

# New Deal for Communities

## The National Evaluation

### Research Reports

#### **Lifelong Learning and the New Deal for Communities: 'College in the Community' - Breaking down Barriers**

Research Report 29

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit is currently sponsoring the 2002-2005 national evaluation of New Deal for Communities. This evaluation is being undertaken by a consortium of organisations co-ordinated by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

Those wishing to know more about the evaluation should consult the evaluation's web site in the first instance  
<http://ndcevaluation.adc.shu.ac.uk/ndcevaluation/home.asp>



*Sheffield Hallam University*

**Lifelong Learning and the New Deal  
for Communities: 'College in the  
Community' - Breaking down Barriers**

Research Report 29

**Authors:**

Alison Kirton  
Marie Lall  
David Gillborn

***Educational Policy Research Unit***

July 2004  
ISBN: 1 84387 076 6

# CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Socio-Economic Context</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>The Policy Context</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Nature of the Intervention</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Aims and Objectives</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Beneficiaries</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Delivery</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Outcomes and Impact</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>What Works?</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Problems Encountered/Barriers to be Overcome</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>16</b>

## Executive Summary

The present Government continues to be committed to Lifelong Learning as an important part of education policy. Free learning for all adults in the labour market without level two qualifications has been proposed as part of a new national skills strategy linked to the 'Success for All' reform.

Many residents in disadvantaged areas have not been successful in the educational system and fewer stay on post-16 than in the country nationally. This is particularly the case in NDC areas. There seems to be a general lack of faith in the education system. It has been recognised by NDCs that simply providing Lifelong Learning facilities will not guarantee take up and that creative ways of engaging local residents are crucial. This report focuses on work in one NDC Partnership (North Earlham Larkman and Marlpit (NELM) in Norwich) that is attempting to improve Lifelong Learning provision across three neighbourhoods.

A variety of projects are being developed. The most successful at present appears to have been the 'College in the Community' that made available college courses, which had been requested by local residents. Other centres are being developed, designed to enable local residents to improve their skills and qualifications through providing courses as well - they include the Larkman IT Centre, the Marlpit Communications Centre and Fourways Community Centre in North Earlham. A Lifelong Learning Centre is planned for 2005.

The projects have been especially **successful** in certain respects:

- there seems to have been some success in achieving the aims of raising skill levels and self-confidence, providing progression from 'tasters' to more substantial courses and to begin to develop community networks for learning
- the success was celebrated with a graduation ceremony, instilling a sense of pride into the community
- the 'College in the Community' pilot has influenced the design and delivery of other centres
- the Larkman IT Centre has provided excellent progression from basic ICT, Numeracy and Literacy courses onto more advanced qualifications

**Key factors** associated with successful initiatives are:

- **Community consultation** was at the bottom of all the courses provided to ensure interest and take-up
- **Local tutors** have been used as they understand the background of the residents and simultaneously make sure that local skills are not being lost
- the courses have **catchy names** to get people interested
- courses are held at **local community centres** and provide a **crèche** so that all those who wish to participate can
- **Partnerships** between NELM and other providers such as The Norfolk Adult Education, Norwich City College, the Single Regeneration Budget and Norfolk Learning and Skills Council have been successful

Some **barriers and problems** remain:

- the most successful project ('College in the Community') was not continued into a second year
- **Attracting men** into Lifelong Learning seems to have been a problem
- NELM needs more control over projects. Moving to a commissioning model should help to overcome this problem and allow the partnership to fill gaps in provision

## Introduction

Lifelong Learning is a common educational goal across the entire New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative. It is apparent that NDC Partnerships are at different stages in their attempts to set up Lifelong Learning projects. However, the concept of Lifelong Learning is important as it addresses the need to provide educational opportunities that are accessible to all age groups, regardless of their previous educational background. For this reason, our evaluation of the education theme in NDC includes a focus on Lifelong Learning in each of the evaluation years. Our selection of projects for evaluation has been guided by two principal goals: first, over time, to examine a range of projects across the NDC initiative; and second, to use the evaluation to identify wider lessons, especially in relation to what works well under challenging circumstances. This report focuses on developments in North Earlham, Larkman and Marlpit in Norwich. The projects developed in this partnership focus on providing Lifelong Learning centres and learning opportunities for adults. During our work in we focused mainly on two projects:

- 'College in the Community'
- Larkman IT Centre

The first project ran in the first 12 months of the NDC (September 2000 to July 2001) and there are plans to re-establish it. The second began in 2000.

