

Community Learning Champions



Community Learning Champions

Report on the National Community Learning Champions Support Programme 2009–2011

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Introduction

In the last year Community Learning Champions have reached more than 100,000 people, 70 per cent of them unemployed, in some of the country's most disadvantaged communities. Local people have discovered the rich resources on their doorsteps in museums, libraries and galleries. Jobless people have taken their first steps towards paid work. Friendships have formed across community and language dividing lines. Homeless people have new hope that they can make something of their lives.

These are some snapshots of what has been achieved in just over a year by the 2,000 Community Learning Champions who have signed on to the national register as part of the National Support Programme for Community Learning Champions.

The Community Learning Champions approach represents a highly effective way of promoting adult learning, rooted in communities, driven by volunteers, and supported by the voluntary sector and local authorities. Significantly, it reflects the understanding that real change happens when the people themselves are in the driving seat; not the professionals, not the service managers, not the policy-makers, not the politicians. Community Learning Champions are part of a bottom-up movement that can reshape and democratise local services. This fits with the Government's ambition to build the Big Society; where individuals are empowered to improve their own lives and the communities they live in.

The report will be of special interest to anyone working to improve places and services and to strengthen communities. It will also help those considering setting up or funding Community Learning Champion schemes.

Based as the scheme is on the work of volunteers, training and supporting Community Learning Champions effectively is fundamental to their impact, and this requires funds. Community Learning Champions should be viewed as complementary to the work of professionals, not substitutes for them. They have a valuable role to play in engaging people who have proved hard to reach for traditional providers, signposting them and supporting them through learning but also helping to develop new learning opportunities for them.

This publication reports on the activities and achievements of the Community Learning Champions National Support Programme which ran from August 2009 to March 2011, funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and developed and managed by a partnership comprising NIACE,

WEA, unionlearn and Martin Yarnit Associates. Written by the project team, it does not purport to be an independent evaluation of the programme, although it does draw on quantitative evidence about the Community Learning Champions and their impact.

This report outlines the key elements of the programme, local and national, assesses the difference the Community Learning Champions have made and identifies the resources produced. It should be read alongside those resources, especially the toolkits, the training programme and a series of films illustrating various aspects of the work of Community Learning Champions.

It is supplemented by a series of case studies illustrating the work and impact of a variety of projects and approaches. The focus is primarily on the 50 projects funded through the programme, but it also touches on the activities of the 15 or so Community Learning Champions projects supported by other funding streams such as Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities. The case studies, and a set of appendices detailing registered Community Learning Champion projects at March 2011, and training for Community Learning Champions offered by projects, can be downloaded from <http://www.communitylearningchampions.org.uk>. This report can be downloaded from the same site.

Summary: Reaching out and engaging learners

A new national enabling framework for Community Learning Champions

Taking part in learning is good for health and well-being, for individuals and communities. It builds confidence and the skills for living and working. But often the people who can benefit from it most are least likely to take part. Enthusiastic volunteers – called variously learning champions, advocates and mentors – have been proving for years their effectiveness in reaching out to the people who are less likely to respond to traditional marketing and outreach. Passionate about learning because of the way it has changed their lives, learning champions are the best advocates of its value to others. They are able to act as role models for family, friends and neighbours because they are 'people like us'; that is, local people, volunteers in the main, rather than paid professionals. In disadvantaged communities, they perform a similar role to union learning representatives in the workplace, complementing the work of professionals in voluntary organisations, local authorities and other agencies.

A more coherent approach generates results

The potential of Community Learning Champions (CLCs) has won the recognition of Ministers keen to promote the value of learning. BIS – the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills – has funded a National Support Programme for CLCs that builds on the best of what has gone before, adding coherence to what had previously been disparate so as to provide a firm springboard for future development. The programme has scaled up previously fragmented local initiatives, given them the backing and prestige of a national framework and set them in a wider policy context. Resources do not have to be wasted on re-inventing the wheel.

As a result, 2,000 CLCs have been trained and registered and have engaged 100,000 people in learning in less than 18 months at an overall cost of £3 million – a powerful demonstration of the potential of the approach.

The legacy – an enabling framework

The legacy of the support programme is a framework that enables projects to develop to meet local needs. Providing support, rather than prescribing a particular model from the centre, it offers access to a range of resources and a quality standard that ensures that CLCs across the country operate within a common set of values and principles. It has also established a national presence to

raise the profile of CLCs and their work and to make connections with key policy initiatives relating to children, families, employability, well-being and the reshaping of public services, ensuring that CLC projects do not operate in isolation.

The framework does not offer ongoing financial support for local projects but it has established:

- an online register for CLCs;
- a profile-raising marketing campaign with a distinctive logo and badge worn by registered CLCs;
- an accredited training programme;
- a website to disseminate innovation;
- a light-touch monitoring system for gathering evidence of impact;
- network meetings to share ideas and experience;
- toolkits that distil best practice for the benefit of managers and CLCs;
- a series of short films about CLCs and their impact.

Behind the framework's success is an ethos that values creativity and collaboration and the notion that local people know better. It works because:

- every type of learning has been encouraged, especially informal community learning, to make for an inclusive and powerful appeal;
- CLCs have been encouraged to discover their own enthusiasms and creativity to engage learners and to develop new learning opportunities;
- CLCs have been attached to local hubs and service providers such as community centres, children's centres, schools, clinics, healthy living centres and libraries where they have been able to acquire new skills and knowledge and apply them for the benefit of service users;
- projects are run by partnerships that can draw on the combined strengths of the voluntary, public and private sectors, reaching out to the broadest range of people in the most disadvantaged communities – including people who rarely figure in traditional adult learning programmes including the elderly, black and minority ethnic women, homeless people and members of immigrant communities.

Now, as BIS funding for the CLC programme comes to an end, the reform of informal, adult and community learning currently underway provides an opportunity for embedding this highly successful approach in local service planning and delivery.

1. Need and context

The origins of the National Support Programme



There can surely be no better envoys for lifelong learning than inspirational people in local communities sharing their thirst for skills, their hunger for education with others; and we now have more than 600 registered Community Learning Champions (CLCs). These people bring learning to life for thousands across the country.

I have seen for myself the difference that community learning, whether it's practical or academic, can make to people's health and self esteem whatever their age, background or previous experience.

Our new Government is dedicated to building a truly big society, and lifelong learning has an important role to play. Adult learning brings the promise of a better society, founded on social mobility, social justice and social cohesion.



John Hayes, Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (28 May 2010)¹

Early in 2009, the previous Government announced a £3 million Community Learning Champions (CLC) National Support Programme. It formed part of a new national strategy for informal adult learning set out in the White Paper *The Learning Revolution*. It said:



Learning from effective practice in the most successful schemes, we will invest up to £3m, engaging a national delivery partner or partners to design and implement a national support programme, to include:

- *a network and national advisory group for CLC schemes*
- *regional events and an annual conference for CLCs*

¹ <http://www.niace.org.uk/news/14-projects-get-funding-for-community-learning>

- a light touch system for assuring quality, improving outcomes and improving data sharing to track outcomes
- a coherent training and development framework and access to continuing professional development
- successful and sustainable approaches to recruiting volunteer champions.² ””

Background

CLCs – also known as advocates, ambassadors, mentors and agents – are nothing new. For example, projects such as those in Bolton, Gloucester, Greenwich, Sheffield, Swindon and Nottingham pioneered the approach from the 1990s onwards as part of an increasing focus on the adult learning needs of deprived communities.³ The approach spread and with it came a growing recognition in the adult learning community of its value, because it could:

- help learners to make better informed choices about the learning services available;
- ensure that those with the greatest need could access learning;
- ensure that users can help to shape and improve services to meet their needs.

In addition, it was clear that, through their activities as learning champions, many people were gaining the skills and knowledge themselves to take a vital step forward to further or higher education, employment or volunteering.

Reflecting the growing interest in the approach in Government, in 2007 the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills commissioned a survey of the field. The resulting report, *Learning Champions: A Vital Link*,⁴ pointed to the contrast between the effectiveness of the model and the fragility of support and funding. It suggested that there was a decline in the number of schemes despite the fact that they were benefitting learners in a number of ways through:

² Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2009) *The Learning Revolution*, paragraph 2.22.

³ You can read reviews of the work of the Sheffield and Nottingham projects at <http://www.martinyarnitassociates.co.uk/learningbrokerage.php>

⁴ Learning Champions: a vital link at <http://www.martinyarnitassociates.co.uk/learningbrokerage.php>

- **widening participation**, by attracting hard to reach groups to learning and raising their aspirations – e.g. Kent’s learning champions attracted 1808 people to courses over five years;
- **increasing the numbers of people with Level 2/3 qualifications, especially from target groups**, by mentoring and supporting learners, enabling them to make the transition from first rung learning to a Level 2 or 3 qualification;
- **achieving the 80 per cent employment rate and reducing benefits dependence**, by signposting individuals towards programmes that could help them into employment;
- **raising attainment in education for children and young people**, by helping to improve parent–school links, reducing exclusions and helping parents to support their children’s learning. A growing number of schemes act as a bridge between parents and schools.

The report made a series of recommendations for putting learning champion projects on a firmer basis. It called for:

- a national network with regional events;
- a light-touch quality system;
- an accredited training programme;
- the appointment of scheme coordinators to recruit, train and support learning champions;
- the need for national and local recognition of the learning champion role;
- earmarked financial support to ensure sustainability.

A national consultation on the future of informal adult learning led to the publication of *The Learning Revolution* white paper early in 2009. This succeeded in turning the spotlight on the value of informal adult learning in transforming lives and communities, and in many cases as the essential first step to formal and vocational qualifications. It also recognised the value of what it referred to as *Community Learning Champions (CLCs)*, as ‘foot soldiers’ in opening up access in disadvantaged areas, and proposed the creation of a National Support Programme with sufficient resources to kick-start development. The programme adopted many of the recommendations made by the *Vital Link* report, and called for a strategic framework to be created as part of a revival of informal adult learning.

What is informal adult learning?

Informal adult learning encompasses a huge variety of activities: it could be a dance class at a church hall, a book group at a local library, cookery skills learnt in a community centre, a guided visit to a nature reserve or stately home, researching the National Gallery collection online, writing a Wikipedia entry or taking part in a volunteer project to record the living history of a particular community.

Although informal learning can support the development of work-related skills, the primary purpose isn't to gain a qualification. People participate for enjoyment and are driven by their desire for personal fulfilment or intellectual, creative and physical stimulation.

Such activity also contributes to the health and well-being of communities by building the confidence and resilience of the individuals involved. The social relationships that develop as a result of this informal learning can provide networks of support and solidarity. For the low-skilled and under-confident, informal learning can be an important stepping stone to further learning and a more skilled future.

Following the change of Government in May 2010, the new Ministers made clear their strong support for informal adult and community learning and for the CLC model, which they saw as an important element in achieving their Big Society ambitions. They returned to the learning theme later in the year with The Skills for Sustainable Growth Strategy white paper which called for a reform of further and adult education to improve the nation's skills base and particularly that of disadvantaged communities.⁵ It suggested drawing on the expertise and successes of CLCs and Union Learning Representatives to promote the development of workplace learning champions.

The central support, commitment and resources available from the national programme should not be underestimated. The WEA training programme has proved invaluable for delivering our second course and through attending regional network conferences we were able to speak to other local Community Learning Champion (CLC) schemes and share best practice.

Cheshire West and Chester CLC project quarterly report

⁵ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2010) *Skills for Sustainable Growth*.

2. The National Support Programme

In August 2009, following a competitive bidding process, the Government appointed a consortium to set up and run the national support programme. The consortium comprised NIACE, the WEA, unionlearn and Martin Yarnit Associates.

A key objective of the National Support Programme was to create for the first time strategic leadership and coordination and provide a framework for support and development that would also sustain local projects after Government funding had ceased. The plan drew on existing effective practice, including the work of long established learning champion projects such as those in Bolton and Greenwich and that of the Union Learning Representatives managed and supported through unionlearn and various trade unions.

The Development Fund-supported projects – setting them up

To raise the profile of CLCs across the country and to trial different approaches and new materials, 50 local projects were set up. The bulk of the funding, 80 per cent of the Government grant for the programme, was distributed to local projects in areas with high levels of deprivation. This was specified in the grant criteria as districts with a high ranking on the index of multiple disadvantage. Grants were given out in two phases. In Phase 1 organisations were invited to bid for up to £30,000 in year 1 (December 2009–March 2010), with opportunity to apply for a further £10,000 continuation funding from April 2010 to March 2011. Phase 2 (April 2010–March 2011) invited new applications for funding of up to £25,000.

The broadest possible range of organisations from areas of disadvantage were encouraged to apply, including voluntary sector bodies, private sector firms, charities and local authorities.

Applications for funding could be made by either:

- local partnerships targeting their activities on areas with high levels of educational need that met one or both of the following criteria:
 - ten per cent or more of their Lower level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) were in the most deprived national decile on the Education, Skills and Training domain on the IMD2007;
 - eligible for Working Neighbourhoods Fund;

or

- national, regional or cross-regional organisations targeting groups currently excluded from learning (5 per cent of funding was available for such applications). This was offered because of the potential to address very specific needs of particular communities that might be dispersed and numerically quite small, but whose needs might not be met any other way.

For Phase 1, there were 129 eligible applications and of these 36 were approved. For Phase 2 the figures were 109 and 14. Total grant funding for Phase 1 was £1,440,000 and for Phase 2 £350,000.

Successful Phase 1 projects were invited to a briefing session in Birmingham in December 2009.⁶ Due to the short timescales, support materials were being developed in parallel to the emerging projects. Development Fund-supported projects were encouraged to assist the national programme in developing resources by trialling materials, commenting on drafts and by attending discussion forums which have helped shape the programme.

To assist in their development, and to ensure that they fulfilled the requirements of their funding agreement, each project had a member of the project management team assigned to it on a regional basis and project leads were encouraged to use this link for questions relating to policy or for advice in the development of the project. Projects have commented positively on the support and advice they have received in this way.

Support has continued through the lifetime of the projects and has included regular email updates to project leads from the project manager and a workshop on sustainability for all projects in December 2010.

⁶ Phase 2 projects were invited to a briefing in April 2010.

