Brighton and Hove Learning Partnership
Community Skills and Learning

Evaluation of the Community Outreach Learning Project April 2006–December 2007

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March 2008

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Community Learning Outreach Programme Evaluation, Spring 2008.

Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by the Community Skills and Learning Manager of Brighton and Hove City Council, on behalf of the Project Steering Group. It details the findings of a qualitative review of the ESF-funded Community Outreach Learning Project carried out with Project workers, key providers and Project participants. The Report deals with the activity of the Project between April 2006 and December 2007.

Objectives

The purpose of this evaluation was:
- To develop a picture of participants' experiences with learning opportunities, quality of delivery, outcomes achieved, their needs and desires for additional learning and interests in progression routes;
- Identify the specific experiences of Chinese learners who are an under-represented group;
- Understand the contribution of the support systems provided by the Project and identify strategies for post-Project follow-up;
- To identify issues related to the recruitment and training of community facilitators and their on-going support;
- Identify the key features of the Project as a model for continuing community education outreach to be mainstreamed across Brighton and Hove.

Process

A broad range of policy literature, both national and local, was reviewed to inform the research. The evaluation process took place over 3 months from mid-December 2007 to mid-March 2008 and involved:
- Community facilitators working in the 3 geographic areas covered by the Project;
- City-wide providers involved in delivering learning programmes to learners, and training to the Project facilitators;
- Interviews with learners from the three geographic areas covered by the Project; members of the Chinese community who participated in the Project.

Interviews: I carried out semi-structured telephone or face-to-face interviews with the Project workers, education and training providers, the manager of the Brighton and Hove Learning Partnership and one

of the development workers from the Working Together Project. I also made regular telephone contact with the Community Skills and Learning manager to seek clarification and had several meetings to discuss analysis and interpretation of statistical data. These interviews attempted to identify issues related to the work of the Project, its aims, and activities, as well as asking for views on the potential future direction of the Project.

In addition, I made telephone contact with the Development Manager of the Chinese Mental Health Association in east London as part of my scoping work about the Chinese communities in Brighton and Hove.

Visits: I attended Chinese New Year celebrations in the Dome, Brighton and was introduced to members of the Cantonese-speaking community. I then visited the Chinese Elders group at their invitation, accompanied by the Project worker who had been the main contact with the group.

Focus groups: I held focus groups with members of the Downland Court residents group in Mile Oak, Portslade; the ESOL group and Maths group at the Friends Centre, Ivory Place. These were arranged through the CLO Project worker who had been working in the west of the city and in Hollingdean and Hollingbury – without this facilitation these focus groups would not have been possible. I recorded these groups with the permission of group members and transcribed the recordings for use in this evaluation report.

Activities: I met with the Project Team and facilitated a Time Line mapping activity to identify significant moments, events and changes over the life of the Project. This activity is an approach used in Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), developed in the South to enable communities to share, analyze and enhance their life and conditions. In this context, it enabled the team to explore the Project's activities collectively and allowed key issues and events to emerge through the team's collective recollection without being directed towards particular outcomes. It served to illustrate the successes achieved and the progress made in supporting learners in study. The resulting map has been an invaluable resource during the evaluation and clarified issues and processes that were not immediately evident from discussions and interviews.

Validation: After preliminary analysis, I returned to the Project Team with draft recommendations and key issues emerging from the findings to present an outline and invite feedback. This enabled me to check back to see whether my initial identification of key issues accorded

with project workers' experiences and understanding. I incorporated new insights and reviewed some elements in response to Project Team feedback.

Note on use of names: Where interview extracts are quoted, or episodes related in conversation are recounted, pseudonyms have been used to denote a person's name, or I have used the collective 'they'. Although members of the focus groups all felt comfortable with use of their proper names in this report, because of the difficult personal circumstances recounted by some focus group participants, I decided to use pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity for learners in the event of quotes from this report bring used elsewhere.

Research constraints and issues

The resignation of the original Project manager in May 2007 and subsequent employment elsewhere, made it difficult to arrange an interview to discuss their involvement of in the Project. In addition, one of the Project workers was on extended leave for personal reasons until mid January and so was not interviewed at length, although they participated in the mapping exercise and facilitated visits with the Chinese community. One of the three Project workers who was redeployed in November, made themselves available for interview and participated in the Project mapping exercise.

The time frame for this evaluation was insufficient to allow for substantial scoping work with the Chinese communities in the city. Although I had established contact with a number of community organisations at the time of producing this report, more time was needed to consolidate these contacts and have productive dialogue. However, I have provided a summary of the key issues that emerged from my discussions and indicated in the recommendations a number of activities that I feel would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the Chinese communities in Brighton and Hove.

Key features of the Project

1. The CLO Project extended education outreach beyond the NR areas to other areas of the city that had previously received limited sustained funding for this type of work in the past.
2. The CLO Project conducted education outreach in these communities, set up Taster and Skills for Life courses for learners in community settings and negotiated with providers to deliver the courses.
3. The ability to run very small groups gave more flexibility to the Project to get people started in learning when they were ready.

4. Start dates for courses were not reliant on the standard academic year and term structure, and classes could start whenever a group of learners were ready to so, in venues that were locally accessible and at times that were convenient for them.
5. The CLO Project worked with the Chinese elders group based in the city centre. This was an important contact with a previously underrepresented group in the city.
6. The CLO Project workers provided IAG and offered exit interviews to all Project participants to explore options for progression.
7. The CLO Project negotiated with providers to develop follow on provision for Project participants and facilitated their recruitment into this provision. This was important for successful learner progression but was not a planned feature of the Project.
8. The CLO Project worked in partnership with adult education providers to develop administrative and tracking systems that facilitated leaner transitions.
9. The CLO Project promoted equal opportunities by targeting hard to reach groups in the city. It demonstrated this through the large numbers of BME learners and single parents, in particular, who participated in learning opportunities through the Project.

Key lessons from this Project:

1. The Project data to be collected has to be understood and the systems for doing this need to be agreed and used from the outset by everyone involved in delivery of courses.
2. An evaluation cycle involving the whole Project team can facilitate regular qualitative reviews, help forward planning and inform relationships with community-based organisations.
3. Despite other drawbacks, short term Projects can serve as pilots for development work which, after evaluation, can be embedded in longer-term development strategies.
4. The Project activities have demonstrated the potential benefits of education outreach with hard to reach groups and in areas that have previously received little sustained attention or funds.
5. Adult Education providers are keen to work with education outreach projects such as the CLO Project, because they have the flexibility to make connections with hard to reach groups that the providers are not always best placed to do.
6. Projects like CLO need to work with tutors who are enthusiastic and experienced in working in community settings and with a range of hard to reach groups.

7. Members of hard to reach groups are willing to commit to learning if appropriate learning opportunities are negotiated and accessible, with supported progression routes made available.
8. Project workers can benefit from regular training with other similar projects to inform practice in aspects of work with hard to reach groups.
9. While facilitators need some understanding of IAG, more targeted and extensive IAG work can be better delivered through a dedicated IAG worker who could network with IAG providers with expertise in work with specific hard to reach groups, and thereby develop a coordinated and focused approach to delivering IAG service in community settings.
10. Central office bases can support education outreach in the city centre, but Projects like CLO also need to be based in the community, particularly if the communities are on the fringes of the city and involve considerable travel times and distances.

