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| **BME Equality and Diversity**  |
| This case study presents the work of 4 separate PRD groups who each addressed issues associated with participation and achievement of BME learners in their communities.1. Three Counties Professional Development Partnership – Walford and North Shropshire College, Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology, North East Worcestershire College, Worcestershire College of Technology, Shrewsbury Sixth Form College, Derwen College, Telford College of Arts and Technology

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Contact: Andrew Goodall (anddrew.goodall@wsc.ac.uk) |
| Theme |
| Equality and Diversity – BME participation and success |
| Purpose |
| The 4 PRD groups used the peer review to share practice in improving participation and attainment of black minority ethnic (BME) learners. The groups hoped that by reviewing the position and sharing practice they would improve rates of participation and success among learners from this specific community group. The peer reviews aimed either to test a hypothesis, or to investigate the root causes of inequality and to identify good practice in addressing it. |
| Context |
| 1. North East Worcestershire College (NEW) had identified an attainment gap through the College’s self-assessment process
2. Learner Voice members work with 14-16 year olds who are disengaged from learning and were aware that aspirations for progression to Apprenticeships were low
3. TWNALP had identified low participation of BME groups in work-based learning across the North East through research carried out by Northumbria University
4. Luton Borough Council (LBC) wanted to review participation by young black males in Apprenticeships was each identified a gap in attainment and / or participation of BME learners and that of other ethnic groups
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| Strategies |
| The 4 groups each adopted varying methodologies for their peer review, but each included:* A review of data
* A review of key organisational plans and self-assessments
* A visit to the provider to carry out interviews with students, staff and representatives of the community
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| Outcomes and Impact |
| Across the 4 groups, outcomes included:* Increased awareness among staff of good practice and strategies to promote success among BME learners and about the importance of monitoring the impact of strategies
* An appreciation that detailed data mining and consultations with community representatives serve to highlight the root causes and barriers to participation and success. Detailed analysis allows appropriate improvement plans to be determined and the absence of accurate analysis introduces risk that assumptions are made about barriers
* An awareness of the challenges involved in demonstrating evidence of the organisation’s impact on the community and of the importance of developing a strategy for community development that is aligned with the core business of the organisation.

For example, work-based training providers in the Learner Voice PRD noted that their core business is to ‘serve our sector skills priorities and employer needs first. Understanding how that impacts on the local community is important.”Colleges involved in the 3 Counties PRD groups noted that “our core activity, i.e. supporting learners to achieve the qualifications they set out to achieve was the way in which they can make the most significant contribution to community cohesion”. From these statements it is a priority is to evidence the impact of their strategies on the participation and success of learners from all parts of the community and to promote and secure equality of success. For some of the work-based learning providers in particular there is also a clear priority to ensure a clear strategy for community development that is aligned to the core business of the organisation.All 4 PRD groups recommended:* Improvements in the collection and analysis of detailed quantitative data to enable

organisations to accurately review the equality of participation and attainment across different ethnic groups and to establish success measures against which to review progress* The definition of success measures within a coherent quality improvement plan
* Further developments in using the SAR to record evidence the impact of organisations; in supporting local employment and skills
* Working with learners and representatives of the community to understand the issues affecting participation and success and tailoring improvement actions accordingly

Across the 4 groups, further recommendations included:* Development of targeted marketing strategies aimed at BME groups
* The use of targeted student support interventions to address the needs of BME learners
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| Evidence of Impact  |
| The groups highlighted the importance and the difficulties in presenting evidence of their impact on the development of communities. Detailed data analysis undertaken during the peer reviews has established a baseline against which improvement will be measured in future periods.The groups also identified the importance of embedding success measures within quality improvement plans. These measures need to derive both from the baseline data analysis and also from the organisation’s strategy for community engagement which needs in turn to identify targets and measures. |
| What Worked Well / Even Better If |
| WWW* Senior management support for the process of peer review
* The process for the review was kept as ‘simple’ as possible.
* Reviewers were not ‘swamped’ with information and evidence. Key data was presented and pre-analysed for the reviews to consider.
* Engaging directly with young people to understand their barriers to participation