This report covers the following areas:

- the context in which the Lifelong Learning projects have been established and the problems it is trying to address
- the nature of the interventions in terms of objectives and targeted beneficiaries
- the way in which the Lifelong Learning projects have been delivered, in particular focusing on the type of intervention offered and the assumptions behind this intervention
- current outcomes and impact of the projects to date
- key lessons that have been learnt so far

## Socio-Economic Context

According to the baseline information that was gathered to identify local need (NDC, 2000), North Earlham, Larkman and Marlpit (NELM) communities have high levels of unemployment. The proportion of workless adults is 17% with 5.2% claiming Job Seekers Allowance and 11% claiming out of work illness related benefits. The area also experiences low levels of household income with 55% receiving income support and housing benefit, compared to 27.1% in Norwich. Of the children under age 16 living in NELM 46.7% were living in these households. 40% of the residents of working age have no qualifications compared to 35% in the NDC aggregate (Warnock, 2003), 32% of pupils in the area attain five A-C grade GCSE passes compared to 46% in Norwich and 37% leave school attaining no GCSE higher grade passes (A-C). In relation to the provision of Lifelong Learning only 3.7% of young males remain in education post 16 compared to 76.2% in Norwich and 74.2% nationally. Levels of adult literacy and numeracy are low and only 31% of residents wished to take part in additional education, which is lower than the NDC aggregate nationally.

The figures above indicate significant poverty and social disadvantage. They also help to explain a negative orientation to education and why few local residents over the age of compulsory education take up the education and training facilities currently on offer in the area or in the city.

The NDC area, which is made up of three predominantly social housing estates, has been felt to be low income from the time it was first developed and suffers from a long-standing stigma. The Larkman estate was constructed in the 1930s to house families from the rural areas around Norwich. A significant minority of travelling families were settled in Marlpit and Larkman, and North Earlham was populated by families leaving some of the poorest areas of the city centre. Many families have very little experience of settled, long-term employment. This is coupled with the very negative and stigmatising perceptions that are held by many people from outside the area and has led to something of an isolationist mentality, with many residents preferring not to venture beyond the estates. The NDC Delivery Plan summed up the situation as follows:

*'The symptoms are all too evident to the community; antisocial behaviour, lack of facilities and childcare, drugs and the 'benefit culture'. The root causes of many of the problems are the lack of decent employment due to poor educational attainment and lack of ambition and horizons.'*

Unlike other NDC areas NELM does not have significant numbers of visible minority residents but it does have a significant traveller population:

*'There is a fairly strong travelling network in the estate that kind of supports itself really. And as I said about the, you know, the six months here, six months away thing, family kind of look after the property and that kind of thing. And some efforts have been made to help them in terms of the more, kind of, practical stuff. You know, when they've been on-site we've put things like toilets there for them, there's skips to put their rubbish in, that kind of thing. But to engage them in anything, formally, I don't think has been tackled.'* (Project Development Officer)

## The Policy Context

The Government is committed to Lifelong Learning as an important part of key educational policy. In July 2003 the Government launched for consultation a national Skills Strategy called '21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills - realising our potential', aimed at developing Adult and Community Skills. This strategy builds on the success of the Adult Basic Skills programme, the Trade Union Learning Fund, Learn Direct and The Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Free learning for all adults in the labour market without level two qualifications (GCSE AC level) is proposed. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is designated as a third basic skill alongside numeracy and literacy. The strategy intends to bring together regional Development Agencies, local LSCs with Business Link and Jobcentre Plus to ensure coherent access for adults to adult skills and learning opportunities. A Sector Skills Council network is planned so that 90% of the workforce will be covered by a body that can provide back up with evidence of skills gaps and shortages in each sector. There is an intention to lift the age cap on modern apprentices to introduce adult modern apprentices to offer the opportunity for people to re-train and up-skill later in life. Finally the Skills Strategy seeks to create the concept of 'Learning Communities,' which aim to raise community aspirations and to provide non-threatening and less intimidating kinds of learning which may lead on to more formal learning and higher level skills acquisition. This is very relevant to the kinds of learning opportunities provided by NELM and outlined below.

Related to the Skills Strategy is the LSCs most recent policy document, 'Success for All', launched in November 2003 for consultation. Its main aim is to develop a coherent set of measurement systems for post-16 education and training:

*'Success for All' places the sector at the cutting edge of our aspirations to make Lifelong Learning a central part of the culture and economy of our country. If we are truly to achieve 'Success for All', we will need to define and measure success in a way that is*

*meaningful and can inform the choices of learners, parents and employers, and judgements by funding bodies, inspectorates and Ministers. (LSC (2003:1) Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills Sector).*

The report states that the measures proposed will be used across the learning and skills sector and will include adult learning providers for those learners not following programmes that lead to a formal qualification. The objective is to develop value added measures that allow a calculation of the extent of learners' achievements across the sector and can be used at the level of individual providers or for benchmarking purposes. The measures of success proposed are:

- learner success; retention and achievement of qualifications
- value added and 'distance travelled'
- non-accredited learning
- learner satisfaction
- learner destination

These proposals, which will be piloted and tested in 2004, have been welcomed by many post-16 providers and organisations. However, some caution has also been expressed in relation to the increased bureaucratic burden that such measures could generate.