Creating a national presence and the Community Learning Champions brand

A key feature of the plan was to raise the profile of CLCs in order both to create a strong ripple of interest in their work and what they could achieve and to strengthen their legitimacy in the eyes of their fellow citizens, local service providers and potential funders. The local projects felt this was needed and the brand was developed in consultation with them.



The national Community Learning Champions register and badge

Credit: Groundwork



Stephanie Pickett – the first CLC on the national register – receives her badge from the Mayor of Coventry

The national register and badging process were developed to give legitimacy to the CLCs as well as to monitor their work and the projects they operate within. CLCs are accepted by those who they help as people who can be approached for reliable information, part of a wider and trusted scheme. The CLCs are able to lay claim to a share



The CLC badge

in a growing brand, to undertake accredited training and to participate in a wider network.

Once CLCs have embarked on their training and grasped the wider context of their activities, CLC project managers are able to register them online as CLCs. In registering their CLCs, organisations take responsibility for ensuring that their CLCs have signed up to an agreed statement of values and principles (see box below). To ensure that the register is sustainable in the long term, the responsibility for ensuring that CLCs understand their role and are checked for their own and others' safety (this may include a CRB check depending on their target group) lies with the local projects.⁷

Registered Community Learning Champions

Declaration of values and principles

Community Learning Champions value lifelong learning for:

- *its potential to benefit people emotionally, physically, intellectually, socially and economically;*
- *its contribution to the health and well-being of communities.*

Community Learning Champions uphold the following principles

- **Community Learning Champions are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to learners and the community;**
- **Community Learning Champions are impartial.** *They give information and advice to meet the needs and interests of the learner, and not providers or other organisations.*
- **Community Learning Champions respect confidentiality.** *They will not pass on personal information without the learner's prior permission.*
- **Community Learning Champions are committed to improving the quality of their practice.** *They take part in training and development and ongoing reflection and evaluation of their own practice.*

The training programme

The training programme developed by the WEA was designed to complement locally designed and delivered induction programmes. This was refined through a series of regional events designed both to enrich the programme and induct the core delivery team and the resulting 24-hour-long programme

⁷ CRB – Criminal Records Bureau – checks have been required since 2002 for those whose work places them in contact with vulnerable groups, including children.

was built around the concept of a learning journey. After further consultation, the materials and learning outcomes were designed for Level 1 and Level 2 learners. The materials were piloted in the spring of 2010 and published on the website. Simultaneously, steps were taken to secure accreditation for the course with a recognised examination body (NCFE), a process which was achieved in June 2010.

The course was offered to all Development Fund-supported projects, delivered through a team of locally based tutors. Sixty per cent took up the offer and over 55 courses have been delivered, reaching more than 550 CLCs. In addition, ten courses have been provided for schemes that were not supported by the Development Fund, and several others have delivered the materials in house.

Evaluation of the impact of the programme demonstrates that it has been highly valued by both CLCs and scheme coordinators:



I loved the course, the tutor was so friendly and made it fun. I enjoyed sharing my CLC work with others.'

A learner at Cooke e-Learning project, Leicester

Attending the course means I now understand the role of CLC better. It was good to think about how successful I've been to date and also to recognise some of the pitfalls.



A CLC at Enable, Nottinghamshire

Some projects found it difficult to embed the training course within their scheme. In the majority of cases this was because the CLCs were geographically dispersed. To partially overcome this, distance learning materials were developed, which could be used to reduce the core contact time. These are available on the website, together with suggested alternative delivery models.

Most projects have offered their CLCs a wide range of additional training opportunities as well as locally developed induction programmes reflecting local priorities and conditions, complementing the national training programme. Examples of the additional training offered over the last year include (a full list appears on the website):

- National Open College Network accreditation and NVQ in IAG (Information Advice and Guidance);
- use of Moodle;
- PTTLS (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector);
- research methods training;
- Adult Learner Support – OCNW (Open College Network);
- safeguarding training;
- mental health and disability awareness;
- equality and diversity training;
- peer facilitation training.



Credit: Groundwork

A training session at Groundwork 2

Collecting data – the challenge of asking people to monitor what they do

Gathering data and evidence of impact is vital for local projects:

- to enable them to assess and improve their service;
- as evidence of their impact to secure future funding.

It is for these reasons that, working closely with Development Fund-supported projects, a light-touch monitoring system has been designed which gathers data of two sorts: quantitative data through the register of CLCs and the online monitoring system, and qualitative information through regular project reviews. The material gathered includes:

- the numbers and characteristics of the CLCs;
- the number and type of interventions they have engaged in with learners;
- the numbers of learners with whom the CLCs have engaged and the characteristics of the learners with whom they have made one-to-one or longer-term contact;
- case studies of CLCs and the impact that being a CLC has had on them;
- case studies of learners engaged into learning by CLCs and the impact this has had on them;
- pictures of practice which give evidence on how CLCs' activity has made a difference by improving or making savings to service delivery and impact on the community.

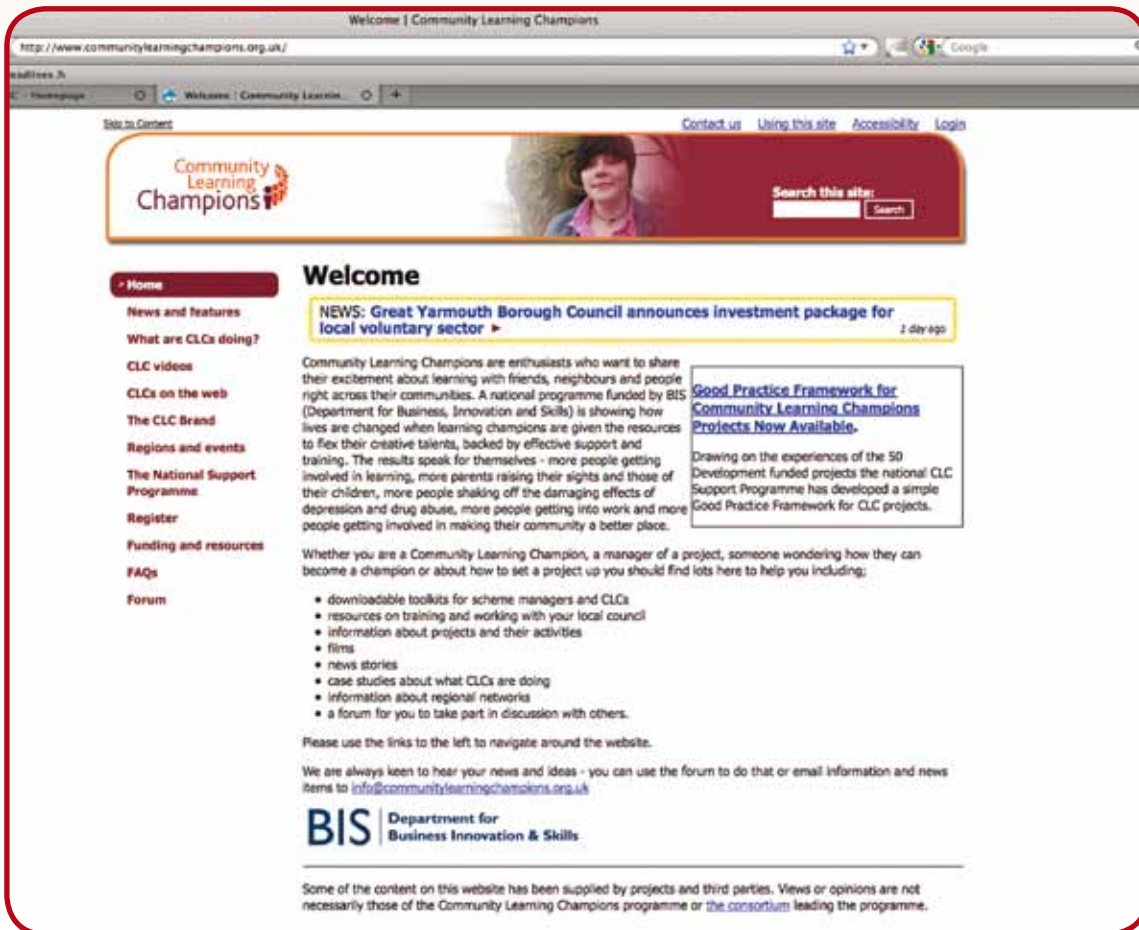
The online monitoring of CLCs and activity has been modified through the life of the project and the guidance simplified. A recent phone review of all of the Development Fund-supported projects has shown that they are of the view that the modified system is fit for use.

Establishing a workable light-touch monitoring system has been perhaps the most challenging aspect of the programme. Convincing CLCs, who are largely volunteers, of the need to record the work they do and to ask for the details of the people they have supported has been hard, especially for projects that are widely dispersed or working with a range of partners.

Nevertheless, some useful lessons have been learned about how best to operate the system. At an early stage the projects supported by the Development Fund were supplied with sample forms which they could use to gather the information. Some projects have amended these forms and some have developed them in simple diary form. These appear to make the information gathering simpler and these are shared on the website for projects to use or amend for their own purposes.

Analysis of the information gathered in this way is included in Chapter 4.

The Website



The CLC website – www.communitylearningchampions.org.uk – provides a coherent national presence and voice for CLCs as well as providing news and easy access to a growing fund of resources such as films, evidence, stories, case studies and toolkits. There is also a growing CLC presence in the social networking media with several Facebook pages and a number of local websites. Links to these are now on the CLC website.

Toolkits

An important feature of the national programme has been the systematic collection of information and evidence of what constitutes effective practice. That has taken a variety of forms including the creation of two toolkits, one which supports project managers or would be project managers, and one designed for CLCs. These fit alongside the national training programme, with clear links where appropriate. Both toolkits represent a selection of the best published material and interviews with practitioners and are intended to provide access to state of the art practice when they were written. They have now been supplemented by the Good Practice Framework (see following section).



Films

To assist the Development Funded projects in setting up, the National Support Programme commissioned three films in the early stage of the programme based on existing CLC activity. A further three films which show the impact of CLCs and the projects which support them across the country have been produced in 2010/11. Finally, a film has been made illustrating aspects of the Good Practice Guide set out in this report. These are all available on the website, and the four most recent films made about the work of CLCs are in a DVD within the cover of this report. Earlier films and those made indendently by CLC projects are available on the website.

Networks

The WEA has taken the lead in establishing regional CLC networks across the country. These were initiated in the nine English regions with a preliminary meeting to assess the level of interest from both Development Fund-supported and non-Development Fund-supported CLC projects. Over 20 regional network meetings each led by a WEA tutor, have taken place over the life of the National Support Programme and several virtual networks have been set up. In most cases, these have been attended by project managers and CLCs.

This approach has proved most effective in areas with a relatively high density of schemes and an established tradition of regional working. In these cases, it provided opportunities for face-to-face networking, giving CLCs a chance to

talk about their activities and projects and to share problems. It also provided an environment in which less active CLCs could learn from others about how to get started, and provided them with a space in which they could ask questions of their peers rather than the project managers.

In the more successful networks, events have been supplemented by learning activities. For example, in the North West a meeting was held in Blackpool, where the project focuses on local heritage, and participants given a guided tour of the Tower. In a number of cases meetings have been supplemented by activities related to the use of technology. In response to this, the WEA is developing a series of short training activities focused on different aspects of the role of ICT in learning with materials available through the CLC website.

In rural areas and regions where schemes were more dispersed, a number of schemes sought to establish virtual networks using social networking software. CLCs were enthusiastic about this approach but in practice it failed to gain momentum, with many volunteers realising that they did not want to mix their private networks with things to do with their volunteer/work life.

In the meantime, it seems that existing networks will continue in some regions, perhaps led by CLC projects themselves. In some cases, it may be that new spatial boundaries, perhaps provided by conglomerations of local authorities, will provide a firmer foundation for collaboration between CLCs.

National Advisory Group

Set up to advise the project team on the direction of the programme, the National Advisory Group (NAG) has drawn on the support of two main constituent groups: CLC project managers and senior figures in voluntary and learning organisations. It has played a valuable role as a forum for airing key issues such as the relevance of the CLC model for evolving Government policy and the best prospects for sustainability.

CLC Voice Group

The CLC Voice Group, set up to represent the views of CLCs themselves to the project team and the NAG, helped to shape the identity of the initiative. CLCs representing the regions contributed to the design of the now-familiar logo and the contents of the CLC welcome pack sent to the first 2,000 registered CLCs. Subsequent meetings generated a letter to the Prime Minister about the value of CLCs, and a proposal for an annual CLC week of

activity. Several improvements came about following discussion at the Voice Group including a welcome message to all newly registered CLCs, a regular update bulletin for all CLC projects, and changes to the website which make it more accessible. Following a discussion about lobbying local authorities, a 'how to' guide for CLCs has been uploaded to the website – see <http://www.communitylearningchampions.org.uk/talking-your-local-council>

Raising the profile of the CLC approach

An important aspect of the work of the programme has been the raising of the public profile of CLCs. Many local projects have made good use of the press, radio and TV, and this approach has been supplemented by the mounting of several events. These include:

- a visit to Greenwich CLC Project by HRH The Princess Royal;
- the presentation of CLC badges to the first and the most recent CLC to be registered in front of an invited audience of potential corporate sponsors and MPs in Central Hall Westminster;
- a seminar at NIACE, Leicester, for potential CLC host organisations;
- a national dissemination event for CLC projects and opinion formers in central London;
- the presentation of CLC awards during Adult Learners' Week May 2011.



3. Community Learning Champions projects: organisation and focus

It has been clear for over a decade that the CLC approach can be very effective in drawing in new learners and jump-starting the careers of the CLCs themselves. But it took a carefully designed national programme with the money to fund 50 discrete projects to enable the CLC approach to flourish in a whole variety of different ways.

Types of organisation leading Community Learning Champions projects

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of lead organisations for the 50 projects supported by the Development Fund.