EBI* Define the scope of the review and the evidence to be reviewed as clearly as possible in advance of the review itself. This is particularly important when addressing a theme that has not previously been the subject of peer review
* It would have been helpful if the reviewers had known beforehand who they were going to interview so that they could have prepared in advance.
* Engaging key workers as partners in the project to help follow-up in supporting young people with issues raised through consultation
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| **East London Partnership (ELP) Peer Review and Development Group (PRD)** |
| Participating Members:The Adult College Barking and DagenhamCity Lit, WestminsterRedbridge Institute of Adult EducationTower Hamlets Lifelong Learning ServiceWaltham Forest Community Learning Service and SkillsContact: Joni Cunningham, Head of Service, Redbridge Institute of Adult Education |
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| Purpose |
| The project aimed to:1. Develop a sustainable peer review model
2. Shift the focus from peer review *and* development to peer review *of* development and thereby to improve the impact of peer review on partners’ capacity to improve
3. Improve consistency in the quality of ESOL provision across the services
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| Context |
| 1. The group had developed a model of peer review based on a 2-day learner journey review, undertaken by staff trained as reviewers or lead reviewers from partner organisations. The group were concerned that the model was not sustainable, due to the small number of trained staff and the time needed to complete each review. 2 new partners joined the group shortly before the peer review.
2. Existing PRD model not sufficiently focused on transfer of good practice and effectiveness of quality improvement strategies which limited the impact of peer review on partners’ capacity to improve.
3. The Ofsted grade profile for ESOL and community development delivery varied across the partners, showing different levels of responsiveness to the new Common Inspection Framework (CIF).
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| Strategies |
| 1. To develop a sustainable peer review model, the partnership agreed a new PRD model, which:
* focused on a single curriculum area (ESOL)
* involved the managers of the curriculum area in the review
* included a SWOT self-assessment to be completed by each service in advance of the review visit
* introduced learner focus groups and paired observations of teaching to the process
1. To shift the focus towards peer review of development, the partnership
* Incorporated a workforce development model for quality improvement and capacity-building
* Introduced 3 and 6-month reviews to focus on the improvements made by each provider since the review. These took the form of presentations by each ESOL Manager to their peer group.
* Introduced a moderation of Observation of Teaching and Learning (OTL) records
1. To review impact of ESOL provision on community development the partnership:
* Broadened the range of indicators against which evidence was evaluated, to include questions A5 and A2 of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), Olympic values and success measures contained in local ESOL plans.
* Gave consideration to:

- analysis of local needs, priority groups and local plans- employability and progression of ESOL learners- embedding of values into teaching and learning5 reviews were carried out between October and November 2010 |
| Outcomes and Impact |
| 1. The new peer review model has:
2. **Increased capacity** by training additional lead reviewers through coaching and shadowing and by including a wider range of staff in the role of peer reviewer (including colleagues from Skills for Life team)
3. **Improved consistency** by completing all reviews over a short period of time and by including the ESOL Managers who acted as a core review team.
4. **Enhanced sustainability** by introducing a self-assessment SWOT which reduced the time taken to complete the peer review and developed more ownership among the service team
5. **Involved more staff and learners** through paired observations which enabled reviewers to engage with more staff and learners
6. **Increased the transfer of good practice** by introducing a section of review reports which highlighted good practice and reviewing the impact of this good practice through the 3-month reviews
7. Impact of peer review on capacity to improve has been improved through the introduction of 3- and 6-month reviews. These review meetings bring together the 5 ESOL teams to present the impact of the project on learners, staff and stakeholders in each service. This has enabled the peer review to promote and evaluate short and longer-term outcomes by following up on the effectiveness of interventions incorporated into service improvement plans. The partners developed a standardized approach to evaluating effectiveness