Recommendations
relating to the CLO Project:

1. Future Projects should extend their knowledge of adult learning and undertake further training in supporting basic skills development with adults in hard to reach groups, and in understanding the structure of adult and vocational training in general.

2. Develop a more diverse curriculum portfolio to be delivered in community venues.

3. Investigate the provision of awareness training in IAG for front line workers in community venues.

4. Explore the range of possible delivery methods for IAG in community settings drawing upon the experience gained by Gateway at the Whitehawk Inn, through its EQUAL funded IAG post.

5. Explore potential for local volunteer programmes to train and support teams of 'study buddies' in community venues.

6. Explore other funding sources to provide greater flexibility for the Gateway model in delivering targeted education programmes to 'hard to reach' groups across the city.

relating to city-wide action:

7. Instigate discussions with other outreach providers from both the statutory sector (health and social care and family learning, as well as education outreach), and the voluntary and community sector, to explore the range of outreach activity across the city, to share and extend practice, and to develop a strategic overview of future delivery and development of outreach across sectors.

8. Work with the Chinese communities in Brighton and Hove to establish more coherent links with their community organisations; organise participatory events with the Chinese communities to involve project workers, learning and other service providers, and community organizations; record and circulate key issues and suggestions to everyone involved; use this information to identify community needs and inform future activities.

9. Liaise with providers to map coherent and sustainable progression pathways that enable learners to move on, with adequate support at key transition points.

10. Explore ways of collecting data on learner recruitment by programme (including tasters), venue and area to aid future planning. This could be linked to tracking learner participation across providers currently being investigated by the Adult Learning Group of the Learning Partnership.

11. Investigate potential for establishment of outreach bases in localities such as Portslade and Hangleton – this could involve a mix of 'core and hub' along the lines of the local 'learning hubs' piloted at the Bridge and Whitehawk Inn, as well as 'gateway' models, as appropriate.

12. Organise regular events for education providers, community and voluntary groups and policy makers in the city, to showcase the education outreach work across the city, and invite dialogue about future developments.

Community Learning Outreach Programme Evaluation, Spring 2008.

Section 1 - Introduction

This report was commissioned by the Community Skills and Learning Manager of Brighton and Hove City Council, on behalf of the Project Steering Group. It details the findings of a qualitative review of the ESF-funded Community Outreach Learning Project carried out with Project workers, key providers and Project participants. The Report deals with the activity of the Project between April 2006 and December 2007.

1.1Background

1.1.1 National Policy Framework

The **Social Exclusion Unit (SEU)** produced a *Policy Action Team (PAT) Audit* in January 2001. *PAT2 – Skills* looked at the skills gaps to be addressed in poor neighbourhoods and amongst marginal groups. It also considered how alternative methods such as informal learning and outreach might work to motivate adults to engage in education and training. It recommended that, to ensure people in disadvantaged communities have access to education and training, 'first rung' provision should be delivered where people live though neighbourhood learning centres with local people having a role in managing them. *PAT9 – Community Self-Help*, argued for sustainable community development and the recognition that time and resources were necessary to nurture and support it.

The **Social Exclusion Unit's** report, '*Jobs and Enterprise in Deprived Areas*' *(SEU, Sept 2004),* highlights the failure to address the multiple disadvantages experienced by residents in deprived communities, whose problems are rooted in a wider set of social issues, not least the lack of self-esteem and negative experiences of learning. The report emphasises the need for outreach services to such communities, but also the importance of bringing a range of organisations and services together into 'local outreach networks' to ensure the availability of a range of potential support systems to help people into employability.

The adult learning section of the strategy document '*Access to learning for all'* **(DfES, 03/05),** emphasises that learning is not just about economic goals but also about the pleasure of learning for its own sake, the dignity of self-improvement and the achievement of personal potential. It also supports the provision of a varied range of learning opportunities for personal fulfilment, community development and

active citizenship. Research shows that such learning has a positive impact by helping people build the confidence to come back into learning, offering the first step to qualifications for those who want them.

In their response to the *Social Exclusion Unit Consultation 'Improving Service Delivery for disadvantaged adults'* **(Feb 2005)**, **NIACE** pointed to the way good outreach and community-development methods could contribute significantly to more responsive, accessible and efficient services.

The research summary, *The Economies of Deprived Communities (DCLG, June 2006),* also emphasises the importance of local collaboration and joint working focused on deprived neighbourhoods, with community-based 'intermediary' organizations developing sustainable approaches that engage with local people. However, it argues, the sustainability of such an approach requires foundation support by the local authority.

The Leitch Review of Skills (December 2006) draws attention to the strong link in the UK between the educational attainment of parents and their children, with a cycle of disadvantage and low educational achievement locking people into persistent poverty. It underlines the need to ensure that raising aspirations and standards in schools is linked to ensuring adults have a real and effective second chance to improve their skills. The Review recommends that, to embed cultures of learning requires a sustained national campaign, backed by action in communities to lift aspirations.

In their *Response to the Leitch Review (January 2007)*, **NIACE** highlight the significance of more general preparation for work and point to the response of employers who stress the value of 'softer generic skills'. The key industrial skill is the skill of learning, which NIACE point out can be learnt wherever learners' motivation is fired.

NIACE also draw attention to the DfES-supported **Wider Benefits of Learning Research Centre**, which has produced a series of findings that highlight the positive benefits of learning on health, and indicate the subsequent increased activity of adult learners in civic life. **NIACE's** own research demonstrates the important contribution that adult education provision can make to positive mental health strategies, as well as reducing the call upon health and social services.

1.1.2 Local Context

Community Strategy

Brighton and Hove's ***2020 Community Strategy*** states that the city aims to be:

> *A place where communities are strong, inclusive and involved and have opportunities to influence decision making. A place where individuals are able to take advantage of opportunities to improve their quality of life (2020 Community Strategy; 26).*

Under the aim to promote enterprise and learning the Strategy states the city will:

> *Encourage[…] a healthy and sustainable economy and actively promote[…] learning and training opportunities for people of all ages.*

It will also plan to:

> *Develop high quality employment opportunities in deprived neighbourhoods and equip residents to access those opportunities (2020 Strategy; 6-7).*

The Strategy also proposes a number of projects to tackle poverty and to ensure these address local needs it states that they should be developed by local communities though Neighbourhood Action Plans (2020 Strategy; 30).

The OCSI report (December 2007), Developing Appropriate Strategies for Reducing Inequality in Brighton and Hove, Phase 1 and 2, in its review of community-based renewal initiatives, highlights the long-term commitment required to support local residents with multiple disadvantages. It also points out that it is easier to signpost and support people into contact with other services and groups beyond the locality from a position of trust built up over time, and that this process itself helps to strengthen community relationships (OCSI Report, Phase 2; 62).