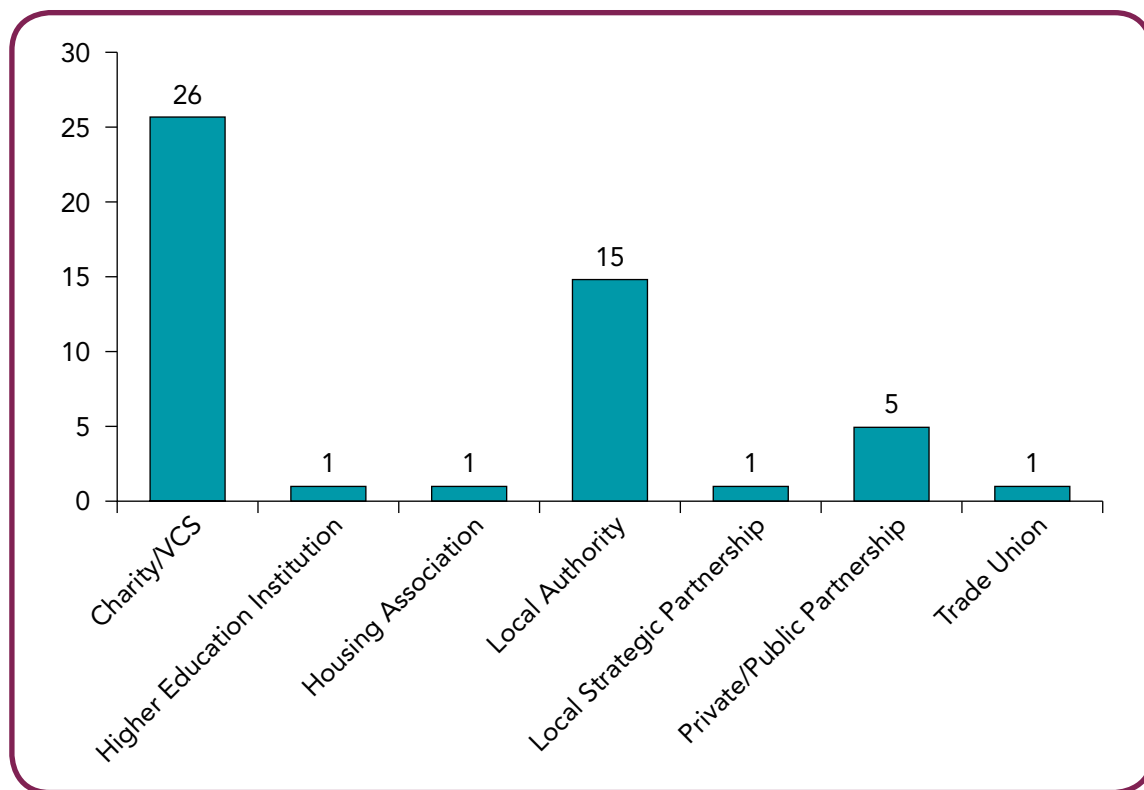


Figure 1. Development funded projects: lead organisations

The monitoring survey of February 2011 (Figure 2) shows that 61 per cent of CLCs currently supported are members of projects led by charity/voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, with 31 per cent belonging to projects led by local authorities.

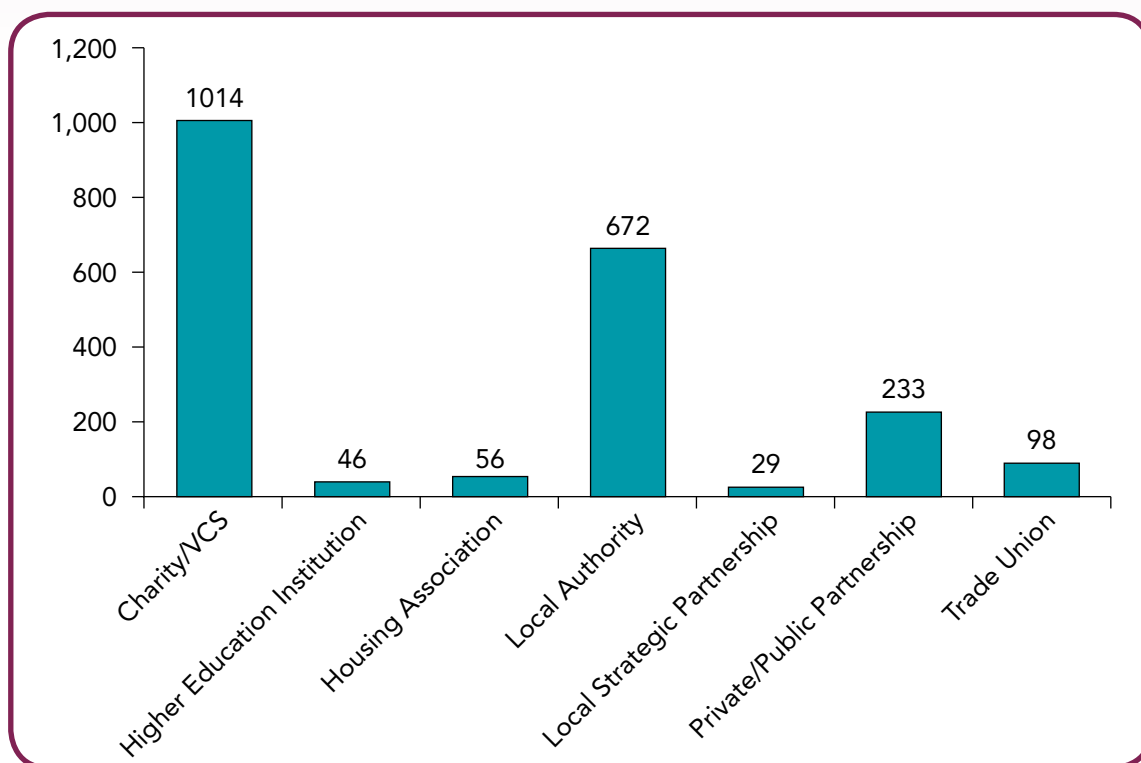


Figure 2. Number of CLCs supported by projects led by different organisation types⁸

However, CLCs supported by local authority-led projects accounted for 25 per cent of hours of activity, while those belong to charity/VCS-led projects accounted for 22 per cent.

Figure 3 (over) shows the impact of the work of CLCs according to organisation type. This demonstrates that projects led by charity/VCS schemes and those led by public/private partnerships have been more successful in attracting people to learning activities.

⁸ This data is derived from 49 project returns in the CLC monitoring survey February 2011 with a total of 1649 currently supported CLCs.

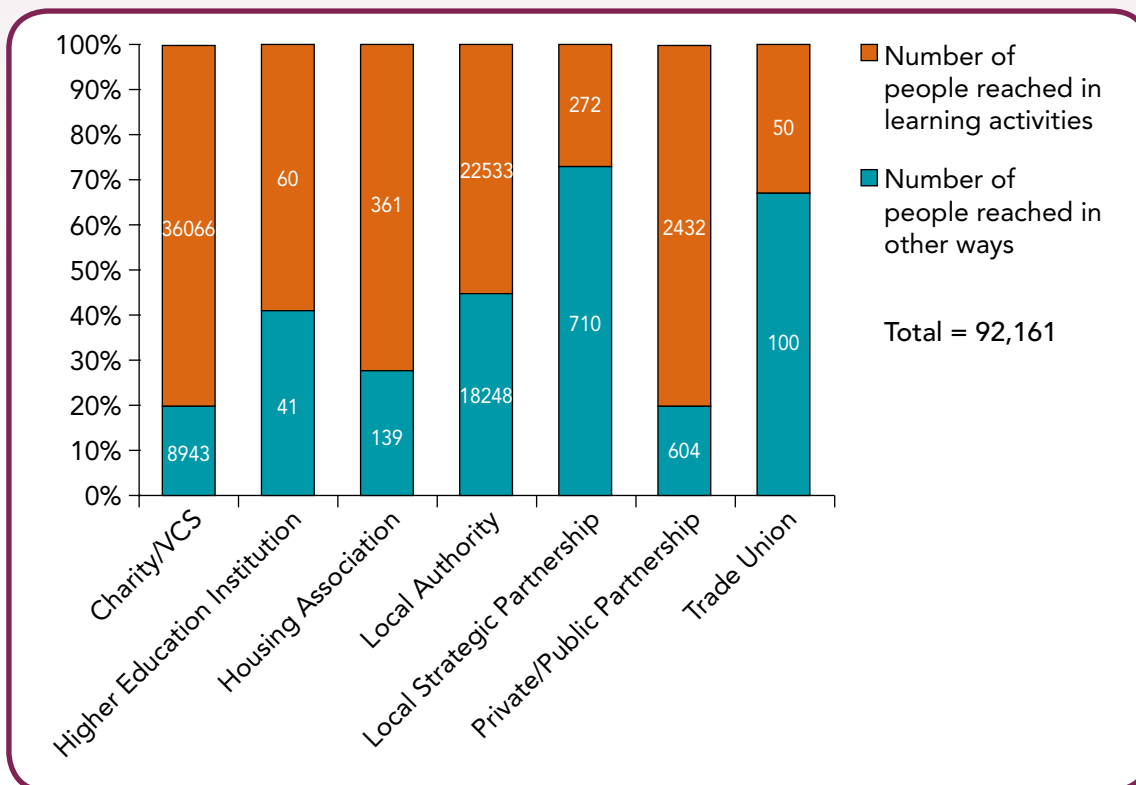


Figure 3. Impact of CLC activities according to organisation type

Structure

A close look at the organisation of these projects suggests that the way in which they structure themselves seems to reflect a number of factors such as:

- the size of the area the CLCs work in;
- whether the project is based in a rural or urban area;
- whether the focus of the project is on a particular target group, for example black or minority ethnic women or army families, or to focus more broadly on disadvantaged people;
- the partners the project works with;
- the amount of available funding.

Projects organise CLCs in one of the following three ways:

- as a team of CLCs;
- as a team of CLCs who are supported by either:
 - mentors, who may have paid roles in, for example, libraries, children's centres, adult community learning services, further education colleges and other providers;

- senior CLCs who support the work of smaller teams of CLCs;
- with central co-ordination from an organisation that holds a contract and the funding to deliver a CLC project, and that works with smaller organisations that recruit and support the CLCs.

The three models are shown below in diagrammatic form.

1. The Team

This is the most common approach, best suiting situations where CLCs are managed by one organisation and one manager in one location. The advantage of this model is that CLCs are able to build a strong sense of identity around a particular town or community. Examples of this include One KX in central London and Cheshire West and Chester in Northwich.

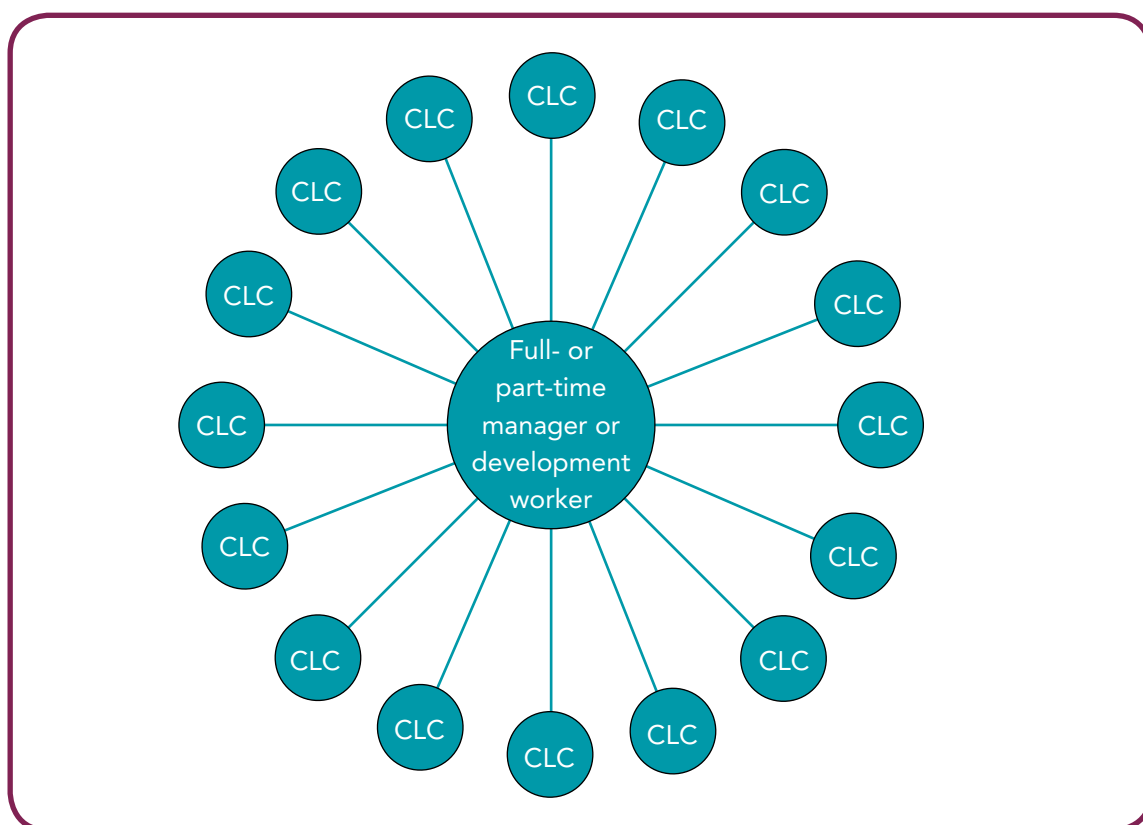


Figure 4. The CLC Team

2. The Mentor Model

Some projects distinguish between the role of mentors and CLCs, where the former are either experienced CLCs or are drawn from practitioners working for one or more organisation.