The OTL moderation exercise focused providers in the quality of action planning following the observation and on the use of professional dialogue between the observer and the tutor.1. The peer review process highlighted the following issues for providers:
2. **Contributions to Local Area Plans** were under-developed in all areas and the review has ensured greater emphasis on strategic planning to achieve better recognition of the impact of ESOL provision on community development
3. **The value** **of a whole service approach** has been underlined through ESOL teams working with other service teams, such as Skills for Life. This has ensured that a clear service statement for ESOL has been developed and is better understood across the service. Course guides have been improved, more ESOL learners are accessing learning support and ESOL awareness is embedded in a range of provision. Resources from other teams will inform the development of an employability focus within ESOL. A new volunteer training programme is under development.
4. **Better use of initial assessment** is being made to include a focus on identifying the learner’s aspirations beyond English language acquisition. This will improve progression opportunities into vocational skills programmes.
5. **Curriculum development.** As a result of the review a number of enhancements have been made to learning provision, including:
* New courses have been developed to improve participation of male learners (e.g. Dads only ESOL courses in Children’s Centres, embedding ESOL within driving lesson theory classes).
* ESOL courses will include increased opportunities for visits and trips to develop language skills beyond the classroom.
* Better links are being made with community outreach staff to identify the ESOL needs of learners engaged in family learning and neighbourhood learning provision.
* An ESOL Summer school is planned.
* ESOL is to be embedded in a range courses including childcare, education, business, IT, numeracy
* Bridging courses into higher level ESOL are being introduced to improve progression and success rates
* Intensive work-focused courses such as ESOL for Retail are to be introduced and will include interview skills and work tasters
1. Quality of teaching and learning has improved as a result of:
* Monthly 1-1 reviews with tutors, using a quality visit checklist
* Use of Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating in Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) to monitor progress and achievement
* Peer training for staff in developing bridging courses and embedding ESOL
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| Impact Measures |
| The partners have agreed to share their ILR data on ESOL learners and use 2009-10 data to establish baselines against which impact of changes will be measured annually on the following indicators:* Attendance
* Retention
* Enrolments from deprived wards
* Number of learners on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and work-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) benefits
* Number of learners on low income and non work-related benefits
* Success rates by ethnicity, gender and disability
* Progression to vocational qualifications, work and /or volunteering
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| What Worked Well / Even Better If |
| WWW* New PRD model with 3- and 6-month reviews
* Senior management support for the new model
* Transferability of the model to other curriculum areas
* LSIS Leading Change Through Professional Dialogue Workshops for all staff before and after the review

EBI* A workshop for staff to consider the LSIS Community Development Framework (draft) before reviews began and to use this to agree common measures of success.
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| **Independent Specialist College (National Group) Peer Review and Development Group** |
| Independent Specialist College (National Group) Peer Review and Development GroupThe Royal National College for the BlindNational Star CollegeDerwen CollegeHenshaws CollegeTreloar CollegeContact: Sandie Foster (sandie.foster@rncb.ac.uk) |
| Purpose |
| The peer review group set out to map the needs of learners, communities and businesses against local strategic priorities to inform the organisations’ development of community development plans. |
| Objectives |
| * To evaluate the contribution of a College to its county’s local strategic priorities
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| Context |
| Derwen College is a specialist residential college in Shropshire for young people with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities. It offers a curriculum which teaches vocational skills and develops independent living and social competences, supporting students in their transition towards independence.The College is in Shropshire and the peer review set out to consider the contribution of the College to the county’s strategic priorities. The following 3 priorities reflect the county’s vision for 2020 and each is underpinned by outcomes which will guide delivery and be the focus of activity for the Shropshire Partnership.1. Enterprise and growth with strong market towns and rebalanced rural settlements
2. Responding to climate change and enhancing our natural and built environment
3. Healthy, safe and confident people and communities
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| Strategies |
| The peer review focused on Derwen College and the reviewers agreed a set of 7 questions to explore the College’s contribution to the local strategic priorities:1. Is what we currently offer to external partners effective in terms of contributing towards local strategic priorities?
2. Is the offer efficient in terms of the resources required?
3. How are we measuring outcomes against the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)?
4. To what extent are members involved in shaping, influencing and driving Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)?
5. What skills are required by member organisations to further develop their contribution towards local strategic partnerships?
6. Do we have the capacity to deliver?
7. Do we have the leadership models that support collaborative partnerships?
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| Outcomes and Impact |
| The peer review mapped the activities of the College in relation to the county’s three strategic priorities (Enterprise and growth; climate change; happy safe and confident people and communities). It offers a case study for recognising the contribution of an organisation to local strategic priorities and collating evidence of that activity.1. **Is what we currently offer to external partners effective in terms of contributing towards local strategic priorities?**