Adult Learning Strategy

The City's Adult Learning Strategy sets out the key actions for the development and delivery of 'inclusive and high quality' learning for all adults in Brighton and Hove. The strategy aims to achieve this through:

> *Focusing public funding on disadvantaged communities and those residents with few or no qualifications (Adult Learning Strategy; 2).*

The Strategy is organized around six themes:

- *A broad range of learning opportunities*
  […] for the city as a whole in personal development, health and well-being, community involvement and citizenship, basic skills and accredited learning to improve access to work and volunteering.

- *Inclusive learning*
  To ensure that all those who live and work in [the city] have access to learning and receive support to overcome any barriers which may prevent them from participating.
- *Information, advice and learner support*
  To achieve maximum participation in adult learning through the provision of information, advice and learner support in a variety of community-based settings.
- *Joint planning*
  To ensure that a broad range of learning opportunities and progression routes are available to learners across the city.
- *Support for high quality provision*
  To ensure high quality teaching and learning by sharing good practice and experience among practitioners and providers and supporting benchmarking for quality improvement.
- *Maximise funding opportunities*
  To work together to identify and access funds for adult learning from different sources and ensure the Local area Agreement (LAA) addresses adult learning needs (Adult Learning Strategy, 2007-2009; 5).

These six themes underpin the work of the Community Outreach Learning Project.

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resulting map has been an invaluable resource during the evaluation and clarified issues and processes that were not immediately evident from discussions and interviews.

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1.4 Research constraints and issues

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Section 2 – Findings

The findings are presented under 9 headings:
- ESF Project outputs and learner destinations;
- Curriculum development and partnerships;
- Leaner experiences including barriers to learning and progression;
- Learner support and IAG;
- The Gateway Protection Programme;
- The experiences of Chinese learners;
- Recruitment and training of community facilitators;
- Project systems and support of the facilitators;
- Key features of the Project.

2.1 ESF Project outputs

2.1.1 Project outcomes

The original outcomes from the Project Bid were renegotiated during the course of the Project. Final Project outputs are detailed below:
- Initial contact was made by Project facilitators with 183 learners/beneficiaries *[expected outcome -115]*
- Assessment and individual learning plans (ILPs) were completed with 183 learners/beneficiaries *[expected outcome -115]*
- 169 learners were supported into First Steps provision, including short courses *[expected outcome – 183]*
- 169 learners began First Steps training courses *[expected outcome – 110]*
- 60 learners begin training at Entry Level 1-3/ Skills for Life programmes *[expected outcome – 57]*
- 163 learners completed all the aims of their Individual Learning Plans *[expected outcome – 115]*
- 12 learners progressed onto nationally accredited vocational training programmes at Level 1 or above *[expected outcome – 35]*
- 57 learners completed a nationally accredited Skills for Life qualification (Entry level 1-3) *[expected outcome – 57]*
- 3 learners completed their Skills for Life course but did not gain a qualification
- 161 learners in total completed their learning programmes *[expected outcome – 115]*
- 161 learners/beneficiaries received exit interviews *[expected outcome -115]*

2.1.2 Learner destinations

The Project overall has more than achieved its original targets. However, some areas did not do as well as planned. The number of learners progressing on to vocational training at Level 1 or above was significantly below the target set. However, learner feedback during the Focus groups and discussions with Project workers and with learning providers indicate that this figure was ambitious given the nature of the target group. In order to both commit to learning and then to progress sufficiently in order to move into accredited vocational training, learners from hard to reach groups requires ongoing support and more time in which to achieve their goals [this issue is addressed in more detail in section 2.4 Learner support].

In addition, it is likely that insufficient Information and advice was available to participants in the Project and this contributed towards the low progression rate into vocational programmes. It should, however, be noted, that, while the team did conduct or offer exit interviews to every Project participant, team members were only offered level 2 IAG training through Sussex Careers. It is also important to note that there was no IAG advice programmed into delivery of the ESOL, Literacy or Numeracy courses [this is discussed further in section 2.4 Learner Support].

The destinations recorded for participants are encouraging, however: 11 participants moved into employment, 12 participants entered full time vocational training; 6 participants took up voluntary work while a significant number of participants have continued their studies. 59 participants are taking ESOL courses; 16 are studying Numeracy; 7 are studying both Literacy and Numeracy, with the intention of moving on to level 1 vocational training later; 1 participant has moved on to study for GCSEs.

This statistical snapshot suggests that, while the CLO Project did not achieve its target for movement of participants into level 1 or above vocational training, by targeting potential learners who otherwise might not have taken up learning opportunities, the Project has increased the likelihood of their participation in learning and training in the future. This supports research that points to progression through the provision of locally accessible and supported learning opportunities that encourage adults into learning and enable them to develop successful learning profiles, build their self confidence and expand their familiarity with learning situations.

The groundwork to establish this provision takes time and support. 18 months is insufficient time for work with hard to reach groups to really

demonstrate significant progress towards achievement of hard outcomes. That the CLO Project has achieved these results is indicative of both the commitment of the Project team and the fact that people from hard to reach groups are interested in learning if their life circumstances allow and the right opportunities are made available to them. It also indicates that measuring soft outcomes, such as engagement with learning or increased self-confidence amongst hard to reach learners, is a better way of showing early progress, looking at distance travelled towards achievement of the hard outcomes of an actual award, enrolment on a vocational course or employment.

2.2 Curriculum development and partnerships

The curriculum offer developed by the CLO Project has provided a range of routes into learning, with taster sessions offered in a variety of different local venues. Such an approach is vital in attracting new and hard to reach learners into study, particularly as people often restart their learning journeys for very personal reasons. A broad range of courses available to potential learners in local venues makes returning to study less problematic and less threatening. However, while adult education providers are supportive of the education outreach activities undertaken by the CLO Project and the other Gateway teams, community-based agencies are not necessarily so clear about the value or potential for such activities.

2.2.1 Partnership development through outreach

Outreach work in the west of the city has focused on the provision of computer skills and of Numeracy and maths workshops through Talkshop and St Richards, in partnership with Portslade Community College. The Project work has taken a different focus at Downland Court, Portslade, working with a group of estate residents and using the local community flat as a venue, with the offer of childcare provision through the local Sure Start Centre. The CLO Facilitator was able to make contact with members of this group through partnership with a detached youth worker who worked in the area. This group of learners have taken First Steps and Skills for Life courses in Literacy and Numeracy and have completed a First Aid course.

Work in Brighton by the CLO Project also demonstrates the importance of partnerships and the value of flexibility when taking learning opportunities into community venues. The CLO Project work in Hollingdean was developed in partnership with the NRF worker in the area. The CLO Project set up a First Steps course and a Skills for Life course in Numeracy in Hollingdean at Hollingdean Community Centre. The Project also arranged a Childcare course at Brighton Women's Centre during the autumn 07. Learners from these three courses then

moved on to a Maths level 2 National Test (GCSE equivalent) course provided by the Friends Centre. The CLO Project also funded a short taster course in Hollingdean Community Centre in ESOL before Christmas 2007, with a Friends Centre tutor. The Friends Centre was then able to use Adult and Community Learning funds to carry on with the course in January 2008. The CLO Facilitator working in Hollingdean was able to maintain contact with the learners from the taster course and supported recruitment to the follow-on course offered by the Friends Centre in Ivory Place, Brighton.