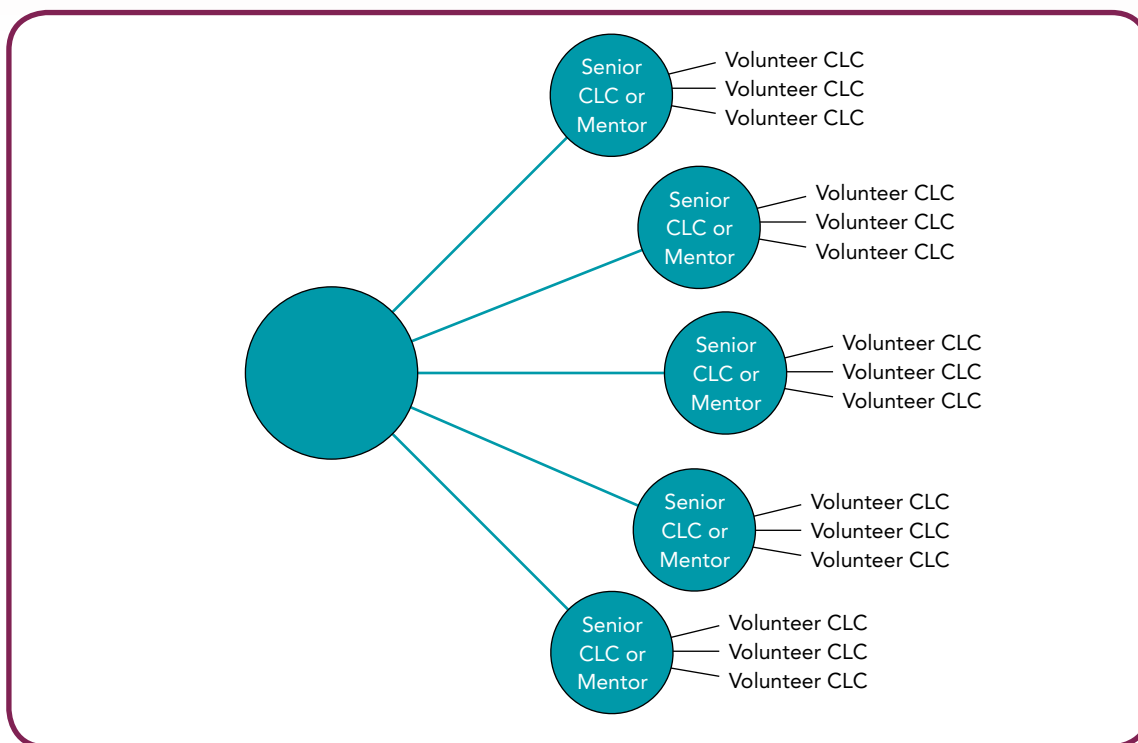


Figure 5. The Mentor Model

In Limehouse, East London, ten mentors have been trained in a two-day programme to help them support the CLCs more effectively. CLCs have a point of contact with a mentor as well as with the CLC project coordinator. Mentors can act as a sounding board and update CLCs on local providers. Mentors are responsible for working with CLCs on Individual Action Plans.

3. CLCs attached to a range of partners

Many CLC projects consist of a host organisation working with a set of partners. Often CLCs are attached to and managed by the partners while the host takes responsibility for overall coordination and management of resources.

In Cumbria, the geographical spread of the CLC project is wide (Cumbria is the third largest county in England) and transport links are poor. The project operates from a number of local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) offices

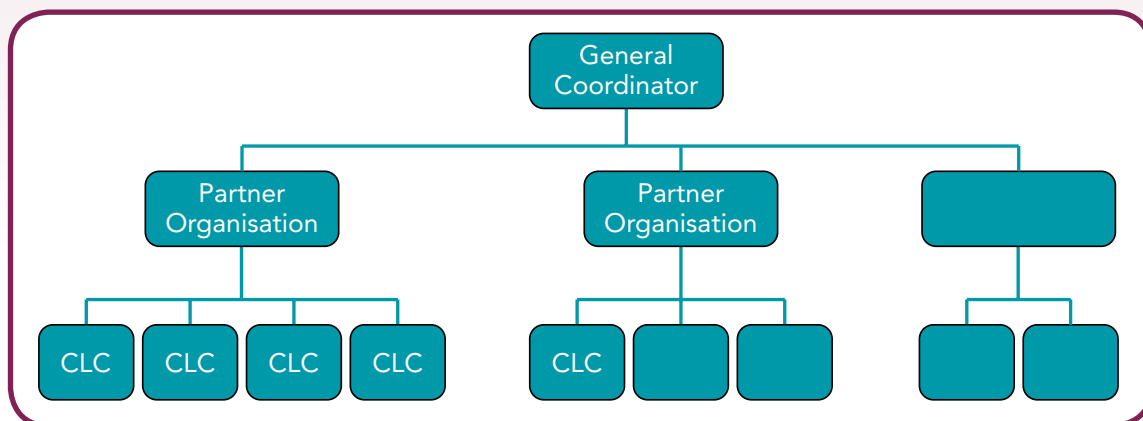


Figure 6. CLCs attached to partners

and therefore it has been essential to ensure that CVS staff across Cumbria are able to support the scheme and can step in to assist local CLCs if necessary.

In partnership with Age UK, South Tyneside CLCs worked with local schools to recruit young people who then supported users of the Age UK centre to learn to use a Wii and Facebook.

Focus: working with target groups

All projects were asked to state the target groups they aimed to work with; many chose to work with multiple target groups, and some found during the course of the project that there were problems in recruiting CLCs from particular groups.

The planned target groups should be viewed alongside the actual beneficiaries – i.e. learners – reached.

Of the beneficiaries whose gender was recorded, 67 per cent were women, 32 per cent male. This is a higher than expected proportion of men for informal adult and community learning, where traditionally male participation is low. More typical is the gender ratio of the CLCs, which is 72 per cent female to 28 per cent male. This is very similar to the percentage for those funded through the Adult Safeguarded Budget for 2009–10: 75 per cent female and 25 per cent male.

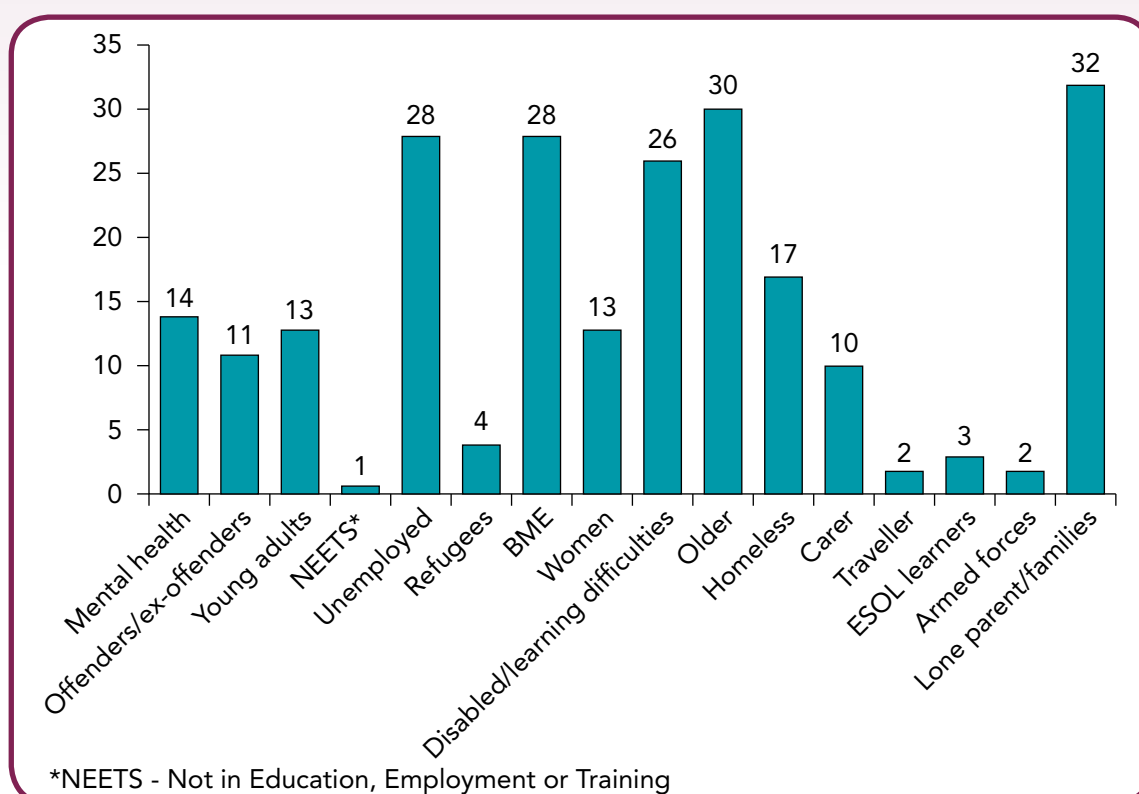


Figure 7. Planned target groups for CLC activities

Where disability was recorded, 22 per cent of beneficiaries stated that they had a disability (compared with 13 per cent of CLCs). On the other hand, for those 26 projects where people with a disability were stated as a target group, the figure for beneficiaries reached was only 16 per cent.

Twenty-eight projects targeted black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. In a significant number of instances, projects were not able to tell us the ethnic background of the learners they reached. However, for those for whom we do have data, the outcome was 12,478 white learners reached compared with 5,717 black and minority ethnic learners reached (Figure 8).

Turning to employment status (Figure 9), 70 per cent of beneficiaries whose employment status was recorded were not in paid work, far higher than the national figure.⁹ This compares with 47 per cent of registered CLCs who were not in paid work. It should be noted here, however, that there was a high percentage of beneficiaries whose status is unknown.

⁹ Tuckett and Aldridge, 2010 *A Change for the Better: The NIACE Survey on Adult Participation in Learning 2010*, NIACE, p. 18.

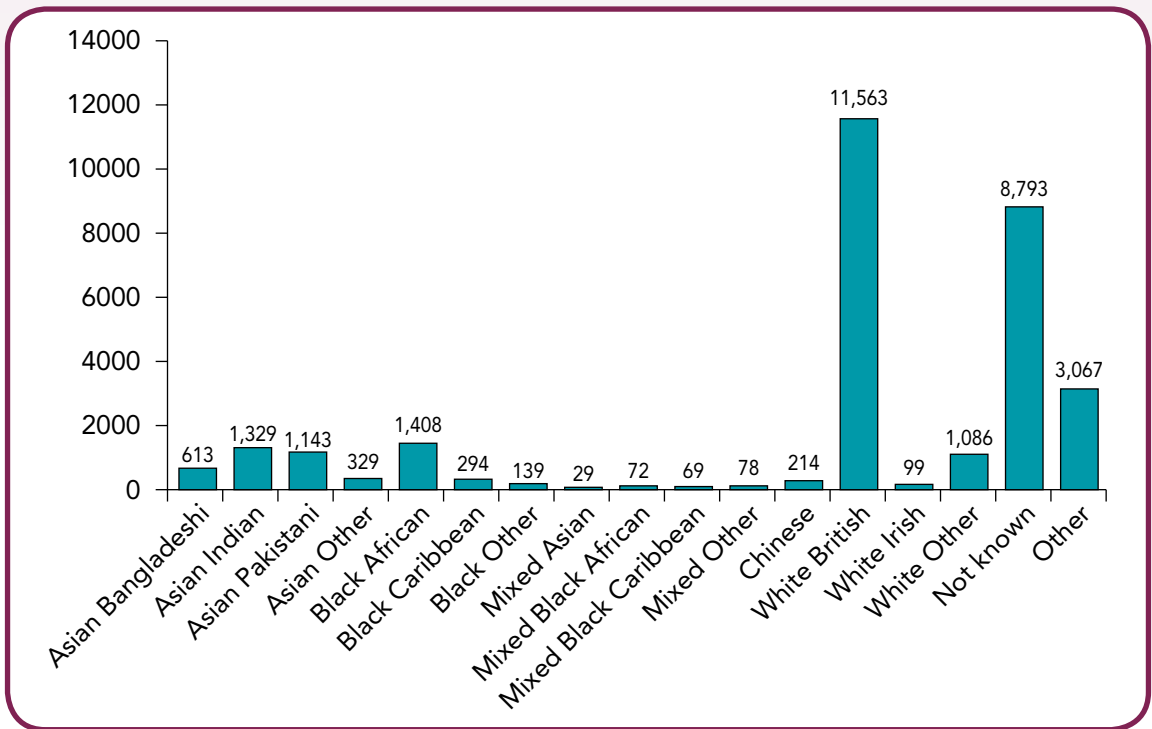


Figure 8. Beneficiaries: ethnic groups

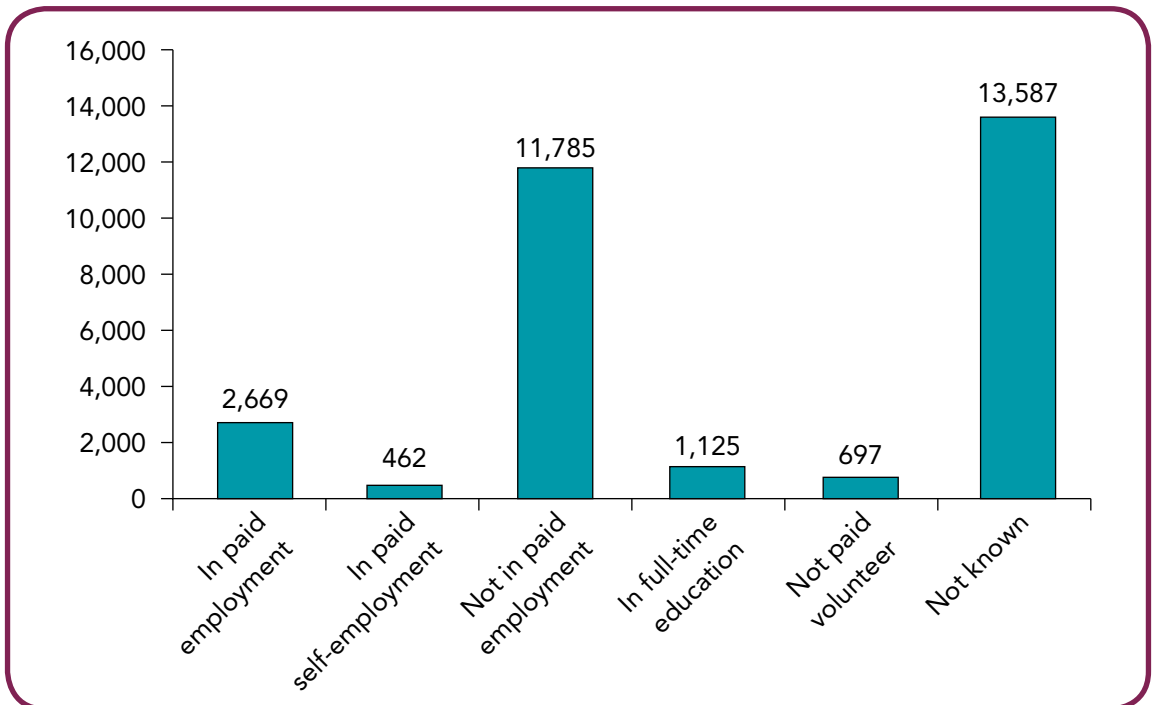


Figure 9. Beneficiaries: employment status

Relationships and activities

Local relationships have been crucial to the CLC projects whose work is reviewed here. This is unsurprising: it was a condition of funding for projects that they could demonstrate strong local partnerships. This insistence derived from an analysis of CLC projects carried out before the National Support Programme came into being. The reason for this emphasis is related to the nature of CLC work. CLCs are brokers, acting as the link between would be learners and learning providers. To reach into communities to recruit CLCs and to engage learners often requires the help of a variety of partners, many of them small voluntary sector organisations. To ensure that there is a coherent response to learners' needs, projects also have to form partnerships with learning providers and other local agencies. Many projects have multiple partners, in some cases acting as the hosts and managers of sub-teams of CLCs.