The following activities are evidence of the College’s contribution to the economic growth of the area. The College:* Delivers training to local businesses, including Food Safety and Manual Handling and more specialist training aligned to the college’s specialist status (e.g. use of Makaton language programme) to support businesses in becoming more inclusive.
* Offers a range of short courses are available to the public
* Employs the services of local professionals to enhance learning
* Is a medium-sized local employer and offers high quality training to its staff
* The farm shop promotes local enterprise by selling a range of produce
* Promotes its own produce through local farmers markets which supports the regeneration of farmers markets
* The planned new food production centre will develop opportunities for work experience for young people, enhance learning through partnership and extend community links by offering courses and placements to the wider community
* Contracts out to local businesses to support infrastructure and developments, including local transport companies
* A Sustainability Working Group to consider and promote the sustainable growth of the College and maintain its contribution to the local economy

The College’s response to climate change includes:* An energy-efficient heat exchange system in the new food production centre
* Extensive local consultation on new build proposals
* Learners participate in work placements linked to recycling, which has been identified as a positive area for student employment
* Recycling a wide range of materials used by the College
* Raising awareness among staff regarding recycling, including through providing recycling facilities on campus

The College’s contributions to developing the health, safety and confidence of the community include:* Raising awareness of equality and diversity through their links with local enterprise
* Its work in preparing young people with learning difficulties and disabilities for transition to independent learning
* Expanding retail outlets for public use including a restaurant and farm shop which provide leisure opportunities
1. **Is the offer efficient in terms of the resources required?**

The College identified value for money in its CPD but also highlighted a need to explore sustainable solutions to enable local external organizations to access training as the CPD offer is extended. By working in partnership with other local training providers, the College contributes to effective foundation learning provision for the area. The College’s expertise supports local businesses to training employees who need support to access level 2 learning. 1. **How are we measuring outcomes against the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)?**

The 2009 CAA for Shropshire highlighted the high proportion of ‘people from different backgrounds who feel they get on well’. As an employer the College promotes equality and diversity, safeguarding, healthy living, personal development and respect for others. The well-being and health of staff and students is promoted by activities such as Healthy Living Days. The College measures outcomes through stakeholder questionnaires and staff appraisals and provides data on learning to the Shropshire Learning Network.1. **To what extent are members involved in shaping, influencing and driving Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)?**

The College offers expertise in supporting learners with learning difficulties and disabilities to the local strategic partnership. Its’ links with schools, colleges, employers and partner organisations give the College a voice within the local community and enable the College to maintain an awareness of local needs.The profile of the College within the community is enhanced by its reputation and prestige, through events (e.g. Derwen Walk), by public use of College facilities and training etc. The influence of the College is carried into the community by its staff, governors and Derwen Friends, enabling it to influence the LSP.As a member of the area Learning Network, the College influences the development of 14-19 education and training in the area.1. **What skills are required by member organisations to further develop their contribution towards local strategic partnerships?**

The College identified partnership-working as the key skill required in order to further develop their contribution. The College encourages its staff to take an active role in the community, for example as members or chairs of local networks and groups.1. **Do we have the capacity to deliver?**

The College’s capacity to develop its contribution to the community is evidenced in part through the sustainability of its strategic plan and business planning to maintain the organisation, which includes initiatives which respond to community need as well as developing the business of the College, for example the development of a new Visitor Centre which will provide learning opportunities for students and recreational activities for local people.1. **Do we have the leadership models that support collaborative partnerships?**

The College recognises the value and impact of partnership working and develops the collaborative leadership skills of its staff at all levels by engaging staff in partnership activity with the community, for example learners maintaining and replanting areas of Whittington Castle; students acting as volunteers in partnership with British Telecom’s local community strategy. |
| Evidence of Impact |
| The College’s approach enabled it to map its wide range of activity closely to the strategic priorities of the area, giving examples of the ways in which the institution has an impact on different elements of the community (staff, students, employers, local economy, local residents etc.) in a variety of ways.The College employs a stakeholder questionnaire in order to gather feedback from external partners. This provides the college with positive evidence in relation to impact. It also provides information on areas for improvement, which informs future action planning. In addition to stakeholder questionnaires all of the activities outlined in the above sections are discussed and evaluated during regular team meetings within departments, with reports presented at Head of Department meetings. Evidence of impact of activities such as the Farmers Market and the work at Whittington Castle can be found in the respective departments SAR. Future plans are carried through within department Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) and in many cases these plans form part of the College SAR in line with College Strategic Planning.  |