It is important to emphasise the value of the involvement of local partnerships in developing the work of the Project, in particular the Friends Centre in Brighton and Portslade Community College. Both adult learning providers were committed to work with the CLO Project and saw the potential in developing locally available progression pathways. During discussions about the CLO Project, both the Friends Centre Literacy and ESOL coordinators emphasised the value of having community-based learning facilitators able to track and support learners from taster courses onto more extended courses held in Brighton. Adult Learning at Portslade Community College welcomed the input of the Project in an area relatively under resourced and neglected in comparison to other similar areas in the city.

2.3 Learner Experiences

This section of the Findings deals with practice that encourages learning, provides examples of learner journeys, reviews some barriers to learning and details different forms of progression.

2.3.1 A framework to encourage learning

Participants in the Learner focus groups identified a range of issues that encouraged them to learn. Learning as a way to *refresh your mind* was a recurring thread running through the focus group discussions: *things that I'd completely forgotten from school.* Denise, a member of the Ivory Place Maths group, commented that she needed to *stimulate her brain,* Libby valued learning *something new each week,* while a member of the Downland Court group valued her increased confidence and her newfound ability to help her children with their homework.

The contribution of tutors, who understand the difficulties experienced by hard-to-reach learners and who are committed to work in community settings, should not be underestimated for the early success of learners. Teaching approaches that are sympathetic and encouraging play a significant part in maintaining motivation, particularly where previous experiences of learning have left troubled

memories of struggling at school. Sharon was encouraged by her Literacy tutor's insistence upon every individual's unique way of learning. This approach allowed her to acknowledge when she did not understand and to ask for explanations.

The potential for Project workers to establish productive relationships with potential learners at first meeting is vital. Marie, a single parent with two children, who lives in Hove, met one of the Project facilitators at the Women's Centre in Brighton when the Project put on a Childcare course. As a result of the Friends Centre's training of CLO Project facilitators in the use of language assessment tools, the Project worker was able to offer Marie a language assessment on meeting. This established a working relationship quickly, rather than sending her elsewhere with the possibility of loss of contact. Marie is Portuguese and needs to develop her language skills, although ESOL is not appropriate as her English is very good. However, she needs to acquire qualifications that will help her get a job in Brighton, which, as a single parent, she has found difficult. Marie is now studying Maths Level 2 at the Friends Centre, and would like to study for a qualification in English:

> It is important for me […] I will never get a [job] here without qualifications that are recognised.

The CLO Project has provided support and access to courses, and advised Marie on the study options available to her with advice about her next steps. With a much clearer understanding of her potential progression routes, Marie has gained greater self-confidence.

The value of local venues and of small numbers in attracting hard to reach groups was reinforced by learners' comments. The group at Downland Court felt valued because the courses they had participated in had been arranged around their domestic childcare needs. Libby spoke for the group when she explained:

> they've worked around us really... how we do it… They've asked us what days we can do it on, so it's all been worked around us…which is good…

Locally available learning opportunities also help to overcome one of the main barriers to learning experienced by 'hard to reach' groups, the cost of travel for study.

2.3.2 Learning journeys

Below I detail the learning journeys undertaken by three of the Project participants that exemplify some of the issues that face many 'hard-to-reach' learners:

Cassie

Cassie lives in Hollingdean, is a single parent with a son, Matt, who has special needs. She explained that:

> I had Matt when I was 15, so I've gone from being a child to adult and I've just been a mum… and I've only just started to find my footing, as it were…

For Cassie, the CLO Project arrived at the right time:

> I've thought about it for ages and I'd gone down and spoke to [IAG worker] at the Hollingdean community centre… It wasn't until […] she asked me what I wanted to do with myself …it kind of upset me… and I walked away thinking ' I haven't got a clue'… when I was 15 I had loads of ambitions and stuff I wanted to do before I'd had Matt and I've lost my way and by doing my Maths, and hopefully getting other stuff under my belt, I'll be finding my way again and be deciding what I want to do…where I'd be useful….

Studying Numeracy and now preparing for GCSE Maths has provided Cassie with an opportunity to complete studies that her early pregnancy prevented, and has offered her a structured space in which to think about her next step:

> I want my Maths and my English under my belt before I decide on what else I want to do … 'cause I kind of missed that because I had Matt just before my exams started ...

Now she has had a taste of learning Cassie wants more:

> …I don't really have a problem with learning 'cause, since I've started I've just wanted more input, and it seems that Numeracy just one day a week just ain't working completely…I'm getting on fine with it but I want more…

Cassie has regained her lost confidence and ambition for herself, and was keen to join a new course for parents in confidence building and action planning for the future, offered by the CLO Project this spring at the Friends Meeting House in Brighton.

Heather

Heather describes herself as an older student, lives in Hollingbury and has a son who is due to move to junior school in September. She recounted a disastrous experience of school:

> because I got so badly behind I just didn't understand and that was the dyslexia but nobody knew until I was 2 weeks away from […].CSEs […] so …that's what happened.[…] oh, they said, 'you're not thick, you're dyslexic'… I said 'ok' and nothing was done and I was pushed into the exams and that was it, 'do your best', not hoping for much, but 'do your best'…

She did achieve five CSE passes, *but very low grades*. Despite such a negative school experience, Heather did not lose her desire to learn:

since then I've done English Literature, I've done an NVQ in Childcare, I've done Sociology. She explained that she wanted to return to work. However:

> *I have been out of work for sometime... due to ill health and stuff… and I actually wanted to do ...I need to do my NVQ level 3 in Childcare, but I just felt that […] Maths was such an awkward subject for me, I felt I wanted to really tackle it, get my teeth into it and give some of my confidence back….because NVQ level 3 is a lot harder a level …than 2…and a bit more intense... I want to …not be thrown into the deep end after about 12 years of non-academic work…*

Heather is clear that she needs to build up her confidence and develop her academic coping skills in order to successfully re-enter the workplace:

> *yea .... get a few more […] academic things under my belt then I'll feel like I'll be more armed to go back to … having been out of work for quite a long time […] your finger needs to be on the pulse of what's happening now...I was working a long time ago, so[…] just wanted to build up my confidence really…*

The Maths course at the Friends Centre is doing more than prepare Heather for re-entry into work. She has learnt that she can understand difficult subjects and has tackled some of her personal demons in studying Maths. Her re-discovered confidence has also provided her with skills she can use to support her son in his schoolwork:

> *and Maths was kind of like […] 'no… I don't want to do Maths' 'cause I find it really, really difficult…and then when I went on this 3 day course […] I'm beginning to understand it which is actually amazing, because I just used to… panic totally and not understand a word the teacher was actually saying…and got very left behind… at least now […] my son is […] going to junior school this year and I want to understand Maths enough to be able to help him…*

Sharon

Sharon attended a Skills for Life Literacy course in the Downland Court community flat, Portslade, and has a child who attends a school for children with special needs. Her comments about her learning indicate how difficult it can be for people who experience multiple problems to commit to learning consistently in order to make a difference in their lives. Sharon explained how difficult she found it to commit to a class:

> *It's difficult because some of us have got children with special needs and if we get phone calls, we just have to go… that makes it difficult as well […] and with doctors' appointments, hospital appointments and sometimes they can be 5 or 6 in a*

year … and 9 times out of 10 they land on days you're doing a course….