The publication of the Interim report of the working group into 14-19 reforms (Tomlinson Report, DfES 2004) is of particular relevance to NDC partnerships like NELM where 'staying on' rates are significantly lower than the national average and many residents leave school with poor qualifications. The report sets out clearly the case for reform. There is no coherent system of 14-19 education. There is a fragmented and confusing system of vocational qualifications and very low levels of participation post-16 compared with other developed countries. Curriculum 2000, it is felt, has not brought about the necessary system change. The Tomlinson report recommends a Baccalaureate-style qualification that aims to provide a more flexible system without increasing the number of examinations. A system of diplomas is proposed covering the first four levels of the national qualifications framework. These will not be age specific and, it is argued, young people will be able to progress through the system as far and fast as they are able. Modern Apprenticeships will be linked in to this diploma system through clear progression routes. It is hoped that the reforms will provide higher status vocational programmes which link into Modern Apprenticeships. The new structure is designed to ensure that all young people develop essential skills including Mathematics, Communication, ICT, Problem Solving and Working with Others. All pupils should leave school with an official transcript of their achievements. The proposals could also signal an end to excessive external assessment and to choices which bar progress to higher education. Such changes should help to establish a firmer base for Lifelong Learning in the formal system by improving staying on rates and attainment.

### **Main Barriers to Participation in Lifelong Learning Opportunities as seen by Local Residents**

As we noted baseline information indicates that many of the local residents have not been successful in the educational system and fewer 'stay on' post 16 than in Norwich generally and the country nationally. This may help to explain their lack of faith in the education system as well as their own lack of confidence. In such circumstances it is rational to be wary of further investment in a system that has already failed you. According to those interviewed there are several interconnected factors, not least a vicious circle of low attainment, poor motivation and interest:

*'I would imagine a lot of it is poor experience and low expectation, really. Poor experience of any educational mechanism they've been through; and expectation in terms of the area has been seen as a, kind of, a no-go, run-down area for so long that it's, kind of, you know, it's rubbing off on each generation. So it's how you change that perspective which is a huge, huge task. And I think that's why we need to do it in small little chunks.'* (Project Development Officer)

Such negative experiences help explain why education and training opportunities are low on the list of priorities for some local residents and that merely having such facilities on offer will not ensure their take up. It was therefore recognised by those interviewed that creative ways of engaging local residents were crucial. Central to the Lifelong Learning initiatives in NELM is the idea of using local community workers who are known and trusted.

*'A lot of people hadn't gone on anything since leaving school. And the people in the community felt that they didn't want to go to the big colleges. I think people who provide funding here should actually visit the community here. I think the people who provide the courses need to understand the needs of the community a lot more. And they also need to use people within the community as well.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

Structural factors like poverty have in some ways made these communities tough, resilient and self-sufficient but the negative perceptions of the area have also resulted in a kind of 'ghetto' mentality where local residents would not consider going out of the area or even into the next estate to take advantage of training on offer. In the past education and training courses have been provided but take up was poor. Leaflet and poster campaigns were ineffectual. The negative labelling that accompanies being a resident of NELM, as well as low-level qualifications, may also work against local residents wanting to improve their skills. From focus group research conducted by Norwich Learning City Group several factors may help to explain this lack of motivation. As mentioned above, poor experiences of secondary education can be related to resistance to going back to the classroom:

*'Many of these people have been shown up and humiliated in some way in the classroom, and, you know, they'll go to any lengths not to be put back in that situation.'* (The Learning Shop Manager)

This has to be taken on board in any educational opportunities provided to compensate for former low attainment.

A second factor mentioned in the research was the amount of effort needed to catch up:

*'The other thing is - especially we found with the unemployed youngish men - was the distance they had to travel for it to make a difference, and I mean distance in terms of how much they would have to achieve, for it to genuinely make a difference to their lives. Mount Everest! So one guy, in his twenties, he's already got four children by three different partners, so he's living on benefits. Now, how far does he have to go in learning and training and work before he's better off? Because, as he says, the child support agency will take his money.'* (The Learning Shop Manager)

Another relevant issue raised was the fact that many residents have things in their past that would close down particular opportunities:

*'We talked to non-learners, many of them have convictions. Now, I didn't realise before, I hadn't really thought about it, if you've got a conviction for drugs (...) or perhaps for violent behaviour of some sort, you're actually ruled out of so many jobs that, you know... How are you going to motivate these young people to do anything?'* (The Learning Shop Manager)



There are complex barriers in NELM. There is an insular mentality that prevents people taking advantage of opportunities to improve their basic skills and qualifications, as they would need to travel out of the area or to centres within the area. Factors like low aspiration and motivation, poor prior educational attainment and material deprivation in adults with negative orientations to education play a strong part. There is little or no tradition of successful learning.

*'It's trying to encourage, you know, learning through every stage of their lives and not to give up, whereas most of them have finished at fourteen and said, "That's it. That's my lot then." And they don't have the- they don't come from families with a tradition of learning; they don't come from families with traditions of salaries or careers. And they really don't see - it's not for them. And so it's trying to just enthuse them, even if it's just a ten-hour course, you know, that they might think it is a start.'* (Trailblazers' Co-ordinator)

Such barriers present a considerable challenge to the effective provision and take up of Lifelong Learning.

## **Nature of the Intervention**

Four projects in NELM, which are either up and running or planned, relate to the provision of Lifelong Learning in the area. Their aim is to raise skill levels and provide opportunities for residents to improve their qualifications. Primary data for this evaluation was gathered by observing the projects at work and through interviews with key players and participants. The four projects are:

- 'College in the Community'
- Larkman IT Centre
- Marlpit Communications Centre
- Lifelong Learning Centre

These projects are interlinked and data collected about them will be described below. In particular we will focus on the first two because they have been running the longest. The Marlpit Communications Centre opened in October 2003 and the Lifelong Learning Centre will open in 2005.