In Birmingham, for example, BEEAS (Birmingham Ethnic Education and Advisory Service), a local voluntary organisation, has worked with Birmingham Social Services, Joseph Chamberlain College, Handsworth Extended Schools Cluster, Aston Pride and Birmingham Churches Together to provide learning opportunities to black and minority ethnic women. There are many examples of partnership taking the concrete form of posting a CLC or a team of CLCs with a local agency, such as the Children's Centre in Jarrow or to primary schools in Hackney.

Partnership, as well as being vital for effective working, is also important for sustainability. At Groundwork Coventry the partnership with the local authority in the CLC project was intrinsic to its success, because:

- it enabled CLCs to make use of a local community facility and work in partnership with service users;
- it ensured ongoing commitment from the local authority to continue to support the CLCs beyond the life of the project wherever possible.

It is difficult to do justice to the wide range of CLC project activities involving partners but a common link has been with libraries and museums.

Libraries and museums

In Lancashire the CLC scheme has enabled Lancashire Adult Learning and Lancashire Libraries and Museums to work closely together to raise the profile of informal learning, forming a solid foundation for future sustainability. Most of the libraries are also UK Online centres, which offer many additional features to encourage the wider use of libraries, increased use of volunteers and greater recognition for individuals on what the role of a CLC is through training and information passed on to them.

One aim of the Norwich CLC project was to use informal learning as a vehicle to widen access to cultural learning opportunities across the city. The Heritage, Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART) have been a valuable partner in this and have helped to both promote the scheme to cultural venues and to raise awareness of opportunities for informal learning in these venues. To further support the CLC project and build skills and knowledge of the CLCs, HEART is running a half-day 'Norwich Ambassador' course for CLCs at no cost to the project. One Coventry CLC decided that she would like to have a regular time at Norwich's central library each week where she will be available for one-to-one help, or to approach members of the public about learning opportunities.



I would never have come here if it wasn't for this trip. I thought museums were boring, but now I have, I'm definitely going to go to the British Museum as well.



One King's Cross learner after a CLC organised book club at the British Library.

Working with older people

At Q Training, a private sector provider which covers Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, CLCs working with elderly people in residential homes have set up 'memory walls', where they work with staff and residents to build a visual representation of reminiscences including objects such as ration books, as well as photos. In one home, it was discovered that one resident used to deliver the newspaper to another during the war. Staff at the home found out lots about residents that they didn't know, enabling a better working relationship and understanding for those they care for. The memory wall continued to grow and was added to, with several residents and their family coming down to view and discuss it.

Getting online

Getting online to support the CLC role and to encourage others to do the same has been a key feature of many CLC projects. Some have set up websites and Facebook pages, often initiated by the CLCs themselves, and through these CLCs are able to keep up to date on new learning opportunities which they can promote in their communities. Some have put their experiences onto YouTube, some projects have run courses aimed at helping CLCs to improve their skills which they can then pass onto others and some CLCs act as volunteer supporters to the less confident user of digital technology with some projects reaching over 1,000 learners in this way. A growing number of websites and Facebook pages are listed on the national website: www.communitylearningchampions.org.uk

Our scheme used state of the art technology (tablet computer – iPad) to gather all information required for CLCs to signpost people towards learning. The tablet computers procured for the project enabled e-CLCs to access course lists, maps, videos, pdf documents and websites efficiently. The information is available at all times and can be carried around to show people, as the tablet computers are light portable devices.

Gateshead Council

Some examples of Information Technology (IT) related work carried out by CLCs include:

- computer workshops in homes with staff and residents in residential homes;
- a UKOnline 'Dip in and Try IT' project which reached 467 learners;
- ESOL and IT classes for adults with learning difficulties;
- sessions for people with mental health problems or learning difficulties to get online, learn to set up email accounts and access the Internet;
- computer courses for local shop workers starting after working hours in a venue close to work – a CLC identified their needs and helped find a venue and set up a 'Computers For Absolute Beginners' course;
- a silver surfers club at a local community centre;
- a 'Talk About Local' website set up by a CLC who is working with a group of learners to publicise local activities and services (<http://speak4le4.wordpress.com/>);

- an intergenerational IT programme in which two young CLCs supported IT taster sessions for residents of sheltered accommodation in partnership with the Get Digital programme;
- computer and Internet beginners classes for older learners which reached 150 new learners;
- courses in digital media, including use of digital cameras to tell digital life-stories;
- A beginner's guide to blogging.

Working with Union Learning Representatives (ULRs)

A small but growing number of CLC projects have been forming partnerships with the trade unions and unionlearn. (See www.unionlearn.org.uk/ulr)

In Liverpool, CLCs work with ULRs from Merseytravel, Liverpool City Council and the fire service in order to share resources and approaches to engagement and provide a cohesive signposting service within communities and the workplace. The partnership has opened up the possibility of CLCs becoming ULRs when they enter employment and vice versa.

In Sussex, two of the scheme's CLCs based at the Bridge Community Centre in Brighton are local Cityclean employees who are also ULR. Recruiting ULRs as part of the CLC group has been very beneficial, as they have been able to share their knowledge and experience with other recruits.

Developing the CLCs

Perhaps the most vital function of CLC projects is the support and supervision offered by project managers to CLCs. North East Lincolnshire CLC project offers regular networking meetings where information and experiences can be shared as well. In addition, CLCs have their own CLC website, including a directory of local training opportunities. Sefton CLC's project manager reports that at the bi-monthly network meetings for CLCs they have established a successful format of:

- project update, reporting issues, communications;
- visiting speakers giving information about informal learning opportunities;
- CLC Information exchange.

Each meeting widens CLC awareness of opportunities and has a theme, for example a recent meeting focused on more formal adult learning provision, with representatives of the local colleges and adult learning service, another covered health, sport and open spaces and another one discussed creative and arts-based activities. CLC logs show that this information has been used by them in disseminating information, for example, after a network meeting where the local libraries explained their service, one partner organisation set up a reading group, and other CLCs are now frequently signposting to library services.

4. Community Learning Champions: who they are and what they do



They inspire learners that they engage with by providing powerful and positive role models showing the life-changing impact of learning.



Lead Inspector, Ofsted, on Bolton College Community Learning Ambassadors

Who they are

What has become clear from the work of the projects is that there is no single type of person suited to being a CLC, no one right way to perform the role and no limit to what CLCs can achieve. Men and women, aged 18–80, what makes them stand out is their enthusiasm for learning which they are keen to share with others and their ability to engage with other people in their community.

The definition of CLCs adopted by the programme was:

People who are active in their community promoting the value of learning to others – family, friends, neighbours, workmates or people they meet at the school gates, at the local shops, or in groups or clubs. They speak from personal experience about the difference that learning can make to people's quality of life or job prospects. Because CLCs often live in the same community or work in the same place as the people they want to inspire, they act as role models.

Two CLCs set up a course at a local primary school in the St Anne's area of Bristol to encourage local families to identify and express their views about crime and facilities for children. The learners took photos of facilities they considered either good or bad and created a digital story about the local park. The families used this work to present their concerns to the local neighbourhood partnership who took up the issues with the local authority. A new course, 'Power to the People' has been set up to help local residents manage the lease of a an unused building which would be suitable for community events.

What this means in practice is that CLCs might be:

- older people who encourage their peers to overcome their fear of computers;
- young parents who support others to take on a numeracy class;
- formerly homeless people who support others like themselves to take the gradual steps to independence through learning new skills and gaining confidence;
- people who know from personal experience the debilitating effect of depression who encourage someone like them to take up learning;
- people whose first language is not English who can help others to become an active part of the community.

Bob, a local Ashfield artist was unable to return to full-time employment because of health concerns. He had learned to paint by watching a famous artist on television and found painting very therapeutic. He became a CLC as he wanted to share his skills with the wider community in the hope that they too could learn a new skill and engage in a therapeutic learning experience.



With the help of his mentor, Bob found funding from a variety of sources to deliver 'Can't paint, won't paint' workshops in his local community. Some of these have taken place in an empty shop in the local shopping precinct, whose walls hosted an exhibition of oil paintings produced by local shoppers. Bob has taken the PTTLS course and is now delivering courses at the local community college.

Who are the registered CLCs?

Information about the CLCs has been drawn from the national register and includes those from schemes not supported by the Development Fund.

Nearly 2,000 (1953) CLCs have been registered to date.¹⁰ Of these, 1668 (85 per cent) are supported by Development Fund-supported schemes. In addition, there are 285 registered CLCs from current schemes that have not

¹⁰ National Register of CLCs 14.2.2012. New CLCs continue to register.

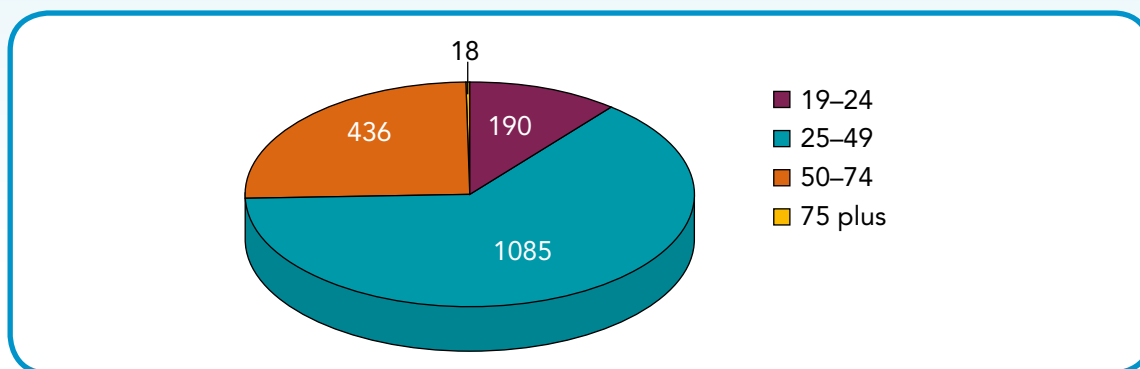


Figure 10. Age groups of registered CLCs

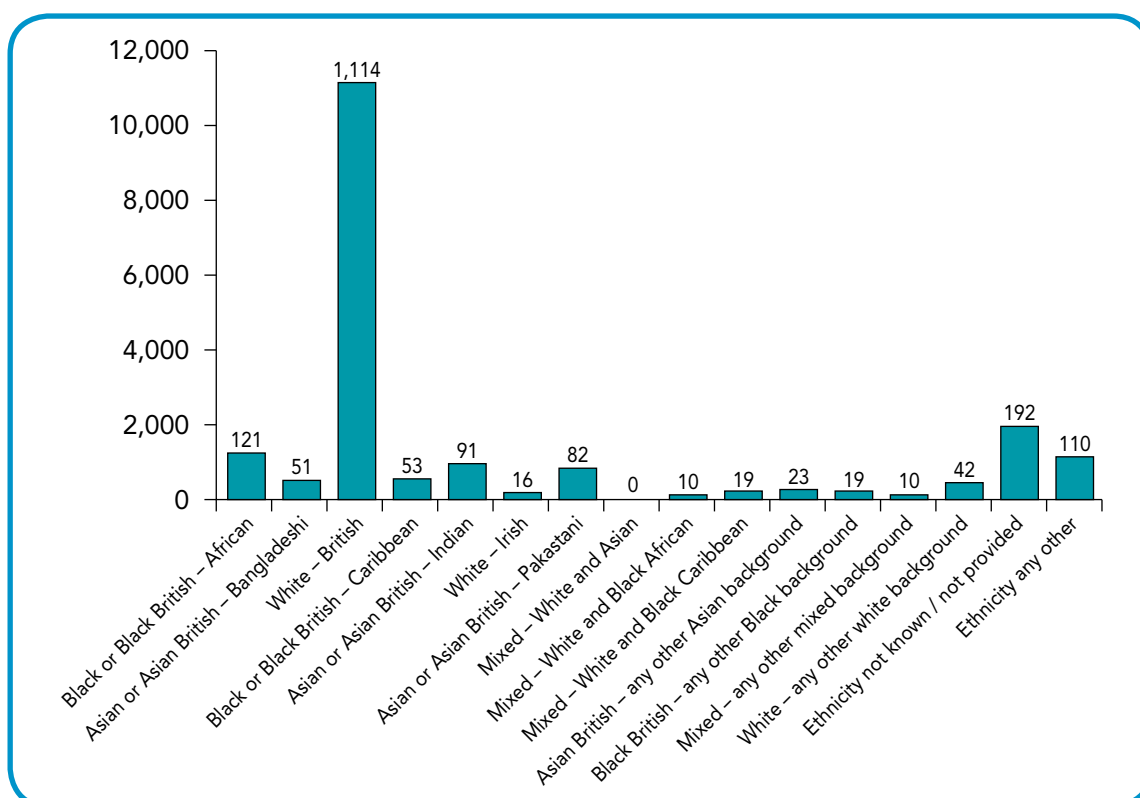


Figure 11. Ethnic groups: registered CLCs

been in receipt of a Development Fund grant, but have nevertheless signed up to the support programme.

The CLCs are predominantly women (of those declared, 72 per cent female, 28 per cent male).