Despite such seemingly intractable problems, she is keen to develop her skills in a very focused way to support her advocacy of her son's needs with the Health Service:

[English] helped me as well… doing a cv, letter writing […] stuff like that…ways of putting things […] especially having to do letters […] writing to hospitals, you know…its helped a lot…

At the same time that Sharon articulated her instrumental use of learning, she also acknowledged that the learning opportunities provided though the CLO Project had 'refreshed' her mind and reawakened an enjoyment in learning itself:

silent letters….things like that...which I love doing […] verbs and nouns and everything…things that I'd completely forgotten from school…its refreshed your mind…

2.3.3 Continuing barriers

Fyvie-Gauld's (2000) review of research with 'Hard to Reach' groups in Brighton and Hove indicated the main barriers to participation in learning or training were cost, lack of information about availability, lack or expensive childcare and lack of time (Fyvie-Gauld, 2000; 10). Eight years after her review, these issues continue to cause concern amongst learners and recurred as themes throughout the Learner focus groups. It is important to note that the CLO Project team have worked hard to overcome these barriers to learning by providing free crèches where needed, offering classes at times to fit with childcare responsibilities and within short travel distances so transport costs do not prevent attendance. However, these barriers can recur when learners move for further learning opportunities and comments by learners during the focus groups referred to follow-on learning with other providers.

Participants in the Learner focus groups emphasised the importance of classes offered at times that fitted with family commitments. A member of the Maths focus group at Ivory Place explained that, although she was committed to the course, its timing caused problems with collecting children from school:

the timing's difficult, yes…I think the mornings would be perfect […] because you're rushing back to school or you're having to find someone to have your children…

The timing of this course, developed by the Friends Centre as a progression pathway in negotiation with the CLO Project, has now been changed in response to learner feedback.

A range of additional factors can make learning itself a difficult life choice to make, where practical considerations override a desire to learn and can inhibit progression. Denise explained the financial constraints of bringing up children on welfare benefits:

> *the Social only really give you enough money to live on for basics, for food, gas, electricity… then you've got bits the kids need for school… so I wouldn't be able to […] there's no room for manoeuvre […] then you've got to take into consideration your travel…fares…and then your equipment…*

The CLO Project funding provided flexibility in delivering learning programmes and meeting costs that prevent participation in learning by members of hard to reach groups, but the funding environment that adult and further education providers are required to operate within does not always match this. This is now seen by the CLO team to be a real barrier to learners progressing to mainstream learning elsewhere.

2.3.4 Forms of progression

The statistical outputs for progression by Project participants [detailed in section 2.1] are encouraging and indicate the potential for movement in learning for hard to reach groups if they are offered suitable and accessible learning opportunities.

Progression does not just mean linear progression of individuals through to the next level of learning and can be viewed in a number of ways. Volunteering in a community group, involvement in an arts project or joining a yoga class can all signal changes in people's lives and indicate progression and greater community engagement.

Some focus group participants indicated their readiness to move into accredited learning in preparation for a return to work. Libby was keen to know more about qualifications, some guidance about choices available and help with finding a job, now her son had started school:

> *look at what sort of job you're going back into […]put on some course to help you towards that […] a lot of jobs use computers […] so I'd be really interested in doing a computer course*

She was clear about the value of accredited learning for her:

> *and knowing you've got the certificate at the end of it which obviously is going to help you when you do eventually start looking for work…*
>
> *yea… it gives you the motivation to carry on once you've got that certificate […] to show to an employer, say 'this is what I've got'… and would help towards getting me a job…*

Libby's interest in progression routes is an outcome of her participation in CLO's community-based First Steps and Skills for Life provision.

For some Project participants, work and accredited progression are not a current option. For Emily, becoming a mum at 16 was traumatic and being happy as a mother is significant for her:

> *I'm quite happy just being a mum I'm not one for doing new things […] but maybe at some time in the future…*

Learning that supported her situation as a young mum now would offer a framework for making constructive future choices once her child is older and, like Cassie, she rediscovers her adult self and desire for learning beyond the home and family.

Short-term Project funding can sometimes result in 'parachute syndrome' as learners see yet another Project drop in and then quickly leave their community. Participants in the Maths focus group at Ivory Place indicated both their commitment to each other as a group and their desire to progress. They also expressed concern that the Project had awakened their desire to learn through the Taster programme, and their worry that the Project worker would then disappear, leaving the group without anything to move onto:

> *we all said, 'ok, you've given us a taste for this so where are we going to now?'. and we were very anxious that we weren't going to be just left forgotten, high and dry…..*

The CLO Project worker negotiated a follow-on Maths course with the Friends Centre at Ivory Place, which has enabled the group to move together from their community-based Taster course in Hollingdean into study in Brighton.

The CLO facilitators articulated problems with progression during discussions about the structure of the CLO Project's curriculum offer. The Project was only able to fund learners to do one Skills for Life course and learners had to choose either to take Maths or to opt for English. However, for learners to progress into a level 2 College course they usually require both their English and their Maths at level 1, and so lack of both Skills for Life level 1 qualifications became a barrier to progression for some of the Project participants. In discussions during this evaluation, the Adult and Community Learning Manager at City College indicated that it would be possible for learners to join a level 2 course without both Skills for Life qualifications and work towards acquiring the relevant English or Maths skills whilst also participating in a vocational programme

The CLO Project team also expressed frustration over the restrictions created by time-limited courses. The Skills for Life courses offered

through the Project were only 12 weeks long; yet, people new to learning often need longer than 12 weeks in order to make significant progress. A significant number of Project participants did not progress from First Steps provision into Skills for Life programmes, while not all participants in Skills for Life programmes succeeded in achieving accreditation within the allotted 12-week course. Even fewer participants moved from a Skills for Life course into nationally accredited vocational programmes. The team felt the Project needed more flexibility in order to offer learners a package that met their needs, rather than expect them to progress at a uniform rate, particularly as the Project is targeted at hard to reach groups who generally have not had very positive experiences of learning in the past. As one of the Project Facilitators explained:

> once they get used to working together in their group, to start a new class is not always easy, so more flexibility about what we could fund and to have courses on longer

There is a need to negotiate flexible learning packages with providers that offer hard to reach learners the possibility to progress at their own speed, as well as the funds to support them.

2.4 Learner Support

This section of the findings details the range of support offered to learners and the reasons it is necessary.