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PEER REVIEW**

**CASE STUDY**

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| Peer Review and Development Group |
| E2E Improvement GroupNottinghamshire Training Network (NTN)ProstartCentral Education TrainingAccessSkills 4 EmploymentA range of organisations in the Hucknell areaContact: Janet Charlton (janet@ntn-wbl.org.uk) |
| Purpose |
| To review the contributions of 2 Community Centre’s operating in local communities in Nottinghamshire; to learn from and share practice and promote partnership between providers. |
| Context |
| NTN is a consortium of work-based training providers and colleges with an established team of peer reviews and have previously undertaken peer reviews of each others’ work-based learning provision. This peer review aimed to include new partners and to conduct a review focused on the needs of the community.The 2 Community Centre’s - Under One Roof Community Centre, Hucknall and The Red Lion Community Centre, Bulwell both serve economically-deprived communities with similarities in high rates of crime and anti-social behaviour, poor health and low achievement and aspirations. Each Centre offers a range of services and facilities, including those provided on-site by private and public sector organizations. Both Centres were keen to review their provision and to learn from each other as well as to explore potential to expand their services.NTN had begun to work in the areas served by the Community Centre’s, to build relationships with the community towards a long-term goal of establishing a social enterprise. Some training had been delivered in one of the areas which had been well-received and NTN partners were keen to explore ways to extend the offer.The peer review offered an opportunity for work-based learning providers and Community Centre’s to understand each other, learn from each other and explore ways in which they might work together to better serve the needs of the 2 communities. |
| Strategies |
| The peer reviews addressed 6 core themes in each centre:* Marketing and Publicity
* Services and Facilities
* Improving Practice and Efficiency
* Expanding provisions and considering funding issues
* Working in partnership with similar organizations
* Environmental considerations – reducing the carbon footprint
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| Outcomes and Impact |
| **Outcomes**Despite the apparent similarities in the 2 communities, the peer review identified differences in the communities and in the approach and services offered by the Centre’s. These differences included:* **Self-Perceptions:** the way in which one community referred to themselves as ‘deprived’ while the other did not
* **Marketing:** Approaches to marketing differed between the 2 Centre’s, with the older more-established centre relying on word-of-mouth and the newer centre actively promoting its services
* **Attitudes to Partnership:** The more established Centre having many robust partnership arrangements, while the newer centre had some links with local organizations but these were not fully developed
* **Environmental considerations**: One Centre was more progressive than the offer in its approach to energy-saving. Both Centre’s identified more that could be done to save energy as well as to offer recycling services to the community in partnership with the Local Authority

The review considered the range of learning provision available at the Centre’s and consulted with existing learners to gather their views. The feedback indicated that the community would like to see a greater range of Skills for Life qualifications available at the Centre’s, in addition to the existing range of ‘enrichment’ courses, such as jewellery-making. Skills For Life provision in English, Maths and ICT were highlighted by users as being beneficial in supporting entry to employment.Both Centres’ were keen to explore additional learning provision, but identified funding and the emerging relationship with the local FE College as potential barriers. The review was able to recommend strategies for income-generation, such as increasing marketing to local businesses to improve room-lettings.Partnership with the Local Authority was identified as a priority area for development, and the peer review recommended that the Centers’ Managers and Board Members needed to develop a more strategic relationship with the Local Authority in order to plan for developments in the services. It was agreed that while immediate additional funding from the LA was unlikely, working together at a strategic level to understand the needs of the community and the ways in which the Centre’s might be developed in order to meet those needs was essential.**Impact*** Reviewed the use of the term ‘deprived’ within NTN Community Development strategy
* Developments in the marketing materials used by the Centre’s to reach a wider audience. Changes include a wider distribution to community venues such as Job Centre’s, Connexions offices , youth clubs and church groups including a newsletter to inform the community of events, activities and functions at the Centre’s
* Negotiations with the Local Authority regarding the provision of recycling services
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| Evidence of Impact  |
| The review concluded that the contributions of the Centre’s to their communities was not always fully captured or recorded. Evidence of impact is important for the viability and sustainability of funding for the Centres and the review recommended that both Centres give further consideration to how they capture evidence of impact.The Centre’s hope to see the impact of these changes in:* Increased participation in activities at the Centre’s
* Increased range of learning provision
* Improved partnership with the local FE College to broaden the range of skills-based programmes available through the community setting
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| What Worked Well / Even Better If |
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| WWW- Professional development of the reviewers who gained a fuller appreciation of the work of Community Centre’s- The Community Centres gained ‘free consultancy’ to support their planning and development- Improved relationships between organisations, between NTN members and the Community Centres, between the 2 Community Centres themselvesEBI- Reviewers need to be sensitive to the potential for them to be seen as ‘suits going in with their own agendas’ and ensure that they are flexible in the practical arrangements for the review, particularly when engaging with volunteers |