The most common age group for all CLCs is 25-49. Of those declared, 11 per cent are 19-24, 63 per cent are 25-49, 25 per cent are 50-74, and 1 per cent over 75 (see Figure 10).

Brian became a CLC in July, after experiencing long-term unemployment. During his time as a CLC Brian has worked on community events and worked with members of the community who have learning difficulties. The events he has helped to organise include learning promotions, job fairs, community parties, and community meetings. Brian also helps on a local farm that employs people with learning disabilities, helping to engage and encourage learners to become active members of the community and improve their self-confidence and quality of life.

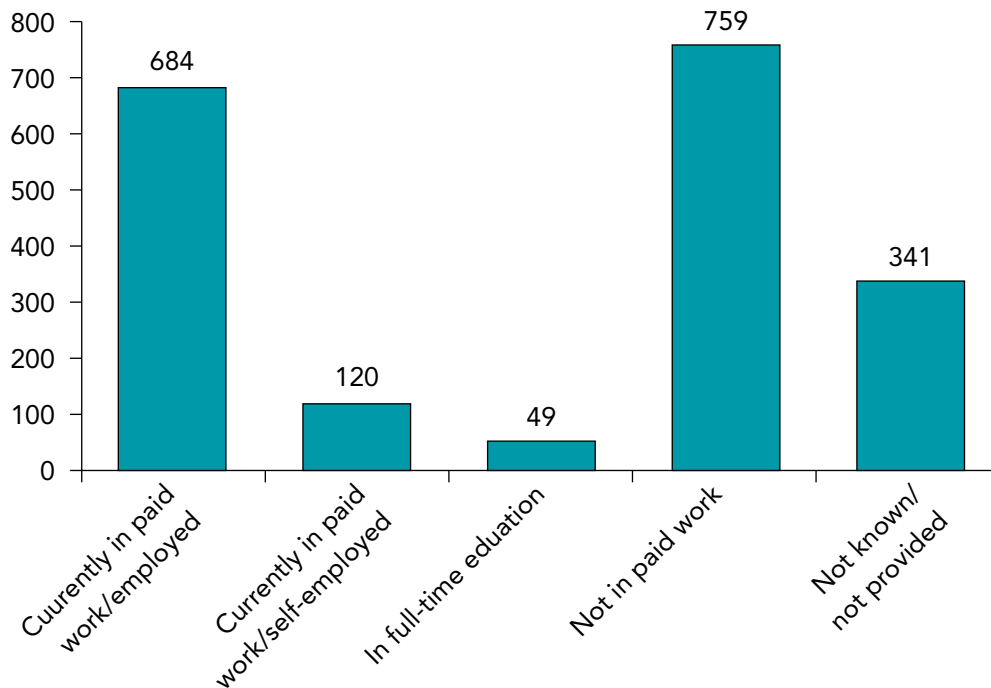


Figure 12. Employment status of registered CLCs

A range of ethnic minorities are represented within the group: 1172 described themselves as white, and 479 as black or minority ethnic, or 40.8 per cent of the total for which we have data (see Figure 11).

Thirteen per cent (214) of those CLCs who provided information declared that they had a disability.

Nearly half of CLCs (45 per cent of those declared) had caring responsibilities, including child care and elder care.

A large number of CLCs are in paid work, either employed or self-employed (49 per cent of those declared) while 47 per cent are not in paid work. This reflects the recruitment of a substantial volunteer cohort of CLCs as well as the voluntary adoption of the CLC role by a range of those in work (see Figure 12).

What CLCs do

The range of CLC activities is impressive, and their enthusiasm for new challenges seems to be limitless. As one project coordinator said, 'The challenge for us is coming up with new challenges and interesting things for things for them to do.'

The main activities that CLCs get involved in can be classified under three headings: promoting learning, supporting others and impacting on their local community.

Bradford Community Learning Champions (Trescom Research & Consultancy Limited)

Some projects working with unconfident learners and those coping with language barriers focused on helping them learn about and access services, for example public transport workshops helped learners access the different means of transport and local amenities workshops helped them access local facilities such as the swimming pool and gym.

In Sefton some CLCs are leading informal learning groups themselves – such groups include reading, walking, singing and art groups. These groups also have positive impacts on the CLCs themselves such as in the case of one long term carer whose partner has recently died and who now runs a local history group, helping him to re-engage socially with people.

CLCs in Liverpool are helping to inform the planning of learning opportunities at a neighbourhood level through the feedback that they collect. This information is fed into the North West Partnership Group and the Personal and Community Development Learning Group. Providers can then improve what they offer and how it is offered, whilst avoiding overlap and duplication ensuring greater efficiency and value for money in service delivery.

Champions Inspire (Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership)

- Asian women's weekly football training and tournament
- Belly dancing classes
- Pathways to employment for refugee communities
- Intercultural cafes
- Learning about Polish, African and Traveller communities for residents of a large social housing estate
- Peace studies
- Learning about peace initiatives in Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria
- Karibu
- Introduction to informal learning for isolated women
- Singing for the Terrified

Promoting learning

- Meeting people to motivate and encourage them to take up learning, either for leisure or to update their skills.
- Giving information about learning opportunities and finding out what sorts of learning people want and need.
- Designing and delivering new learning opportunities.
- Designing leaflets or posters to attract people into learning.
- Identifying gaps in the learning opportunities available and giving feedback to learning providers such as colleges.
- Helping to plan provision (see example below).

Bolton Learning Ambassadors are sometimes paid on a sessional basis to undertake work for outside agencies such as the primary care trust or the local authority. They are known for their ability to reach hard to reach sections of the community and, having been trained in a range of methods including participatory appraisal, they have the skills to inform service provision more effectively than outside organisations – in this way local research is done by local people who know best to find out what the community needs or wants.

CLCs have engaged in 134,538 hours of activity in total, been involved in organising and delivering 6,036 events and activities, and have supported 105,804 one-to-one interventions (Figure 13), which include:

- 32,503 face-to-face initial contacts;
- 16,815 interviews to identify needs;
- 14,041 instances of practical support to start informal adult learning (IAL);
- 9,289 instances of practical support to help sustain IAL;
- 14,461 signposts to IAL;
- 6,880 signposts to formal adult learning; and
- 11,815 signposts to IAG.

They have also provided feedback to learning providers in 1,059 instances.

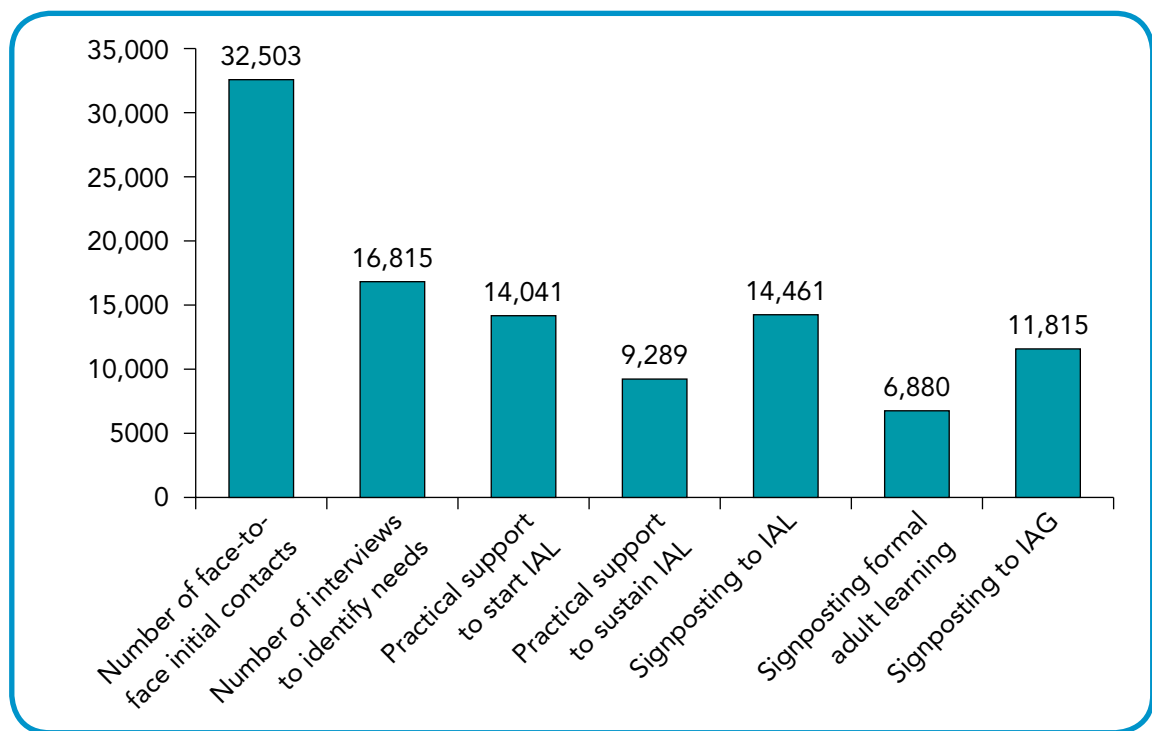


Figure 13. One-to-one activities of CLCs

Lyn, a CLC in Lancashire works with Galloway's, a charity for blind and visually impaired people. Lyn helped to organise for a group of 15 blind and visually impaired people to take on the Three Peaks Challenge.

Supporting others

A crucial role played by CLCs is to support individuals who are considering or have taken up learning opportunities by:

- helping people to work out what they want to learn and plan how they will achieve what they want;
- supporting learners lacking in confidence to move into learning; this may include finding things out for them – making phone calls or getting information from the Internet – or going with them to a class to help them enroll;
- setting up and maintaining websites or Facebook pages for peer support;
- keeping records and reviewing a learner's progress.

Pearl has been volunteering with Granby Toxteth Development Trust for more than five years. Last year she was encouraged to become involved in the Neighbourhood Learning Champions Project. As a result of the training, personal support and development she has been given, Pearl has built up her own self confidence to the point where she now runs basic computer classes for adults with learning difficulties, as well as providing support in a range of other learning activities. Pearl plans to undertake training to enable her to follow a career path in adult education for people with learning disabilities saying 'this is something I would never have dreamt was possible'.



Brent Learning Leaders, (London Academy for Social and Economic Development)

- Confidence building and assertiveness for mental health sufferers
- Holistic stress management for mental health sufferers
- Needlecraft for Asian ladies with mild depression
- Social networking and eSafety taster courses for mental health sufferers, army families and African refugees
- Environmental data recording and analysis for community volunteers
- Various literacy and reading courses
- Childcare NVQs for parents
- HENRY (healthy living and eating) course
- Parenting courses
- Computer and Internet beginners classes for older learners

Impacting on their local community

In many instances, CLCs are playing a valuable role in their local community by:

- organising and running events and learning opportunities for local people;
- making contact with local groups, schools, and community and volunteer organisations to find out what is available locally and sharing this information with others;
- researching community needs.

Some examples of learning activities CLCs have helped to plan and run:

- Starting your own social enterprise workshops
- Starting your own health and well-being small business workshops
- Healthy eating surgeries/taster sessions
- Faith and education fairs
- ESOL classes for eastern Europeans
- Grow your own vegetables and herbs workshops
- Day trip to Kew Gardens

CLCs in Gloucester gave a local provider a list of 35 people who wanted an introduction to first aid, they were therefore surprised to hear a few days before the workshop that it was going to be cancelled as only two people had booked. That was because the provider had sent out an official-looking letter. Offering to help, the CLC took the list with her to the school gates, the shops and the coffee mornings and used free texting to contact people. The potential learners confided to the CLC that they had not read/opened the letter, or could not understand it or were put off by its formality. As a result of the CLC's involvement, the event ran with 12 people attending and further learning provision has since been organised.

5. Achievements and impact of the national programme and local projects

The purpose of the programme has been to bring about change for individuals, communities and learning providers. To document those changes we have drawn on project reports and the data provided by projects about their activities. Part Two of this report also contains a set of case studies of a sample of the projects, based on information provided by the projects themselves.

The impact on Community Learning Champions

The biggest short-term success has been the transformation of the CLCs themselves. Universally they talk about the confidence boost they have received from becoming CLCs. Although in some cases it is too early to provide detailed evidence, it is clear that a growing number have taken on new responsibilities and new learning opportunities with many moving into other volunteering roles, becoming more active in their community and gaining paid employment. Below we have included some examples of what CLCs have achieved for themselves in different areas.

Progression of Community Learning Champions

Development Fund-supported projects were able to provide information about the progression of their CLCs into other roles (see Figure 14). Of those who declared information, 37 per cent in total had gone into paid employment: 8 per cent into employment in adult education, 5 per cent into careers advice and guidance, and 23 per cent to other paid employment. In addition, 22 per cent had gone into education or training. 15 per cent had moved to another scheme, and 16 per cent had progressed to a volunteering opportunity elsewhere.

A total of 349 CLCs had moved away from the Development Fund-supported schemes over the lifetime of the project.

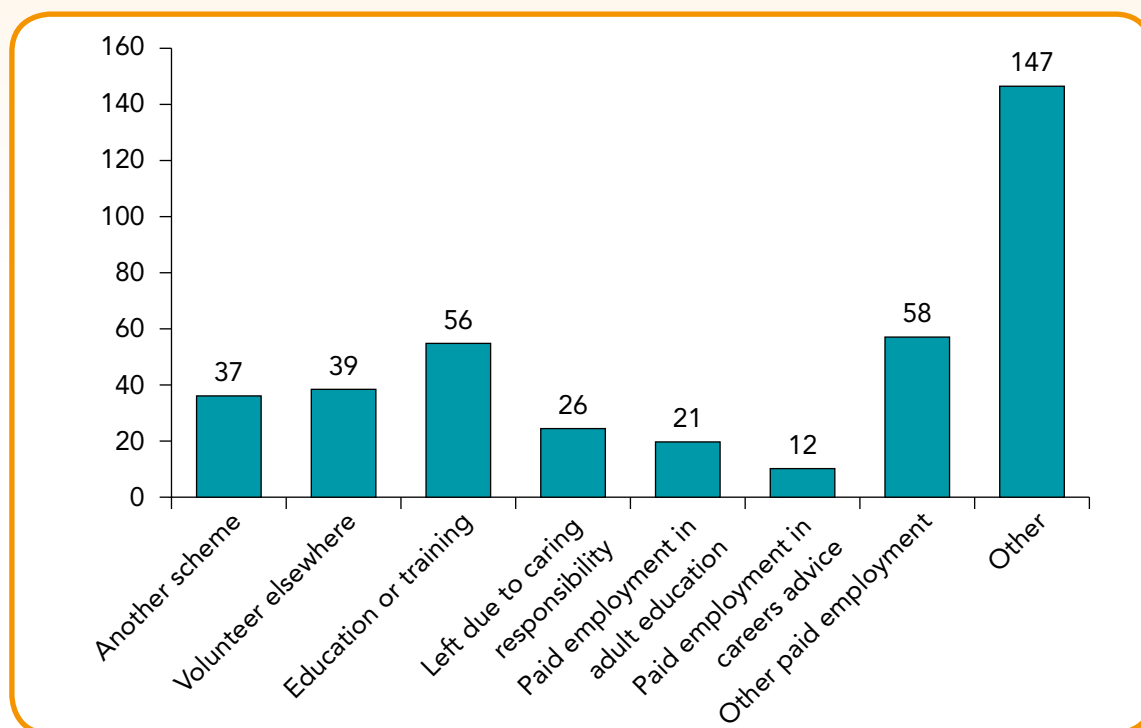


Figure 14. CLC Progression¹¹

Raising aspirations

Improving the confidence of learners is a vital role played by CLCs. In order to do this, CLCs have first to strengthen a belief in their own capacities.