### **College in the Community**

This project was run as a pilot in the first year of NELM from September 2000 to July 2001. Its main aim was to bring college courses into the community by consulting local residents about their needs and interests and then setting up courses in a number of local community centres. Local providers, including Norwich City College and Norfolk Adult Education, ran such courses.

### **Larkman IT Centre**

This project is jointly funded by NELM and Norfolk Adult Education to provide ICT courses that will enable residents to improve their basic skills of numeracy and literacy. It is located next to a primary and middle school and used by parents, pupils and other groups of residents.

### **Marlpit Communications Centre**

This is a drop-in centre, often called a 'one-stop-shop,' incorporating a range of facilities, which include Connexions, employment and benefits advice, and ICT facilities. Courses have been provided here by the Learning and Skills Council called 'Trailblazers' which run taster courses aimed at developing basic skills and designed to lead on to more substantial 10-hour courses.

There is also a Community Café and play/crèche area. A similar centre is planned called Fourways Community Centre in North Earlham where, after consultation with the local community, three main activities will be provided: a luncheon club for older people, keep-fit, and a parent and toddler group. Norfolk Adult Education Service will also provide courses there.

### **Multifunctional Community Building on the Bowthorpe School Site**

This is planned to open in 2005. NELM have bought a forty-acre site to develop that will contain housing, sports facilities (including a running track), an employment zone, and workspace to provide an income stream. Some of these activities are hoped to provide scope for apprenticeships in building and motorcycle maintenance. The actual community building will contain facilities for dance and sport, a youth activities room and a series of rooms used for a variety of learning activities (including art and ICT facilities; a day centre for the elderly with a café; consultation room and a herb garden). There will also be a bar and a room that can be hired for functions. Its main aim will be to provide 'health in the community' alongside facilities for Lifelong Learning. It planned that income generated from housing and rents from businesses and services will make it sustainable after the ten-year period of NDC funding.

### **Aims and Objectives**

'College in the Community' and the Larkman IT Centre are both Lifelong Learning projects designed to enable local residents to improve their skills and qualifications through providing courses that are located in NELM:

*'We're very keen to see a range of facilities very close to where people live, which is why we're putting in the infrastructure in a number of places across the estate in terms of investment in community centres and other community buildings. And we want to utilise all of those facilities as part of an ongoing Lifelong Learning push.'* (NELM Planning Manager)

Because of the barriers we have already discussed (above) the sort of courses that were provided had to address the interests and needs of the local communities in exciting and accessible ways:

*'What we don't want to do is something very heavy immediately. You know, just give them something light, fun, encourage them that it's non-threatening, non-judgemental, they can come in and do it, and they'll come back. And they do come back.'* ('Trailblazers' Co-ordinator)

In this way it was hoped that initial suspicions could be broken down and new links built up. Such courses were also aimed at improving self-esteem and confidence in order to improve the lifestyle and aspirations of people on the estate. Another aim was to save skills in the community from being lost.

*'There's an awful lot of elderly people in the community who've got fantastic skills: knitting, sewing, cooking, baking and that they could use within the community centres. I don't think you always need a tutor from the college to come and help a young mum learn how to make chicken soup and dumplings, because you've got them people within this community. There's lots of people that- males in the community without gardens, you know, who could help maybe set up some gardening clubs, decorating clubs and things like that. Also about getting the community to work with each other in NELM. A couple of single mums, who've got a three-bedroom house, don't know how to decorate it, don't know how to do the garden. That's about working together. And achieving something together.'* (Community Liaison Officer)

The above quote indicates that the project was also aimed in a small way at developing community networks and building social capital through getting people working together. This was also the case at the Larkman IT Centre:

*'For example, the Monday night - my Monday night class, the numeracy, I think they now - over half the group are a little network that's made a little network of friends. I think some of them knew each other before they came in, and have come because their friends have come. But they all, sort of, help each other out at home and stuff.'* (Larkman IT Centre Project Manager)

## Beneficiaries

### Improving Skills and Employment Prospects

Both projects have been successful at attracting local residents and have managed to draw on existing skills in the community. Having found out what courses 'College in the Community,' should provide (by careful consultation by Community volunteers) there is growing evidence that local people have benefited and improved their skills.

*'I would say we had about forty-five people who did courses. But about thirty people who actually did the whole forty weeks on several different things.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

A wide age range has been involved:

*'We had ages seventeen/eighteen year old, right up to a lady of eighty-six who came on 'Growing Your Own Herbs', the gardening program.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

Some of these courses were aimed at encouraging people through what might be seen as hobbies like gardening, beauty, cooking or 'changing rooms' while others were about getting qualifications, e.g. in food hygiene, first aid and health & safety, to improve employment prospects. Some residents, for example, did a book-keeping course:

*'And that was an Oxford and Cambridge Certificate. And there's two of them that actually went on to the next course up, which is the graduation course, and they actually passed as well. And they are now employed by the NELM working in the financial department...'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

This has led on to better-paid work. So given that local employment opportunities are very limited, the NDC has provided the courses and then some employment opportunities. This has also worked with community volunteers:

*'Some of them are employed by the NELM, which I don't think that they would have found the self-esteem to have gone and got a full time job or part time job. And some of the people on the courses actually put in for funding to start their own little projects off.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

The Community Liaison Officer, interviewed for this evaluation had also started off as a volunteer and is now employed by NELM.

