

## Swansea Learning Partnerships

### Intro

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The key players from the Swansea community in Xploit describe in their own words how they experienced the Xploit project.

*Read more...*



### Contacts

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Local learning centers and partnership are yet to be built into a coherent lifelong learning policy. Despite the numerous partnership and network initiatives of recent years, they remain occasional, interest-driven and short-lived. Policy development and local implementation are still lacking.  
*The European Association for the Education of Adults, 2006*



There are two distinct strands: From the 1980's : A history of community development that works from the bottom up - as personified by the long established community centers that have transformed their communities - e.g. Dove workshop & Glynneath. Strong women who wanted to enrich their communities. Education providers & local government (the municipality) tapped into European funding on and spread it out to the centers in the form of ICT labs, free training etc. Education providers, formal & informal had begun to work together to as the Swansea Learning Partnership to make the best use of limited resources.

As a result of Welsh Devolution the Welsh Assembly Government has taken a strategic view of European funding & has used EU funding to develop national structures and networks to apply the funding more consistently across Wales. The South West Wales Regional Learning Partnership combines education and regeneration strategies. West Wales and the Valleys area have a GDP per head of about 70% of the European average.

The XPLOIT project has run during what is widely considered in the UK to be the most difficult period, economically, since the 1930s. Within all spheres of education in Wales there has been a change of direction due to economic pressures. The focus has been on employability and digital inclusion. Part of Swansea University's response has been to develop a very successful Employability Academy that has invited local business into the University to work together with academics to develop the entrepreneurial skills & attitudes in students that will enable them to survive and prosper in a period of change.



Entrepreneurship- Swansea University is developing an e-zone and reviewing the curriculum for all learners, including part time and adults, to ensure that they all develop entrepreneurial skills. The University is working in a regional hub to develop entrepreneurship in education- partners are other local Universities and Colleges (Gower College Swansea, Swansea Metropolitan University, Neath Port Talbot College, Coleg Sir Gar and Ceredigion College). The students (including post- graduates, undergraduates, part time and FE) are setting up an enterprise society. The more vocational of DACE's Adult Education courses are popular as even the retired are seeking to develop money-making skills such as selling online, making photo presentations or designing websites. DACE has started to work with the government job-centers, as many unemployed lack the digital skills needed to access job applications online. City & County of Swansea have been putting on free events for Silver Surfers, so that they can engage online with the tax office, the local authority and the job centers (the most economic medium for running these services)

A Change of policy to reflect economic cuts has led to a decision by City & County of Swansea not to participate in projects involving European Travel for its staff.

A closer relationship between Swansea University & City & County of Swansea.  
A realisation by the centres that they have to get involved in European projects directly themselves.

A richer fund of ideas for developing learning activities from seeing first-hand the work of partner projects, including the vast resources of materials included in the EuroLocal & Pascal projects.



Judith Porch, our community guide has encouraged partnership between The Graigfelen community, involving the schoolchildren, and ART Across the City a project for the local children to create a mural. Graigfelen children have also set up and run a café, completing food hygiene courses and learning some basic business skills in the process.

<http://www.itv.com/news/wales/update/2013-02-15/craigfelen-primary-school-pupils-open-cafe-in-swanea/> as part of "Enterprise in the Valleys" project  
<http://enterpriseinthevalleys.co.uk/media/gallery/>

The DOVE workshop and Glyneath Training Centre are both working with partner organisations to develop more business links

The involvement of employers in education is a big change and it will continue to develop and help learning to take place in a more complete environment that reflects everyday life more closely. The recognition of entrepreneurial attitude as a valuable life skill in times of change is vital when the government support and benefits are shrinking.

There is a huge co-operative project between the University & City & County of Swansea to develop & make accessible the history of Swansea - the old port and the industrial area called the Hafod. The Copperopolis project to develop the huge riverside site where metal works showing that Swansea has been a *global town* since the 1870's importing copper from Australia, South America, & Cuba.



Communities First, the Welsh government's Community Focussed flagship programme to regenerate the most deprived communities in Wales has undergone a realignment in April 2012,

The new strategic priorities are:

- Prosperous Communities (Economic).
- Learning Communities (Education and Skills).
- Healthier Communities (Health).

In practical terms they have been regrouped, focusing on larger areas than previously, now called clusters, to try and make its program more effective  
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/regeneration/communitiesfirst/?lang=en>

Communities First Partnership priorities need to be properly supported and their aims and objectives better integrated into Local Authority strategic plans and vice versa. Opportunities to link the Communities First Programme into local and national health agendas (for example, through Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategies and Public Health Strategic Frameworks) were seen as essential. Similarly, links to Local Service Boards (LSB) were seen as critical to delivering the strategic priorities, and ensuring that shared objectives are taken forward. Others commented on the importance of integrating Communities First with Community Plans and individual programs such as Families First.

Joined-up delivery was felt to be essential with a need to look at how different programs can work together at the local and national level "to best effect".



Visits to community centers as part of the partner meeting are the best possible introduction of the European dimension for isolated community centers. These visits were followed up by continuous work with Community Groups using any XPLOIT ideas & resources wherever possible.

Jean Preece & Judith Porch are both part of the NIACE supported Adult learners Week Committee & disseminate to other partners at those meetings. Adult learners' week is the clearest manifestation of a Learning Community in the process of being created.

This year we are trying in various community centers to show the richness of local community activity with the presence of belly dancing, craft tasters, IT, vegetable growing, local history, Swansea City Football Club community activity, as well as the usual opportunities to use IT and sample lectures.

Dissemination via SWWRLP & other networks - Judith James who represents Swansea University on many boards & networks has spoken about the project wherever the opportunity has arisen (documented on work sheets)

Judith James & Jean Preece are attending a community award event this evening, supported by our local Danish hero, where the local paper has created a range of awards for those active in the community. We include this for our Danish partner! & we use every opportunity to disseminate our work.



Joining up separate networks, encouraging all groups in the community to see themselves as part of a whole learning community, formal and informal. There's a

growing recognition, partly pushed by economic pressures, but also a continuation of the original motivation of those pioneer community centers in the 80's who wanted to create a better community - who saw that the more connections in the network, the more we co-operate, the more productive it is for the community.

This joined -up attitude includes business and entrepreneurialism in the educational mix, which previously had been excluded.

The Welsh government has promoted the joined up government in an attempt to encourage a small country, the size of Wales, to punch above its weight.