Single parent of three, Zoe suffered from low confidence and felt that people thought of her as 'just a mum'. In 2009 she decided to change that and joined Rudheath and Witton Neighbourhood Management Scheme, Northwich, as a Community Representative and subsequently trained as a CLC. Zoe has developed the confidence to speak up in group situations as well as the skills to motivate and enthuse others. Zoe has set up a coffee morning group attended by 15 parents from one of the local primary schools and where Zoe promotes the wide variety of courses available in the local area. Zoe is now training as a Teaching Assistant at her sons' primary school.



¹¹ CLC Monitoring survey February 2011

St Mungo's is a charity in London that provides residences for homeless people, and is placing a growing emphasis on activities that move residents towards independent living. As part of this, St Mungo's has developed a CLC scheme that provides a stepping stone to employment. Four of the scheme's CLCs have now signed up to a course at City Lit College on careers in care work. One of the CLCs is now working for St Mungo's and the scheme has also generated a lot of interest in a new St Mungo's work placements programme that the CLCs have been pivotal in creating.

Getting into paid work

A growing number of CLCs have gained employment as a result of the skills, experience and contacts they have built up, as the example below shows.

Fifteen CLCs from Leeds have successfully completed the 14-week Introduction to Community Development and Health course accredited through the Open College Network at Level 2. The CLCs in their new paid roles as Community Health Educators (CHEs) will be undertaking community work experience delivering basic health promotion messages city wide around healthy cooking and eating. Alongside this they will be able to continue to share information about informal and formal adult learning across Leeds.

Impact on learners

The CLCs have stimulated an enormous number of informal adult learning activities, with 68 per cent of those reached becoming involved in a learning activity.

When the programme began, we expected that every CLC would be able to reach an average of 30 potential learners. Reach was defined very broadly as 'adult learners who came into contact with the projects through events and outreach activities (including online)'. Over the lifetime of the project, CLCs in Development Fund-supported projects have reached 92,161¹² people in their communities – learners and potential learners. This is an average of 47 learners and potential learners per CLC..

¹² CLC Development fund-supported projects monitoring survey: February 2012.

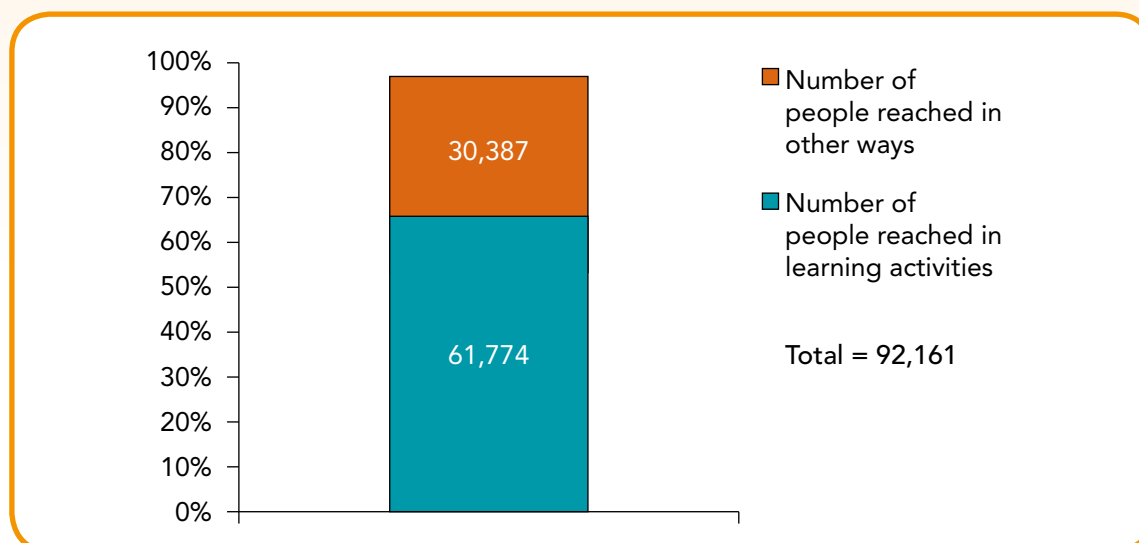


Figure 15. Number of people reached by CLC activity

Applying the same average to the CLCs registered from non-Development Fund-supported projects suggests a total estimated of 105,610 learners. Of these, 68 per cent, or 70,000 people, in the country's most disadvantaged areas have been involved in a learning activity as a result of their contact with CLCs.

CLCs were asked to record demographic data about people that they worked with one to one. Collecting data of this kind is a new task for many CLCs and projects had to work closely to establish effective monitoring systems which grew stronger as the projects progressed and CLCs became more confident.

Learning for older people

Informal learning by volunteering greatly improves the mental and physical health of older people.

In Camden and Islington 50 older people are now volunteer CLCs, helping to advocate and promote the benefits of learning mainly for Spanish and Portuguese speakers. Focusing on the over-50s, they have created informal learning opportunities including courses such as herbal remedies, horticulture, arts, dance and communication skills for older people and taster-sessions and community learning information events. Up to 4,000 older people have been reached and made aware of local learning opportunities; including people over the age of 75 for whom there is very little learning provision, but who were interested in activities that help retain their skills, vitality and social relationships.

Supporting parents

An important feature of the work of CLCs has been the support they are able to offer parents. Two examples show the kinds of activities involved.

Two CLCs in Stoke have set up a new course for young mums at a local children's centre – 'Coping With Kids'. They identified the course as being required by the community, found the venue, produced marketing posters and flyers, recruited twelve young mums and enrolled on the course themselves to support the new learners. All the learners completed the five-week course and a progression course is in planning.

Rebecca became a CLC in the summer of 2010. She has actively reached out to many new and 'hard-to-reach' parents, and encouraged and supported them to take part in activities that are happening within the school. Since her involvement began, the number of parents now coming into school has risen dramatically. Rebecca is mentored by the school's Parent Support Worker, whom she also helps with other aspects of the role such as collating feedback from learners and parents and helping out at coffee mornings.

Skills for employment

A key focus for several CLC projects is moving local residents towards employment, especially those struggling with a history of ill-health or disability.

The Revive café is an emerging social enterprise based at The Lamb Street Service (The POD) in Coventry. The lead Development Worker, who is employed by the City Council, has also been trained as a CLC and is supporting mental health service users at the centre to learn the skills needed to run the café, including cooking, nutrition, how to use the till and customer service.

Developing active citizens

A priority for some CLC projects is to promote the active involvement of local residents in community affairs.

In September 2010, Langport CLCs attended a workshop on engaging with Parliament as part of the 'Voice and Influence' project run by Vista Project. For Gloria, one CLC who attended, the session was an eye opener. She is now active locally and has recently been invited onto the board of her local community organisation.



CLCs working with the ComeUnity Neighbourhood Management Programme in Great Yarmouth conducted a series of street based consultations to gather resident perceptions with 850 people on local learning opportunities and priorities for their neighbourhoods.

Improving health and well-being

Health and well-being has emerged as a key policy priority many CLC projects are keen to address in practical ways. The examples that follow show a variety of approaches to these issues.

As a mother and a CLC taking a career break following the birth of her second child, Afe wanted to find ways of helping other mums in the area to get exercise in a fun, informal way, particularly in a sport that is typically not taken up in black and minority ethnic communities in the inner city. Afe organised – from venue hire to promotion – an introductory badminton group for them, with free childcare included, over an 11-week period. This proved extremely popular, with 30 individual learners attending. Subsequently, 12 of the learners signed up at the local sports centre to continue their badminton activity as a paid-for standalone group. As a result of her CLC experience including acting as a regional and national representative, Afe has now decided to pursue a career in community development.



Through 'Growing Paradise' – a community food growing programme funded by Marks and Spencer – CLCs have been working with residents in the Paradise area of Coventry, encouraging them to learn new skills related to growing food. Residents have developed eight raised beds and are growing a variety of vegetables and herbs which are used for lunches for the elderly at St Barnabas Community Centre.



Promoting positive mental health

We know that informal adult learning has a positive impact on emotional well-being, increases self esteem, promotes social inclusion and reduces the risk of depression.¹³ In practical terms, taking part in learning can be cheaper than courses of antidepressants or clinical support: for example, a one-year course of antidepressants costs the NHS £365 per person, compared with the average cost of £64 of involving someone in learning through a CLC. Qualitative feedback suggests widespread improvements in the mental health of those involved in the CLC programmes.

¹³ Aldridge and Lavender, 2000, *The Impact of Learning on Health*, NIACE; Chevalier and Feinstein, 2006, 'Sheepskin or Prozac? The Causal Effect of Education on Mental Health', *IZA Discussion Papers 2231*, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA); Tett and Maclachlan, 2007 'Adult literacy and numeracy, social capital, learner identities and self-confidence', *Studies in the Education of Adults*, Vol. 39(2), pp. 150–167.

A CLC with WEETU in Norwich lost her job as a result of an industrial accident and now runs an informal well-being group for people who are unemployed and are facing personal difficulties, including mental health concerns. 'Work 2 Well-being' has ten members who support each other and provide learning resources and signposting to appropriate services.

Several learners have been able to stop taking their medication after attending Learn2b.

Northamptonshire Adult Learning Service

The Groundwork Coventry CLC hub is based at the POD, part of Coventry City Council's mental health services. Three long-term mental health service users and three development worker staff from The POD have achieved CLC status. Coventry City Council and their mental health team support the model and see its value in bridging the gap between mental health services and the wider community. The opportunity to access a CLC is now part of the recovery framework available to service users.

Key words in mental health services are inclusion, recovery, employment and community. The CLCs will play a key role in promoting good mental health by reducing barriers, creating bridges to communities and enabling people to access new opportunities.

Christine Eade, Centre Manager at the Lamb Street Service, Coventry (The POD)

Impact on organisations hosting and working with CLCs

Host organisations have reported many examples of the ways in which their practice has been improved through their work with CLCs. For example, in Norwich, third sector partners, such as organisations working with homeless people, refugees, people with drug and alcohol problems, ex-offenders and people who are long-term unemployed, have enabled the scheme to engage champions from a diverse range of backgrounds. CLCs from some of the most excluded communities in Norwich have been uniquely placed to work with others facing similarly difficult life situations and engage them in learning. This approach has been key to gaining access to vulnerable people who would not normally access informal learning.

Groundwork Coventry describes the benefits of working with CLCs:



They support recruitment to programmes – targeting the hardest to reach or ‘invisible learner.’; they mentor less confident individuals through the learning journey; they sustain local programmes – motivating learners to take a leading role in the continuation of activity after funding/staff support disappears.



Children’s centres in Nottinghamshire are reporting that CLCs are helping them to meet their targets for offering adult learning opportunities. The number of parents attending courses is increasing thanks to the efforts of CLCs. In one of the children’s centres the CLC is carrying out a college liaison role previously undertaken by the centre’s community involvement worker.

CLC Dawn has carried out a shadowing exercise with the whole college student services team, so that she is better equipped to support learners from their initial contact with college. As a result of that exercise, a new approach has been developed in which Dawn arranges an initial appointment and accompanies learners to meetings with the student support services team. Dawn is now looking at working in similar ways with other community-based organisations.

Embedding CLC projects

CWAC Northwich maintains that, 'The CLC scheme should be embedded into the organisation's vision and plan rather than working as an isolated project'. An important aspect of embedding is creating a sense of belonging and identity. The Hackney coordinator cites the key factors in this as being:

- a job description, so their roles are clear;
- an induction showing the impact they will have and the types of jobs achievable in the future;
- something to make CLCs recognisable – in our case a red T-shirt and red Hi-Vis jacket with the CLC logo and Trust logo;
- space – all CLCs have access to rooms, phones, computers to meet each other or members of the community;
- whole-group meetings – having 30 people all with the same vision supporting each other sharing stories and skills;
- email: all CLCs are emailed on a regular basis any links/changes to courses or opportunities in Hackney;
- CLC ownership of the scheme – we decided to use a 'pyramid' model. Six CLCs were designated as seniors and allocated a small group to mentor. The seniors meet with the Trust regularly to share experiences and shape the programme.

Impact on learning providers

Less easy to pin down is the impact of CLCs on learning providers but there is a growing number of examples of practical changes that have been brought about. For example Ofsted's report on Bolton College Community Learning Ambassadors states:

'The effectiveness of partnerships is outstanding. Staff and Community Learning Ambassadors work collaboratively and productively with a wide range of statutory and voluntary providers across the borough. They have developed a multitude of projects and outreach provision [...] and hard-to-reach groups are attracted effectively to learning.'

Through its partnership approach, One KX, London, has been able to improve service delivery for several local organisations. For example, the CLCs

disseminate information to learners and potential learners about the training and IAG services provided by Camden Working and CITE (Communities into Training and Employment) for unemployed residents. During the Adult Learners' Week activities, King's Cross Community Learning Champions hosted the Camden Smoking Cessation team and the NHS health promotion team.