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| **Sunderland Work-Based Learning Providers’ Peer Review and Development Group** |
| Sunitec Riverside TrainingCity of Sunderland Riverside TrainingETEC Community Development TrustTeam WearsideSunderland ITECContact: Ian Gardner igardner@sunitec.ac.uk |
| Purpose |
| To embed an awareness of community development within Foundation Learning (FL) programmes. To encourage participation in community development activity by Foundation Learners. To measure and evaluate the impact on learners, providers and community. |
| Objectives |
| The four partners agreed the following objectives for their review:* Evaluate learners’ current understanding and awareness of community development
* Research and develop a learning delivery model that will improve learner understanding and facilitate participation and community action
* Ensure learners community development action is focused on priorities that they have identified
* Ensure all learning and progress is mapped to qualification standards and contributes towards learner progression and achievement in the FL programme
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| Context |
| The four partners had previously worked together as a Peer Review and Development Group supported by LSIS and JISC-funded Regional Support Centre (RSC) Northern. Additionally they are all active within a consortium of providers delivering FL programmes in Sunderland. Approximately 1000 young people aged 16-19 engage in FL programmes annually in Sunderland, achieving a progression rate above the national benchmark.The partners felt that they were able to evidence their contributions to the development of the local communities through:* The engagement of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
* Good rates of educational attainment
* High rates of progression into employment of further training
* Preparation of young people for employment

However, the partners wished to improve the impact that Foundation Learning programmes and their delivery models might have on the learner’s awareness of, and engagement in, community development activity. |
| Strategies |
| The partnership brought together staff from their organisations and representatives of external specialist community development agencies to develop an Asset-Based Community Development Toolkit, which was used to provide a focus for learning sessions included in the Personal Social Development (PSD) strand of Foundation Learning programmes. The learning activities were mapped to standards within the PSD units and as such contribute to accreditation and certification.Approximately 140 learners participated in FL programmes delivered by the partner organisations between November 2010 and March 2011. All learners:* Took part in a Community Development Awareness Survey and activity sessions to identify their attitudes to their communities (assets and deficits) and their existing engagement in community activity.
* Participated in a 1-day Asset Based Community Development workshop
* Took part in a community development activity
* Took part in a second survey to assess any changes in their attitudes or engagement
 |
| Outcomes and Impact |
| The project demonstrated a significant impact on the perceptions of young people regarding their community and their own capacity to improve it, as well as increasing the number who participated in community voluntary work.142 young people took part in the initial survey which confirmed low levels of awareness and understanding of community development. Their views of their community’s assets and deficits revealed negative perceptions outweighing positive perceptions by a ratio of 9:1.A majority of learners also responded that they felt that the problems in their community were ‘inflicted or imposed’ upon them and that they had little potential to improve the situation in their community. Only 5 young people identified themselves as participating in any kind of community-based voluntary activity.On completion of the Asset-Based Community Development workshop the survey was repeated. The learners’ responses showed that their attitudes to their community were significantly more positive at a ratio of 5:4. During the Foundation Learning programme, every learner engaged with voluntary community work as part of the PSD strand. One month later, 29 young people identified that they were now taking part in community or voluntary activity, an increase from 4% to 22% of the cohort.The Asset Based Community Development Toolkit and associated lesson planning resources are now available to FL providers in Sunderland and Tyne and Wear and have potential to be used by community-based organizations as stand-alone resources to promote engagement in community development |
| Evidence of Impact  |
| The group measured the impact of their activities by means of a survey conducted at the beginning of the project and repeated after learners had taken part in learning sessions.The survey measured:* The ratio of positive to negative perceptions of young people about their community
* The proportion of learners taking part in some form of voluntary activity in the community
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| What Worked Well / Even Better If |
| WWWStrong senior management support for the peer review enabled a ‘whole organisational approach’ to be taken which maximized the impact of the review on each organisation’s quality improvement processes and plans. |