The Larkman ICT Centre has also been successful in attracting numbers of people who have passed nationally accredited tests:

*'And the English we've called 'Improve Your English' and that's worked really well. And we've had people- this is, sort of, the first academic year that we've really done the literacy and the numeracy in here. And this last term we had fifty-four people from this area, the surrounding area, go on and do seventy-two national tests in literacy and numeracy.'* (Project Manager Larkman ICT Centre)

Some started with courses to improve their basic numeracy and literacy skills and then moved on to more vocational courses.

*'I started off by doing the basic computer course and then I went on to CLAIT, which is Computer Literacy and Information Technology. Then I have been doing adult numeracy and adult literacy, which I've, just took exams for. And I've also done desktop publishing and the last one is office administration, level one.'* (Female participant)

This participant explains that she had left school without any qualifications but the Larkman IT Centre has provided her with the confidence to get some qualifications and find employment:

*'Well, I'm going to improve my chances of getting a better job. I want to work in an office, or something like that, something where I've got room for progression. Yes. Because then I'm going to do GCSEs come September if I am not employed already. Maths and English I think I'm going to do. And the level two office administration I'll probably do that as well.'* (Female participant)

Other beneficiaries have been the older residents:

*'I think people can feel, by the title Lifelong Learning, I think they feel that it's appropriate to start learning at any point in their life no matter how old they are. I mean, we've got people who come in here who are in their late sixties, early seventies. And that - and they're just starting to use a computer. Fantastic!'* (Project Manager Larkman ICT Centre)

For such residents an introduction to ICT can provide an invaluable means of accessing the internet and using email, for example, to keep in touch with family at home, to contact relatives abroad, to book holidays and for hobbies (especially accessing useful information).

Three other specific groups were mentioned as beneficiaries. First, parents and children who use two clubs: a 'Homework Club' and a 'Nothing to do with Homework Club' (an after school club which focuses on fun activities rather than homework) Some parents have been attracted to courses when picking their children up from these clubs or when dropping them off or collecting them from school. A crèche is provided and some children have come for the crèche and started courses especially supplementing their schoolwork.

A second group mentioned were two stroke victims who were on courses. One of them explains how her stroke had set her back:

*'I had a stroke two years ago and before that I was at GCSE level in Maths but now I find it hard. I joined 'Numbers for the Terrified', because a friend was doing it. Really I am doing the courses so that I can help my children with their Maths homework.'* (Female participant)

The project manager explained how the self-confidence of this participant had improved. The motive of helping one's children is often a good start for people lacking confidence.

A third group are people learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). A diverse group of people attend a course using computers packages to improve their English: meeting an

important need that could have been overlooked in an area (like Norfolk) which generally views itself as less ethnically diverse than the country as a whole:

*'Well, we've got a chap from Mongolia, a lady from Algeria, a lady from Iraq, two ladies from China, and one from Singapore I think, one from Pakistan - I'm trying to picture them as I go round the room - yeah, and I think that's it.'* (Project Manager Larkman ICT Centre)

The wide range of users and the many success stories (of growing confidence, expanding social networks, and improved levels of attainment and certification) are evidence of genuine impact and effective delivery strategies.

## Delivery

There are several themes that emerge from the data on how these two projects have been delivered. The first aspect was that community consultation was used to identify local needs and priorities. A second important factor has been the use of local people (e.g. as tutors and volunteers), who did not patronise the participants nor pathologize the communities. Third, providing a crèche was crucial and often had beneficial, consequences that had not been expected. Finally the courses were presented in non-threatening ways that engaged the interests of the residents.

### Community Consultation

*'College in the Community' had begun with careful community consultation. And we discussed it with the community, exactly what they wanted. We met the tutors and the providers from other organisations. And the community - we got the community to tell the organisations what they want, what type of tutor they wanted.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

This was a partnership of providers (including Norwich City College, Eastern College and West Lodge) who provided the courses. The difference with this project is that the community decided what sort of courses they wanted. The consultation was carefully conducted, including an informal meeting at the Community Centre where breakfast was provided. This was well attended and residents explained that they wanted a diary of courses through the year that would be delivered at three community centres. The community liaison officer explains:

*'And so people could be on three courses a week. They could do be doing retail and design on a Monday, food hygiene on a Wednesday and first aid on a Friday. And so they had a year's diary, so that as they went on a course, that course was finished, they went on to another one.'*

Such consultation was good bedrock on which to build the project. In the past it was felt that money had been wasted by leaving out this stage of delivery planning:

*'And if you don't listen to the community you can throw as much money as you like to a community - education-wise - but if you haven't- don't listen to what the community wants, you're just wasting that funding. And we found a lot of the big organisations are actually coming and putting on courses, and nobody turns up (...) because they didn't integrate with the community, they didn't hear what the community wanted...'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

Such consultation paid off in terms of having good attendance at the courses and generated a feeling of ownership among participants who could look forward to booking themselves into a diary of courses put on through the year.