Impact on partnerships

Several projects have referred to the way that the work of CLCs has acted as a catalyst for strengthening local partnerships. For example, Cheshire West and Chester Council's CLC project leader states: 'As our project has grown, more community partners are showing an interest in becoming more involved with reference to capacity building in their communities and engaging residents in decision making activities and impacting on out of work benefit claimants.' Salford Community Champions have found something similar: 'The Learning Champions approach has definitely driven the Salford Community Learning Partnership closer, particularly at practitioner and volunteer level. A number of proactive but previously isolated groups now feel securely linked to a supportive network.'

6. A framework for good practice

What has become clear in reviewing reports from and visiting the registered projects is that while there are many different models, target audiences and types of CLCs, there are some keys to setting up, implementing and developing a successful CLC project. These have been drawn together into a Good Practice Framework for managers of CLC projects. The framework specifically relates to projects' work with CLCs and is intended to complement other quality frameworks and standards that may be in use in their organisations. It also complements the toolkits for managers and CLCs on the National Support Programme website which were produced early in the life of the project, drawing on the experience of earlier CLC projects.

The Good Practice Framework is set out below.

Good Practice Framework for Community Learning Champion Schemes

1. Recruitment and selection

- CLCs who are recruited should reflect the community they are intended to serve.
- Steps are taken to ensure that CLCs are fit and proper people to carry out the role, including complying with relevant safeguarding legislation and carrying out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks where necessary.

2. The role of CLCs

- Roles and work plans are developed for CLCs to reflect the target audience of the project and the skills and interests of the CLCs.
- The project investigates best practice to identify and develop the range of approaches and settings the CLCs work in.

3. Training and support

- A designated member of staff is responsible for the day-to-day supervision and support of CLCs. CLCs have regular access to this person.

- CLCs are prepared for their role through an induction programme.
- CLCs receive regular one-to-one and group support for their development through a structured review process, which includes appropriate support for progression.
- CLCs receive the necessary training to enable them to carry out their tasks. They are supported to access accredited training where appropriate.
- CLCs have access to up to date information about learning opportunities and other careers and learning advice services in their area.

4. Registration and recognition

- CLCs are registered on the National Register and in doing so sign up to the Community Learning Champions Values and Principles.
- A sense of identity and community and pride in the CLC role is fostered, including support for the national brand and badge and their use at local level.

5. Equality and diversity

- Equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted through the work of CLCs.

6. Networking and partnerships

- The scheme networks with other CLC projects and relevant networks to support and develop its work.
- Partnerships are developed at local, regional and national levels as appropriate, in order to strengthen the reach and effectiveness of the scheme.
- Partnerships plan for the sustainability of the scheme under all funding conditions.

7. Recording, reporting and celebrating achievements

- Processes are in place to record CLCs' activity.
- The outcomes, impact and achievements of CLCs' work are reported and celebrated, both internally and externally.

7. The legacy

The CLC National Support Programme, working with local project partnerships, has developed an enabling framework for informal adult and community learning of outreach and engagement based on peer support and volunteering. This framework, drawing together the best that has been achieved by local projects and the National Support Programme, is the principal legacy of Government investment in CLCs.

The experience of the national programme is that CLCs are at their most effective when they are properly trained and supported within a local partnership. CLCs can be an extremely cost effective way of reaching and engaging large numbers of local people. The enabling framework has developed the basic approach pioneered by Greenwich, Bolton and others since, in several key ways:

- Informal learning: freedom to explore the whole range of learning possibilities has been a vital factor in extending the social reach of the CLCs to involve previously hard to reach groups such as homeless people and people with mental health problems.
- New hosts: involving a wide range of voluntary sector (and other) providers has helped to generate more vibrant learning opportunities alongside traditional adult learning courses.
- Partnership: rooting local projects in partnerships has extended the range of the local learning offer and provided a firmer basis for sustainability than if projects depended entirely on one organisation.
- Broader role for CLCs: the combination of the three factors above plus the availability of small amounts of funding has enabled CLCs to move beyond the classic roles of signposting and mentoring into brokering new provision and feeding back to providers on ways to improve what they do. The signs are that CLCs have eagerly seized the possibilities for this more creative and expansive role as well as leading learning activities in line with their own skills and interests.
- National presence: local projects have benefited from the national presence of the programme, the growing currency of the CLC brand and the strategic support offered by the national project team.

- The development of a good practice framework which synthesises the overall experience of the programme and projects.

Sustainability

The National Support Programme and the local projects need to achieve a strong level of support and recognition in their communities so that CLCs are perceived as valuable contributors to the Big Society.

As far as the national structures are concerned, there is a good prospect that elements of the national programme will continue, with funding from the public sector (but not directly from The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) and support in kind from the private sector. This should ensure that in the foreseeable future there will continue to be:

- a national coordinating centre, providing organisational linkages, making policy connections and searching for future funding;
- the national CLC register;
- a website providing a link between projects and CLCs and offering information and access to resources;
- a major national event, possibly linked with Adult Learners' Week, and regional or sub-regional networks.

In addition, toolkits, films, the monitoring system, personal networks, and the accredited training programme all remain as part of the legacy of the programme, available to be drawn on in 2011 and beyond. The Government's £3million initial investment has created a momentum that can be sustained with relatively modest continuing resources. The critical issue for 2011–12 is to maintain this momentum locally and nationally in the interim pending the reform of informal adult and community learning.

Turning to local sustainability, it was a condition of funding that projects should be able to demonstrate the strength of the partnerships making the proposal and the robustness of plans for sustaining the project beyond March 2011. It was made clear from the outset that the funding from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills was intended as a catalyst rather than a continuing resource. To emphasise this, Phase 1 projects received £30,000 for their first four months of operation, falling to £10,000 for the second year.

The survey of projects' sustainability plans and prospects in January 2011 suggests that there are several ways in which CLC projects are finding the resources to continue:

1. Mainstreaming – despite the state of public finances, some agencies such as local authority adult and community learning services have decided that CLC projects should be funded as a valuable part of the mainstream.
2. Sharing the cost – some partnerships have decided that they will share the costs of the projects, by devolving responsibility for each element to one of their members.
3. Income generation and enterprise development – in a few cases, CLC projects are able to earn part of their upkeep by selling their services e.g. as researchers or outreach workers.

Waveney Learning Community, a partnership of training providers in Suffolk, runs the Waveney Community Learning Champions project and is one example of the local authority deciding to fund their continuation. The project is seen by the Waveney Local Strategic Partnership as an essential route to getting hard to reach learners started on their learning journey and into employment and has been granted £8,000 funding for the CLCs and £7,000 for the Coordinator to continue the project into 2012–13. Similarly, Wirral Lifelong Learning, the local partnership, has agreed to continue funding for the Wirral CLC project. Groundwork in the West Midlands, after the success of its Coventry project, is considering rolling out the CLC approach.

Government and national agencies

Alongside the local impact, the CLC approach has also made a mark at a national level. Bodies concerned with adult learning have themselves been able to draw some lessons from the CLC experience, especially the members of the consortium responsible for the National Support Programme.

The WEA has a long tradition of involving learners in the organisation and development of learning activities. It has had an extensive involvement with the National Support Programme as a member of the national project team and the programme board, by leading on the development and delivery of the training programme, by running regional networks and through a local Development Fund-supported project run by the WEA. So its participation in the CLC project has given it new insights into the impact volunteers can make and helped the organisation to understand the potential gain from embedding new approaches into its existing activities.

NIACE's main aim is to encourage all adults to engage in learning of all kinds. The Institute has been involved over many years with support for local CLCs and learning community projects. The experience of developing and implementing the national support programme has confirmed that local CLCs have a vital role in bringing new people into learning and enabling the voice of the community to have impact on the type and quality of learning opportunities, as well as increasing the amount of informal learning organised and led by those communities themselves. NIACE is supporting the process of reforming and invigorating informal adult and community learning, and is committed to advocating for a central role for CLC schemes in restructured provision from 2012.

Another change has been the strengthening of links between CLCs and Union Learning Representatives (ULRs). The joint conference involving ULRs and CLCs in Liverpool in November 2010 profiled the emerging trend for 'cross-border' work such as that carried out in Newcastle and Stoke. Increasingly, trade unions are looking for ways to apply their educational experience in communities, whilst CLC projects are happy to draw on that experience and the weight of the union learning movement to strengthen their own work.

Also significant has been the decision of LSIS – the Learning and Skills Information Service – to support the transitional phase of the CLC programme into 2011–12, effectively endorsing the importance of the CLC model to adult and further education and specifically to information, advice and guidance.

Local Government has also understood the relevance of the CLC model and not merely to adult learning. The realisation is well summed up by one local authority chief executive, Steve Robinson, of Cheshire West and Chester Council:

'We've realised that public investment can only go part of the way to solving social problems. What's become clear is that Community Learning Champions are part of the mainstream business. The Big Society is about local people taking responsibility and doing things for themselves. But people can't do it for themselves unless they are supported with training and education and CLCs are the first step in that process. They talk the same language; they've had the same learning experiences. They are a key plank of what this council is about.'

Turning to Government, the base of the CLC project in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has strengthened and spread. The Minister

for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, John Hayes, has publicly supported the programme, speaking in favour of it in Parliament in January 2011, and at the national CLC conference on 9 March 2011. Other Government departments have also seen the relevance of the CLC model for their work. In the public health White Paper, *Healthy Lives, Healthy People*, the Department for Health refers explicitly to 'supporting training of CLCs' (paragraph 3.47). Its vision for adult social care also refers to the importance of peer support. The same approach can be found in the proposals from the Department for Work and Pensions to create a cohort of agents to promote active and fit lives for the elderly.

Finally, the CLC approach has attracted the support of the private sector. Aviva, the insurance company, sponsored an event in Westminster in January 2011 and invited a number of similarly minded private sector organisation to take part.

8. Policy: the key messages

The CLC national programme, working with local project partnerships, has developed a new framework for local services based on volunteer peer support.

That framework seems to work best when the following conditions apply:

- CLCs can count on a clear-sighted and supportive management framework with well-designed opportunities for personal and career development.
- CLCs are attached to local hubs and service providers such as children's centres, schools, clinics, healthy living centres and libraries.
- CLCs are enabled to be creative in developing new learning activities – sometimes a course, sometimes an activity that helps people to learn together and develop. Many of the projects have developed the CLC role beyond engagement, signposting and support to generating new types of provision, responding to community need and interest.
- CLC projects are seen as a vital link in a partnership or network delivering local services, providing outreach, engagement, support for learners and feedback to service providers.
- CLCs' work is underpinned by a national presence and brand awareness.
- There is national coordination and an information exchange enabling projects to keep abreast of national policy development and to share best practice around the country.

The CLC approach, above all, is most potent when it is widely recognised as a valuable resource in making the Big Society real. That is to say, in enabling local people, whatever the service context, to play a meaningful role in shaping their community. To ensure that this happens it is important to have a properly funded infrastructure at local and national level as well as awareness among leaders and opinion shapers of the contribution the approach makes to their efforts to build social capital and strong local partnerships.

So, what are the key messages for policy, in adult learning and other fields?

Informal adult and community learning (IACL)

This report demonstrates that CLCs are making a significant contribution to putting into action current policy concerned with volunteering, community engagement and localism. Above all, they have shown that they have a vital role in the future of informal adult and community learning by:

- engaging and motivating potential learners in disadvantaged communities;
- helping learners to progress into further and higher education;
- strengthening the reach and suitability of information, advice and guidance;
- helping to set up and support self-organising groups and learning circles.

In addition, their work has a particular salience for public agencies and others that are addressing key issues such as preparation for work, the ageing society, health and well-being, improving family services and digital inclusion.

The implications for the future of informal adult and community learning (IACL) are readily apparent so we are pleased to note that the future role of CLCs and the wider scope for volunteering in the community will be examined as part of the forthcoming IACL review. We recommend that:

1. Government, at local and national level, recognises the vital contribution of CLCs, particularly in encouraging and enabling people to take part in informal adult community provision.
2. The National Support Programme for CLCs, consisting of the continued support and maintenance of the brand and register, the website, the networking and national events, with a degree of national coordination to provide strategic direction, is supported and maintained from April 2011.
3. IACL budget-holders – whether colleges, local authorities or voluntary sector bodies – plan to mainstream CLCs where appropriate as part of the future shape of local learning services, as brokers, IAG advisers, learning mentors, organisers of provision and trainee tutors.
4. IACL budget-holders should seek to develop adequate support for CLCs including continuing professional development programmes that enable progression for CLCs to employment within the sector, such as learning support, teaching assistance, initial teacher training, and IAG.

Other services

Government and local service providers should give careful consideration to the scope for the extension of the CLC model to other service areas such as housing, family budgeting and support, care for the elderly and health.

Civil society and community development

It will be important to ensure that CLC best practice is incorporated into the community organiser scheme, vanguard programme, digital and health champions initiatives, and the growing number of civil society initiatives, encouraging the embedding of the CLC brand and badge where possible.

The members of the consortium responsible for steering the National Support Programme are committed to working with local and national agencies such as Locality – the partnership responsible for delivering the community organiser scheme – and the Big Society Network to ensure the spread and sustainability of the CLC model.

Community Learning Champions (CLCs) are enthusiasts who want to share their excitement about learning with friends, neighbours and other people across their communities. This report shows how lives are changed when Learning Champions are given the resources to flex their creative talents, backed by effective support and training.

The results speak for themselves: more people getting involved in learning; more parents raising their sights and those of their children; more offenders moving out of the cycle of re-offending; more people shaking off the damaging effects of depression and drug abuse; more people getting work; and more people getting involved in making their community a better place. It all adds up to helping to make the Big Society real.

The Community Learning Champions Support Programme has been funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills from August 2009 to March 2011. A consortium of NIACE, the WEA, unionlearn and Martin Yarnit Associates have worked together to raise the profile of the role of CLCs and to develop a range of support materials and resources for them and the projects which support them. These include: a new national CLC training programme; a register of CLCs; a nationally recognised badge; a website; toolkits and other resources for CLCs and project managers; and regional and national discussion forums for CLC.

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COMMUNITY LEARNING CHAMPIONS SUPPORT PROGRAMME