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| Peer Review and Development Group |
| **West Midlands Peer Review and Development Group**Birmingham Adult Education ServiceDudley Metropolitan Borough CouncilStaffordshire County CouncilWalsall Metropolitan Borough Council Warwickshire Adult Education Service |
| Purpose |
| To carry out a strategic review of adult and community learning (ACL) in each borough, reviewing the contribution of ACL to community development and considering the position of adult learning and skills in relation to the strategic priorities of each Council. To explore ways of engaging community representatives in identifying the needs of the community and in evaluating the impact of learning and skills on health and well-being. |
| Objectives |
| * To carry out a strategic review of ACL services
* To initiate a local community engagement activity in each area to identify approaches to identifying community needs
* To compare and contrast strategies and practice across the 5 areas
* To share effective practice to support improvement of services
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| Context |
| The group identified a working definition of community development to guide them in undertaking the peer review:*“To consult with the community to identify learning and skill needs. To provide services through learning and skills activity via partnership working that develop skills, confidence and capacity, leading to stronger, resilient communities able to do things for themselves.”* The 5 Councils represent highly diverse populations and include urban and rural communities.The period of the peer review represents a time of significant change in all Councils, leading to reviews of strategic priorities, structures and accountabilities. ACL services are also subject to a reform programme for implementation in 2012/13  |
| Strategies |
| The group agreed to use a core set of questions to act as a framework for the strategic reviews:1. What are the current local strategic priorities for your Council?
2. What contribution does your department make to these local strategic priorities, in your community and how are these communicated?
3. What are the particular community cohesion and equality and diversity issues faced in your area and how have you been successful in resolving them (or to what degree have you been successful in resolving them?)
4. How is your local authority fulfilling its duty to promote economic and social wellbeing and what contribution does your department make to this?
5. How do you map the diverse needs of learners and communities served? How do you plan to meet these identified needs?
6. What indicators of success will you use to evaluate how you are meeting the needs of your local community and what will the evidence look like?
7. What skills do your staff need in working beyond your organisation to lead community projects or influence local strategic partnerships?
8. What reasons/benefits/issues have you identified as to the role or relevance of adult learning opportunities in promoting effective community development, in relation to formal and informal learning activity?
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| Outcomes and Impact |
| The group’s key findings were:1. Each Council has a set of strategic priorities, across which there are a number of common themes, including:
* Community development is at the heart of all Council priorities and the central priority from which many aspects of Council policy and strategy stem
* Development of learning and skills in the context of employability, raising aspiration and community development is important
* Safeguarding is a key priority
* There are proven links between the provision of learning and benefits to health and wellbeing for people of all ages established by research through bodies such as NIACE, OFSTED, CIF and NEF
* Partnership working, community engagement and consultation are some ways that Councils have identified to achieve successful community development
* “Sustainability” features in strategic documents (reflected in the use of terms “capacity” and “resilience” in the working definition)
1. The ACLS plans were mapped clearly to the strategic priorities of the local authorities and the local strategic partnerships. Common themes include:
* Use of learning to promote health and wellbeing in targeted groups of people, for example, older people, people with mental health challenges, or people with learning or other disabilities
* Targeted activity to reach specific communities or individuals with few or no qualifications. This includes outreach, engagement and consultation activity
* Inter-generational learning, particularly family learning
* Partnership working both internally within the Council and externally with other agencies
* Employability programmes, volunteering and tackling worklessness
* Information, advice and guidance on learning and work
* Being inclusive, widening participation and raising aspirations
* Safeguarding
* Capacity building individuals, communities and organisations, particularly third sector organisations