## Using Local Tutors

The second successful characteristic of the delivery of 'College in the Community' and the Larkman IT Centre was that the staff were friendly and accessible. It was expressed strongly by community representatives that if possible such people should live locally and have good networks to draw upon. The Project Development Officer describes how she hopes this will work at one of the community centres where they have established a steering group of local residents:

*'I'm hoping that, through the steering group at the Fourways Centre, because they're local residents, word of mouth is the best thing and it travels like wildfire. And I'm hoping that through having lots of local residents who seem very committed to developing Fourways Centre that they will promote activities with their friends, neighbours, relatives, that kind of thing. And will get people in that way, through a very informal supportive network.'* (Project Development Officer)

Participants at the Larkman IT Centre stressed the importance of the approachable tutor whom they valued greatly:

*'I get on well with her, and she's very flexible in the way she teaches. If someone's got a different way of learning she'll try and help you in the way you want to learn, rather than telling you that you've got to do this and, you know, because everybody learns differently. She's a lady anyone could get on with, I think.'* (Female participant)

This was also borne out by the sort of qualities that were sought when 'College in the Community' involved community members in interviewing the tutors:

*'And because they didn't want stuffy men in shirts or saying big words that they didn't understand. They didn't want women who didn't understand what it's like living in the community, so they interviewed the tutors, so they could feel comfortable with the tutors.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

## Hooks' to Learning

The project manager at Larkman IT Centre describes how they found that in order to teach ICT they had also to teach numeracy and literacy first so that people could deal with the levels required to operate a computer successfully. With this in mind they provided courses with catchy names that signified in a non-threatening way the problem that needed to be addressed. These were called 'Improve your English', 'Beat those Nasty Numbers!' and 'Maths for the Terrified'.

At two of the other centres, taster courses have been provided in a similar way and this has helped improve take up. The 'Trailblazers' Co-ordinator describes a course called 'Jazz up your Junk':

*'And that is, really, they bring a piece of junk in and they tart it up really. I mean, you know, it's a lampshade or whatever. But there's a lot of numeracy can be put in that. They've got to measure it; they've got to look how much material, et cetera, et cetera. So it's really getting basic skills and embedding basic skills in fun learning, with the view that they may well, and often do, go on to...So they'll have, maybe, a taster session, we then will do, say, ten hours further with a themed course. By the end of it they're actually - they've done a numeracy course - and they're then saying, "Hey, actually it's*

*not too bad.” You know, “I was crap at school but now actually I’ll have a go.” We’re encouraging them to take the national test, but we don’t mention it at the beginning; we don’t talk about tests; we don’t talk about maths per se.’* (Trailblazers’ Co-ordinator)

Another example of a course that had been successful in developing a range of skills was quoted:

*‘Authority - Can You Handle It? And it’s about learning how to deal with agencies and how to get what you want, really, being your own advocate, kind of thing.’* (Project Development Officer)

## **Providing a Crèche**

In previous evaluation reports for the education theme of the NDC we have already commented on the importance of providing facilities and support for community members with young children (Kirton, Lall and Gilborn, 2003). Those interviewed reported that providing crèches was vitally important, especially to draw in young mothers:

*‘There are huge amounts of single mums who need the crèche facilities, we need - it needs to be free as well. It’s absolutely apparent that they do not wish to, or cannot, afford to pay for any learning experience. So if it’s free and it has a crèche and it’s on their doorstep, they will come.’* (Trailblazers’ Co-ordinator)

One problem that parents faced was that some of the local Adult Education courses provided crèches but these were provided outside the area. Parents then had to travel out to the crèche to leave their children. Not only did the parents who were free to attend courses benefit from the local crèche facilities, but so did the children involved:

*‘Yes, it’s free, and it’s just in the next door room. And there are two qualified nursery nurses in there. It’s a good way for the children to meet other children as well.’* (Female Participant)

At Larkman IT Centre some children who came to the crèche got involved in the ICT courses, often supplementing what they were doing at school. They were there because of their parents but conversely parents found out about courses because their children were attending an after school club. One mother is an example of this:

*‘One in particular, she’s - her boys come to the ‘homework club’ and the ‘nothing to do with homework club’. She’s entry-level numeracy and literacy, and she’d never have come on her own.’* (Larkman IT Centre Project Manager)

In the 'College in the Community' one of the crèche workers brought her mother, who uses a wheelchair, to the crèche. This had unintended consequences for the children involved:

*‘We actually brought the old lady into the crèche and she became a lot of children’s nanny by the end of the forty weeks. I mean, that was- that was lovely - because a lot of old people are quite isolated, aren’t they? And there’s a lot of children in this community who didn’t have a nanny. And she made things with the children.’* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

## **Outcomes and Impact**

Both projects have had some success in achieving their aims of raising skill levels and self-confidence, providing progression from taster courses to more substantial courses, and beginning to develop community networks for learning. The project manager at Larkman IT