2.4.1 Support for learning

The CLO Project offered childcare support to learners, which is a considerable help for people returning to study and who feel hesitant about whether they are able to cope. Courses were programmed in venues that were locally accessible and at times that did not conflict with school dropping off and picking up times. The Project negotiated access to crèche provision with the nearby Sure Start centre for residents of Downland Court, Portslade, a useful partnership that could have potential for future work with hard to reach parent groups in the area. Finding the time to study around the responsibilities of being a parent are an ongoing barrier; knowing they do not have to worry about finding childcare or the funds to pay for it makes the difference between starting a course or not. Cost is also a major barrier to beginning learning for many. The Project provided free First Steps courses and funded participation for learners in one 12 week Skills for Life programme in Literacy, Numeracy or ESOL.

However, other factors require support if people are to achieve positive outcomes. The actual return to learning and lack of self-confidence in learners' ability to learn effectively, either because of the length of time since they have studied, or because they have

never been successful with learning in the past, are all issues that need to be addressed when working with hard to reach groups. The CLO Project offered learners on-course support, with project workers working alongside learners in class, providing individual help to students as needed. An older woman amongst the Ethiopian refugee group had never learnt to read or write successfully in the past and also had issues with failing sight; a Project worker was able to support her on an individual basis in the classroom. The Friends Centre Step by Step Project developed literacy and Numeracy skills with homeless people at First Base, a homeless hostel. The tutor was able to provide 1:1 support and invest time in confidence-building skills development due to the flexibility provided by the COL Project funding.

Project workers also provided a safety net of contact by telephone, and followed up learners if they had not managed to attend their class, checking with them to see if they needed any other support. In addition, workers acted as contact points with tutors, acting in an advocacy role for learners, dealing with any support issues that arose, linking them up with other agencies where necessary. As one of the Project team explained:
> *our target was hard to reach learners [who] do have real big problems [that] will get in the way of being able to attend classes… [there was] one learner [with] a health problem so I tried to get the work sent to him when he couldn't come… and explained to the tutor as well so she would do a little catch-up*

Friendship networks established through learning are significant in breaking the social isolation experienced by many people in hard to reach groups and encourage their participation in learning (Eldred et al.; 2004). Many of the focus group members recounted complex social support networks that are of equal importance for successful learning journeys:
> *the people around you who actually support you in different ways are really important […] and if you haven't got that[…] you're stuck… catch 22…*

Such networks provide mutual help and support and reinforce a developing sense of self-worth. Denise and Cassie met during a Taster course in Hollingdean community centre, and have established a fruitful and supportive friendship:
> *Denise: sometimes I do my work and my brain goes […], you cant think for a minute …its just because…obviously its being used, but not used as in a sense of learning, its being used more for looking after children, housework […] everyday life sort of things […] my brain! […] it hasn't been used for so long[…] but once I get in the drift of it or its explained to me its like, 'oh, yea!'*

> *Cassie: she panics […] Because we live quite close together […] we do our homework together as well…and in class…it makes things easier…*

Research in adult learning patterns suggests that established groups of people who support each other, such as the Hollingdean group, encourage more sustained learning (McGivney, 2003; Eldred et al., 2004).

2.4.2 Information and advice

The provision of locally available advice and guidance is one of the keys to facilitating learner progression. Many learners taking non-accredited or lower level courses in community venues do not use centrally located guidance services, therefore appropriate advice and guidance needs to be offered within the local learning environment. Local referral points have been shown to be more clearly focused and meet the needs of local people more directly and appropriately. One of the key roles of the CLO Project was the provision of advice to support people into learning and to encourage them to make informed decisions about progression routes. The Project bid indicated that:

 'IAG will be available to all beneficiaries and the [Community Learning Facilitators] will also be able to provide bespoke advice on local learning opportunities'.

This aspect of the Project work was given insufficient focus, principally as a result of the emphasis upon recruitment of learners and development of a curriculum offer with providers in a shortened time span created by the late appointment of the facilitators. An inadequate training programme at the beginning of the Project, with IAG accreditation at an appropriate level for the Project facilitators, also contributed to a lack of adequate IAG for learners. This is reflected in the Project outcomes [see section 2.1]. However, while IAG training at the appropriate level was not provided, the Project facilitators demonstrated significant skill during the exit interviews offered to all Project participants. Additional IAG training would have contributed further to the Project workers' level of knowledge.

2.5 The Gateway Protection Scheme

Brighton and Hove Council decided to participate in the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP), a UK resettlement programme for Refugees, running since 2003 and funded by the Home Office Social Policy Unit; 3 groups of Ethiopian refugees arrived in the city during autumn 2006. The Community Learning (CL) Team made a commitment to address the learning needs of this group. The CLO Project coincidentally began work at the same time and participated

in the support programme. This work was urgently needed at the time, and the CLO Project team provided much needed input to the support and integration of this group of refugees. It is nevertheless, important to signal the impact of this involvement upon the CLO Project, at the beginning of an 18-month time limited ESF project.

2.6 Specific experiences of Chinese learners

In this section of the findings I detail the national and local context for the Chinese community, indicate work that has been carried out with the Chinese community in the city and give details about the activity of the CLO Project with older Chinese learners.

2.6.1 National context

- The Chinese community is widely dispersed, apart from the main China Towns in major conurbations (Manchester, Glasgow and London).
- The majority of the Chinese community is isolated and in commercial competition with each other.
- The Chinese community across the UK makes a lower use of health and social services of all minority ethnic groups (Chinese National Healthy Living Centre; London).

- Heavy workloads and the occupational hazards of work in the catering trade often result in middle aged and older workers who suffer from ill health and consequently find it difficult to continue in employment.
- There is limited take up of welfare services due to:
  - Language barriers
  - Lack of knowledge of welfare rights
  - Lack of experience of contact with health or other professionals
  - Low expectations of health and social services

(Wai Kam Yu, 2000, Chinese Older People, JRF; Bristol).

2.6.2 Local context

- The Chinese population in Brighton and Hove is still a largely 'invisible community'.
- The 2001 census indicated a Chinese population in Brighton and Hove of 1300. However, BME groups overall in the city have increased by 35% from 2001-2004, compared to a national level of 13% (OCSI Phase 1 Report; 16).
- The Chinese community in Brighton and Hove is broadly divided between the Cantonese-speaking community, mainly from Hong Kong and parts of the Chinese mainland; a population predominantly composed of students and graduates who speak

Mandarin and who have strong connections with Mainland China.

- These two communities appear to have very different and distinct identities, with some tensions between them.
- 1/3rd of Chinese people in employment in Brighton and Hove work in the hotel and restaurant sector (OCSI Phase 1 Report; 33).
- The economic activity rate for the Chinese population is 50%, well below the city average (OCSI Phase 1 Report; 50).
- The 'Healthy Ageing' section of Brighton and Hove's 2020 Community Strategy, suggests the introduction of 'a "Sure Start" model of services to break down professional barriers and involve clients in decision-making' (Brighton and Hove 2020 Community Strategy, Healthy Ageing; 24)- a 'Sure Start to Later Life' pilot (Older Peoples Community Programme) is currently being run in Queens Park and Hangleton and Knoll to promote opportunities for over 50 years olds who wish to work, learn or volunteer.
- The Chinese community make less use of health and related services of any of the BME communities (technical supplement to the *Strategy To Reduce Health Inequalities in Brighton and Hove*, Brighton and Hove City PCT, 2005).