Despite the close alignment between council priorities and ACL plans, the way in which ACLS communicate their success internally and relate their contribution to the wider strategic framework within their Council is a weakness for some ACLS that could lead to their contribution being poorly understood and insufficiently recognised. Developing more effective internal partnerships with other parts of the Council, or raising the profile of the service within senior management tiers of Councils may help to address this issue. Reviews of wider strategic priorities within Councils may also be an opportunity for ACLS to identify ways of contributing to changed targets and outputs. 1. The issues facing urban and rural councils in relation to community cohesion and equality and diversity are distinctive. Urban councils have a particular emphasis on with increasingly diverse communities, tackling racism, exclusion and communities creating ghettoes within local areas are massive issues. Long term unemployment resulting in high levels of worklessness and low aspiration, may result in health issues for adults and children that require a multi-agency approach that highlights the need for effective partnership working.

For the rural Councils, there are problems with exclusion, transport and access to services or opportunities. Deprivation can be more hidden and occur in small pockets. For all Councils there are health inequalities to tackle. In this diverse environment councils aim to access and use local information to accurately target services to meet the needs of specific groups or communities. Effective partnership- working, both within the council and externally, is needed to address the wide range of needs and issues encountered when working with targeted individuals and communities. However, while there is a research base which establishes the positive impact of learning on health and well-being, it remains challenging for ACLS to monitor and evaluate the impact except through longitudinal studies.1. All ACLS see themselves as having an active role to play in contributing to the promotion of economic and social wellbeing and that there is an explicit link between the provision of learning and the development of economic and social wellbeing. This strategic goal is reflected in the provision of targeted learning, often in partnership with other agencies, to meet a diverse range of needs from ESOL, to initial engagement and first steps learning, to learning for enjoyment through leisure and self-organised learning activities.
2. Detailed, accurate and impartial information is vital to inform the development of services and ensure these are targeted effectively and appropriately to have the most impact on local need. Although many Services have local staff, their perceptions of local need may not always be complete and objective data can be helpful to confirm, but also challenge staff perceptions. ACLS make use of regional, sub-regional, borough and local data analysis provided by a range of agencies to inform their understanding of the needs of communities.

Partnership working enables organizations to share information and to co-ordinate services efficiently. For example, the Dudley Community Partnership includes a Post-19 Learning and Skills Partnership which co-ordinates work with statutory, voluntary, business and community sectors and adult learners, to develop a borough-wide strategy and plan.1. As the emphasis on value for money increases, so does the importance of services being able to evidence their impact. The range of success indicators used to evaluate the impact of ACLS include:
* Attendance, achievement and progression of all, or specific cohorts of, learners
* Learner feedback or the “Voice of the Learner”
* Economic impact measures
* Learner profile analysis to review targeted services
* Measurement of softer outcomes, or distance-travelled, particularly in relation to health and wellbeing
* Contract management of external funding introduces specific measureable outcomes
* Feedback from partner organizations

Despite these various strategies, the ACLS members agreed that further work is necessary to ensure that they can fully and robustly evidence and measure their impact.1. Staff need a range of skills to be effective in their roles where this involves leading community projects or influencing local strategic partnerships. This includes an ability to understand and engage with local communities in order to represent their needs appropriately and effectively, but also to develop local people to take on this role themselves in the future. Communication and negotiation skills are key.
2. The working definition of community development used by the ACLS partners identifies their role in relation to facilitating capacity- building and resilience of local communities. The group defines “resilience” as the ability of local places and authorities to ‘bounce back from negative global economic impacts’.
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| Impact Measures |
| As discussed above the group concluded that it is of growing importance that they are able to present evidence of the impact of their services on the learning, skills, health, economic and social well-being of communities. One of the local community engagement projects undertaken by the PRD group explored ways in which the impact of learning on well-being might be measured. Staff and volunteers from a variety of small and larger community centres in Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle under Lyme debated ‘well-being’ terminology and reflected on the benefits to them of learning and identified Feeling valued, learning new skills and feeling in control as the 3 main benefits for them |
| What Worked Well / Even Better If |
| To be discussed |