Centre describes the improvements in self-confidence that she has observed:

*'These courses have helped with the confidence and the self-esteem. It's good when you hear "Oh, I'm not that thick actually." You know, I mean I often say, "There are three [things] that are banned in here: one is, 'I'm thick', two is 'I'm stupid', and three is, 'I can't do it'." And by making them circulate you do - they find out a lot more about themselves and they discover, you know they improve their self-esteem and feel far more powerful and empowered than they did beforehand.'* (Larkman IT Centre Project Manager)

She also described the progression from courses that had taken place:

*'People coming out, walking out of this building, six inches taller, really, with the confidence to go on and carry on learning. We've had people who have started courses here and then gone on and they've done access courses at college, degrees...'* (Larkman IT Centre Project Manager)

The Community Liaison Officer for 'College in the Community' describes how the success was celebrated and how this in turn raised the profile of the project:

*'And we had a graduation day because they felt they wanted to celebrate their success. Everybody was given out their certificates by the mayor and also the director of the NELM. And we invited all the tutors and all the organisations to come along as well. We put on entertainment for the children. And we had a hundred and eighty-five certificates given out. And people, members of the community, were getting, eight, nine, ten certificates. I mean, that was just - that was just absolutely fantastic. There was a buzz, there was a buzz.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

Clearly the graduation event was a very special occasion. The feedback from participants is one of the best demonstrations of the impact that the project is achieving:

*'People had things to talk about rather than just the price of eggs and kids. You know, so they could stand at a bus stop and say, "Oh, I'm on this course, I'm doing that course in three weeks' time," and that sort of thing. So they were geared up for it and they got excited, and they got very, very excited about the graduation day because they thought that was marvellous. I think people were quite sad at the thought it was coming to an end. You know, several of them said to me, "This is the fastest year I've known in my life."'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

Despite the fact that 'College in the Community' did not continue the following year, as a pilot it has had an important impact which influenced the design and delivery of the Marlipit Communications Community Centre, the Fourways Community Centre and the proposed Multifunctional Community Building on the Bowthorpe School Site.

## **What Works?**

In terms of providing Lifelong Learning opportunities for residents in the NELM several features of these two projects can be identified as successful practice. The first of these is using local community champions and staff who can relate to residents.

*'And we listened to what the community wanted, which was not hard for me because I've lived in this community all my life - one of four generations. So there was - I was really the person to do it. You know, because people who had basic skills, people who perhaps can't read or write or don't understand about reading a book or writing in a book, they need somebody who they could trust.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)



Consulting the community has also paid off in terms of getting people to take up courses and do well:

*'I can only talk about by what I've experienced and what I've done in these communities. The only thing is I think that some organisations don't do their homework, they don't - they're not prepared to come in and talk to people on the street or post office queues or in the shops or anything like that. And they have put on courses in the past, and they have wasted an awful lot of money because people aren't interested.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

Another successful strategy was to use courses, described above, that don't resemble formal 'education', so that those who have had bad experiences of formal education (resulting in a fear of engagement) are provided with an easy entry into Lifelong Learning opportunities. The project manager at Larkman IT Centre describes such a course:

*'And we're still using IT. You know, we've got a homeopath, a qualified homeopath, comes in, and they're exploring things on the net, using the internet, and they create - at the moment creating a fantastic book of, sort of, cures or remedies for things. Something that they'd never have done, and the level of study and commitment that they've shown, these people have shown, it's been absolutely superb.'* (Larkman IT Centre Project Manager)

Locating courses in local community centres, and providing good crèche facilities, has also proven effective. There is a strong fear amongst residents of going outside their communities or even across their communities, and so locating courses in familiar (and useful) settings pays dividends. Many people have problems of mobility and have caring responsibilities so Lifelong Learning opportunities close to home are crucial.

Finally, there is also evidence that partnerships between NELM and other providers such as The Norfolk Adult Education, Norwich City College, and Norfolk Learning and Skills Council have been successful. NELM has provided the premises and these providers the courses and personnel.

## **Problems Encountered/Barriers to be Overcome**

There have been several problems encountered in the development of these two projects. It is regrettable that a scheme as successful as 'College in the Community' did not continue into a second year. There seem to have been several reasons for this:

*'It lost momentum because it didn't have a dedicated co-ordinator, or a dedicated budget. And there's an outstanding piece of work we need to do to produce the Mark 2 version, and draw down project funding for the next stage of 'College in the Community'. Whether or not we call it 'College in the Community' or something else (...) the principle, in my mind, stays the same that we need to address Lifelong Learning issues and get a sustainable system of Lifelong Learning.'* (NELM Planning Manager)

Staffing was an issue and also the desire not to duplicate provision. Although there is a sense that an opportunity has been missed, there is also determination that the positive lessons are not forgotten:

*'I think it was mainly down to staffing resources within the NDC. And then when there were resources to be able to develop the project, the local situation had changed, with the position of the 'Trailblazers' Co-ordinator from Norwich City College being able to do more outreach. So it was felt like there would be some duplication. And then with the move to commissioning, all project development has been put on hold until we identify*

