are to be levered in to drive community development. This will ensure that sufficient auditing and managerial capacity exists.
- providers may consider Viability (contract size), Flexibility (not just 16-18 or adults – the more demand led the better) and Minimum contract length as possible criteria for determining engagements
- evaluation criteria related to community development activity may include: engagement itself, progression into and within the provider, learner satisfaction levels, learner progress measured through individual portfolio and individually identified goals, demonstrable impact on the effectiveness of strategic and operational planning
- for providers beginning or accelerating the journey into community development, a priority should be given to establishing governor/board level and buy-in from the Senior Management Team
- careful choice of appropriate activity – e.g. for some providers engagement with the National Challenge Trust and through it developing a role in supporting the improvement of a failing school/s may be more appropriate than working with a range of small tenants associations and other small voluntary sector organisations

Consultation questions for the learning and skills sector

1. Do the definitions and explanations enhance your understanding of Community Development? Is there anything missing?
2. Can you associate with the strategic implications and values underpinning Community Development? How do they resonate with your own organisation's values?
3. Does the framework represent an adequate picture of the role of the sector in Community Development? What could be further practical implications and examples?
4. How would you use the framework in your organisation?
5. What support would you need from LSIS to support the use of this Strategic Framework in your daily work?

To provide input to the consultation on the Strategic Framework please contact Martin Steinmuller (Email: martin.steinmuller@isis.org.uk), or Teresa Carroll (email: teresa.carroll@isis.org.uk) addressing the above questions or submitting any other comments by **midday on Friday, 29 October 2010**.

Appendix 1 – OFSTED inspection framework

OFSTED Common Inspection Framework for FE and Skills 2009

- A2: How well do learners improve their economic and social wellbeing through learning and development?
- A4: Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and wellbeing?
- A5: How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?
- B3: How effectively does the provider use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?
- C2: How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge? (including the extent to which governors and supervisory bodies make sure that their statutory duties are fulfilled)
- C4: How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? (including the extent to which the provider manages equality and diversity, particularly disability, gender and race, and actively promotes equality and diversity among staff, learners, employers, parents and other partners).

Appendix 2 community development related activities commonly undertaken by colleges

Involvement of colleges in community development partnerships

- Local strategic partnerships - LSP, LAA, multi area agreements, cooperation, assessing need
- Local people, communities, community groups and voluntary organisations
- Local authorities and other partners in Local Strategic Partnerships; including VCS organisations/community interest organisations
- Local area fora and neighbourhood organisations and services: Housing Associations, Primary Care Trusts, Police

Activities typically involve:

- identifying community issues, needs and problems; contributing to local strategy/policy development
- supporting & developing CD work - secondments, IAG, personal and community development learning, outreach; CD training
- developing new community-based programmes and resources; digital technologies, healthy living
- researching, evaluating and monitoring existing programmes;
- facilitating cooperation of community (interest) organisations e.g. faith, women, ethnic, disability, linguistic, via outreach etc.
- helping to raise community awareness on issues relevant to the community; healthy lifestyles
- providing leadership and coordination of programmes;
- facilitating promotion of self-help in the community; e.g., healthy diet, exercise, employability
- preparing reports and policies;
- developing and agreeing to strategies;
- liaising with interested groups and individuals to set up new services; language, confidence,
- facilitating volunteering;
- planning, attending and coordinating meetings, discussion groups and events;

Specific activities:

- Participating on planning and strategic boards
- CD training – formal/informal training of CD workers in the community
- Research and local assessment of need and priorities – needs analysis, baselining, evaluations
- Capacity building in CD organisations and CD work – developing and delivering CD learning
- Volunteer training and development
- Hosting and facilitating CD events/meetings:
- Contributing to funding proposals/ grant applications/regeneration projects
- Providing youth facilities; Specific courses for the community – horticulture, tasters, local history/interest, crafts etc.
- Colleges encouraging groups to use its premises free or at nominal cost and offering taster sessions which aid development of informal learning
- Joint work with organisation supporting homeless people encouraging engagement in learning

- Principal's involvement in local strategic partnership informed priorities for city. College delivery recognised and addressed priorities for local area.