2.6.3 Local responses

Some providers of learning and health-related services tend to highlight the similarities rather than the differences between members of the Chinese community and other BME communities. However, lack of contact and experience of working with the Chinese community has tended to reinforce generalisations about the community's needs. Providers of lifelong learning report an historical lack of take-up of learning opportunities by members of the Chinese community, including ESOL. Yet, the work patterns of Chinese workers, mainly in local restaurants and Take-Aways, make it difficult to attend either day or evening classes, thus consistent attendance at English classes is problematic. Yu (2000) also indicates a lack of discussion regarding lifelong learning for older Chinese people and an absence of discussion about their potential contribution to the wider community.

Some mapping of Brighton and Hove's Chinese communities has already been undertaken in the recent past, through Brighton Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP). City College also established a good working relationship with the Chinese Education Development Project (mainly Mandarin speakers) through their Adult and Community Learning Manager. This led to the development of a course in English for Business Purposes at City College with the intention

of assisting in the assimilation of people from Mainland China into the life and culture of Brighton and Hove.

The Working Together Project has some experience of working with the Chinese community in the city. With the help of Lottery funding, they carried out a scoping exercise in 2003 with members of the Chinese community, mapping the range of Cantonese-speaking community groups and identifying their training needs. The Working Together Project worked with a Cantonese trainer who is well respected nationally in both the Mandarin and Cantonese speaking Chinese communities, and the Project funded a bespoke training session in Feb 2004 on how to run a voluntary group effectively. In 2005, 4 members of the Mandarin-speaking Chinese community attended a fund-raising workshop for voluntary groups (out of a total attendance of 12). However, due to lack of resources, the contact with both Chinese communities has not been maintained and the Working Together Project have noted a subsequent fall-off in attendance and requests for information and advice. While there is a perception that there are frictions between the Mandarin–speaking and Cantonese-speaking Chinese communities, members of the Cantonese-speaking community who attended the 2004 workshop (above) were concerned that differences and tensions between the two communities should not be interpreted by broader society as unbridgeable rifts. At the same time, they acknowledged that these differences and tensions did need addressing.

2.6.4 Project work with Chinese learners

The Community Learning Outreach Project was approached by the Cantonese–speaking Chinese community through the Chinese Society based on Western Road, Brighton. The majority of the members of this society are older women who have been involved in running their own restaurants or Take-Aways. The ages of the group range from about 60 to over 90, with most members still extremely active. Their families have often sold the restaurants on and therefore the members' knowledge of the restaurant or Take-Away trade is no longer so valued within their families. Some of the group have attended English classes in the past, but were unable to maintain their commitment due to the demands of their work. Some group members have never attended English classes, and have survived by living within their own community. While their sons and daughters have been educated in the UK and speak English, the older members of the community often have little or no English, despite having lived in the UK and in Brighton for a significant period of time. There is also a smaller group of younger Chinese who do not speak English and have recently moved to Brighton to work in the food

trade. This group are very keen to learn English but have limited opportunities to do so.

The CLO Project arranged ESOL classes for members of the Cantonese-speaking Chinese Society, though the Friends Centre. They meet regularly and provide social support to each other and saw the English classes as an extension of this relationship. However, the current funding and provision of ESOL classes makes it difficult to provide continuation classes using the same model of delivery as the CLO Project was able to use. There were proposals to provide English classes in a local restaurant during the gaps between lunch and evening service, for members of the community who work in the local food trade. This would have been useful because the working hours of the catering trade make attendance at English classes, whether during the day or in the evening, almost impossible. As yet, there has been no development of this proposal.

During my visit with the Chinese Society, members of the group expressed a desire to continue with English classes in the future. The group particularly appreciated the emphasis upon practical everyday English in their classes at the Friends Centre. They wanted to develop their English further in order to talk to their doctor without translation, to do their shopping and for everyday conversations. Three members of this group progressed into further ESOL classes, and two achieved qualifications. They did, however, feel that there was a lack of provision appropriate to their needs (identification of needs is addressed in the recommendations). In addition, they recounted, with sadness, their inability to interact with their grandchildren due to a lack of a shared language.

2.7 Recruitment and training of community facilitators

In this section I review
- the recruitment of the community facilitators;
- their training needs.

The original ESF Project brief stated that the proposed activities to be undertaken by the team of community learning facilitators was 'modelled on the effective practice developed by the eb4u funded Gateway to learning team in East Brighton and ACL Outreach teams' already operating in the city (Project Summary, Appendix A).

2.7.1 recruitment

The Project was due to start at the beginning of April 2006, with the appointment of the Project manager. The workers were all interviewed in April 2006 and anticipated starting work quite soon afterwards. However, they actually came into post in August and September 06.

The delay appears to relate to Brighton and Hove Council HR systems and the requirement for police checks to be completed before the workers could come into post. This late start for an 18-month project was further complicated by the timing in relation to education provision in the city, as one of the facilitators explained: …*we started in the middle of the summer holidays when a lot of our providers were on holiday, so it didn't help*…

2.7.2 training

Effective educational outreach work requires experience and training. The Project Brief recognised this when it stated that the Working Together Project (a community and voluntary sector training provider) would deliver 'a comprehensive induction package' for all the CL Facilitators during the first 2 months of the Project. This induction would include a range of skills development modules that would cover Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), Skills for Life awareness-raising, community development and communication skills. Additionally, as part of the training package, the CL facilitators would carry out work shadowing with the existing eb4u Gateway and ACL teams.

The Working Together Project (WtP) had developed a course, 'Championing Learning', that sought to develop learning with community activists. WtP explained that this course had the potential to be opened up to other workers involved in community outreach and community development, thus enabling a sharing of experiences and skills derived from a variety of community outreach settings. The WtP indicated that they could have tailor-made a programme to develop the existing skills of the CLO facilitators and to link this to capacity-building and skills sharing between the outreach teams operating across Brighton and Hove. The Friends Centre suggested the Project team should have some training in understanding Skills for Life programmes, awareness of adult learning needs and assessment of language levels, and was running the CLICK Project at the time that included courses that specifically explored adult learning and basic skills in community settings. This was not acted upon although all the team members acknowledge the value of such training at the beginning of their work. In addition, The CLO Project bought IAG training from Sussex Careers for the project team.

One CLO facilitator took part in the Learning Champions training course, as it seemed appropriate to their training needs. Two of the Project team undertook the City and Guilds 9297 Adult Learners award offered by the Friends Centre, which provided a clear framework for learning support, explained basic skills and provided a specific focus

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upon ESOL, Literacy or Numeracy. Although two of the Project workers took the Adult Learners course, they did not take it together. While they valued this opportunity, they also expressed regret that all three workers had not done so: *it would have been so worthwhile us all doing it […] in the beginning.* The Project team did receive IAG training through Sussex Careers, although the team would have preferred a higher level of training and to have received it earlier in the Project for it to have been more useful.