*areas of priority for commissioning. And I think the 'College in the Community' model is definitely going to be one of the first ones we look at.'* (Project Development Officer)

It is hoped that, once the new commissioning model for funding is in place, the partnership should have more control over projects:

*'We felt we weren't having enough influence, really, on where the project was going and what kind of things we were funding. It was very much we were just sitting back and waiting for applications to come in, or helping local groups develop an idea. Which is great, but we weren't necessarily hitting all of the theme areas adequately enough to tackle the, you know, the problems on the ground. So I think the commissioning model will be far more - well, ours will be far more structured, but also proactive and able to, kind of, identify the gaps of where we're not providing, and then put something out for tender.'* (Project Development Officer)

Attracting men into Lifelong Learning opportunities was another problem that has arisen. This is a national problem related to male educational under achievement and cultures of masculinity, which can view learning as feminine and admitting need as a weakness. The Larkman IT Centre Project Manager describes the problem:

*'Yeah. I think - I think our biggest weakness is getting men in, really. We have bandied the idea, that if you say "beginners" men switch off because they think - this is probably a very sexist remark - but if you said, "advanced users" you probably would get them in. But we haven't quite tried that yet.'* (Larkman IT Centre Project Manager)

It is hoped that the development of the Multifunctional Community Building on the Bowthorpe School Site will begin to provide more opportunities for men:

*'I've been involved in developing a scheme for young people to be involved in construction training. It links in very much with the development of the Bowthorpe School site. Broadland Housing will be doing most of the build on the site, and they've said that they will take on apprenticeships and give them the placement and practical experience.'* (Project Development Officer)

Other interests may be harnessed and addressed through providing car and motorbike maintenance or apprenticeships for mechanics.

*'The young guy who can hotwire a car and what have you, you know, how do you bend that, those skills, into something that's, you know, useful and not illegal. And something to do with motorbikes. Because at the moment they ride illegally on the site. But they want- they're always there tinkering with bikes or getting something working. And, you know, how do you - it's how we harness that skill really.'* (Project Development Officer)

Finally attempts are being made by NELM to improve perceptions of local schools in the community. The partnership is working with the Local Education Authority and Earlham High School on an Extended Schools Project that aims to open up facilities at the school not just to school students but to others in the community.

## Conclusion

*'They have to listen, and they have to listen to the community and why people in the community do not go out and seek education. But once you can get people involved in education then they do get hungry for success.'* (NELM Community Liaison Officer)

This quotation reflects the fact that NELM have had success in listening to the local community and engaging residents in Lifelong Learning opportunities. The reasons for non-engagement are complex and the challenge of raising basic levels of skills, and improving educational qualifications, is not an easy one. While the success of the 'College in the Community' should have been capitalised upon the following year, many of its best features have been incorporated into the new community centres at Marlpit and North Earlham. Lessons have been learnt from it and embedded in future developments. The success of the two projects is also evidence of the skills of the staff working there, as well as partnership between NELM and other providers (Norwich City College, Norfolk Adult Education Service, and the Learning and Skills Council). Such expertise has been coupled with the excellent use made of local residents as volunteers and their networks and local knowledge. Some of these successful residents are now being employed by NELM and should provide strong links and credibility in the local communities.

### **Key Issues for Partnerships: Lifelong Learning**

Barriers to progress:

- a vicious circle of poor educational attainment and motivation being passed from one generation to the next
- stigmatisation from living in communities regarded as a 'no-go', and 'run-down' resulting in an insular mentality where local residents would not consider going out of the area or even into the next estate to take advantage of training on offer
- the amount of effort needed to catch up, especially for young men and women trapped in the benefit culture
- poor experiences and attainment in formal education

Characteristics of Emerging Good Practice:

- providing tasters as 'hooks' to learning and progression
- using community volunteers to consult the local residents about the courses they wish to see
- celebrating success with an award ceremony and certificates
- providing good quality crèche facilities
- providing courses that are non-threatening with accessible staff in local community centres which provide a variety of local services
- drawing on important skills in the community

Further pressing issues :

- attracting male residents to Lifelong Learning opportunities
- renewing the interest and enthusiasm started by 'College in the Community'
- continuing to attract local residents through networks to take advantage of the courses on offer

## References

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *'21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills - Realising Our Potential: Individuals, Employers, Nation.'* DfES. London, The Stationary Office

Department for Education and Skills (2004) *Tomlinson Report: 14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform - Interim Report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform.* London, The Stationary Office

Kirton, A., Lall, M., and Gillborn, D. (2003) *Lifelong Learning - Research Report 13.* Sheffield, CRESR.

Learning and Skills Council (2003) *Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills Sector. Success for All, Theme 4.* Coventry, LSC.

New Deal for Communities (2000): *Breaking the Circle - New Deal for Communities Delivery Plan 2000-2010.* North Earlham, Larkman and Marlpit Partnership.

Warnock, C (2003) *New Deal for Communities: National Evaluation Main Phase. Final Report on the Norwich (North Earlham, Larkman and Marlpit (NELM). NDC Partnership.* Cambridge Economic Associates.