2.8 Project systems

The development of systems for recording data for ESF reporting and for tracking of learners appears to have been initially haphazard, and forms were developed as the Project evolved on a trail and error basis. Discussions during the evaluation also indicated that the paperwork accompanying the Project activities was felt to be heavy by providers, relative to the amount of learning taking place. Providers also felt the forms, necessary for capturing certain data, were unsuitable as a means of providing useful evaluation by learners themselves. One of the Providers commented that not getting the necessary systems in place at the beginning had caused problems for everybody. This was eventually remedied with useful and constructive feedback from the ESF auditor. The Project workers did comment upon the level of positive encouragement, advice and on-going support available from the learning providers involved with the Project, alongside day-to-day advice from the ACL workers in the Community Learning outreach team.

2.9 Key features of the Project

1. The CLO Project extended education outreach beyond the NR areas to other areas of the city that had previously received limited sustained funding for this type of work in the past.

2. The CLO Project conducted education outreach in these communities, set up Taster and Skills for Life courses for learners in community settings and negotiated with providers to deliver the courses.

3. The ability to run very small groups gave more flexibility to the Project to get people started in learning when they were ready.

4. Start dates for courses were not reliant on the standard academic year and term structure, and classes could start whenever a group of learners were ready to so, in venues that were locally accessible and at times that were convenient for

them.

5. The CLO Project worked with the Chinese elders group based in the city centre. This was an important contact with a previously underrepresented group in the city.

6. The CLO Project workers provided IAG and offered exit interviews to all Project participants to explore options for progression.

7. The CLO Project negotiated with providers to develop follow on provision for Project participants and facilitated their recruitment into this provision. This was important for successful learner progression but was not a planned feature of the Project.

8. The CLO Project worked in partnership with adult education providers to develop administrative and tracking systems that facilitated leaner transitions.

9. The CLO Project promoted equal opportunities by targeting hard to reach groups in the city. It demonstrated this though the large numbers of BME learners and single parents, in particular, who participated in learning opportunities through the Project.

Section 3 - Conclusions and Recommendations

This final section of the report will review the lessons to be learnt form this Project, issues related to the activity of the Project and make recommendations for future action.

3.1 Key lessons from this Project:

1. The Project data to be collected has to be understood and the systems for doing this need to be agreed and used from the outset by everyone involved in delivery of courses.

2. An evaluation cycle involving the whole Project team can facilitate regular qualitative reviews, help forward planning and inform relationships with community-based organisations.

3. Despite other drawbacks, short term Projects can serve as pilots for development work which, after evaluation, can be embedded in longer-term development strategies.

4. The Project activities have demonstrated the potential benefits of education outreach with hard to reach groups and in areas

that have previously received little sustained attention or funds.

5. Adult Education providers are keen to work with education outreach projects such as the CLO Project, because they have the flexibility to make connections with hard to reach groups that the providers are not always best placed to do.

6. Projects like CLO need to work with tutors who are enthusiastic and experienced in working in community settings and with a range of hard to reach groups.

7. Members of hard to reach groups are willing to commit to learning if appropriate learning opportunities are negotiated and accessible, with supported progression routes made available.

8. Project workers can benefit from regular training with other similar projects to inform practice in aspects of work with hard to reach groups.

9. While facilitators need some understanding of IAG, more targeted and extensive IAG work can be better delivered through a dedicated IAG worker who could network with IAG providers with expertise in work with specific hard to reach groups, and thereby develop a coordinated and focused approach to delivering IAG service in community settings.

10. Central office bases can support education outreach in the city centre, but Projects like CLO also need to be based in the community, particularly if the communities are on the fringes of the city and involve considerable travel times and distances.

3.2 Training and support of community facilitators

- The training programme originally planned for the Project facilitators did not fully materialise, although the Project workers did participate in a range of training activities.
- Links with the two existing Gateway teams (Whitehawk Inn and The Bridge, Moulescoomb) were not initiated until November 2007, after the new manager for community learning took up post.
- The Project workers expressed the feeling that they would have benefited from initial training in the requirements of ESF data management before they embarked on outreach and course development with learning providers.
- Supporting learners into and during their learning is key to ensure retention and progression where barriers to learning are multiple.

This requires some understanding of how adults learn and this should be addressed through regular training and development activities by project workers and with other front line staff.

3.3 Development of systems, tracking of learners and evaluation of outcomes

- Management systems for capturing essential information for ESF reporting were not in place from the outset to facilitate the Project activities. This situation has now been remedied with a change of personnel both in the leadership of Brighton and Hove City Council adult education and the management of the Community Learning team.
- ESF data management can be problematic if workers are unfamiliar with the processes. There are a number of adult education providers and Projects who work in community settings with expertise in managing ESF-funded projects and whose experience could be usefully shared with other practitioners so that workers do not have to constantly reinvent new systems.
- The complexity of people's life trajectories is difficult to capture in the 'snapshot' of statistical data that record directly measurable hard outcomes. The success of work with hard to reach groups could additionally be measured though the collection of qualitative data that records processes of change and development in people's lives. There are now a number of studies that document ways of evidencing success through identification of soft targets, and the type of targets that could be achieved [relevant studies are included in the Bibliography].
- Tracking learners' journeys across education providers is problematic; work is needed to carry our longer term mapping of learner profiles in order to identify patterns of engagement and target resources in communities effectively.

3.4 Support for learners

- The development of buddying systems through local volunteer programmes would enable project workers to focus on their outreach role in developing relationships within the local community with organisations and groups of residents.
- Local volunteer schemes would also have the potential for capacity building by extending skills within the local community, developing the capacity of local people to understand and support the learning needs of others in their community, which would also have benefits beyond the immediate support needs of individuals.

- Encourage learners to move as a group. They have often set up mutual support networks with childcare, help with homework, etc, rather than continue the traditional emphasis upon individual learning paths and progression routes – collective options might sometimes be more successful (see McGivney 2003 for examples).
- Learning opportunities, availability of public transport and crèche provision can be haphazard across the city and do not always join up. Mapping these facilities against each other might indicate reasons for attendance at one course and failure to recruit for others.
- Many after school activities for the older school age groups are expensive and therefore exclude the children of adult learners in hard to reach groups. There is a need to join up policy and practice and look at the range of provision across the city to provide a coherent and coordinated response to learning needs across generations.

3.5 Progression and curriculum development

- Learning can take place across diverse subjects and settings – vocational, life skills, community participation, volunteering, cultural activities and personal development. The importance is to encourage successful learning that raises confidence and self-esteem.
- Plans for future taster programmes in community venues should consider a more diverse curriculum offer to include: creative activities such as card making; health related courses such as healthy eating, yoga or aromatherapy; creative writing, story-telling or book making; in addition to Literacy, Numeracy, ESOL or IT.
- Project workers should explore with providers the range of courses that could be developed as potential progression pathways, with foundation stages offered in community venues.
- McGivney (2003) indicates the importance of providers of mainstream programmes offering access to programmes immediately rather that making learners who are ready to progress wait until the start of the academic year in September or October. She argues for 'swifter progression […] encouraged through the delivery of rolling programmes, modular structures and all-year programmes' (McGivney, 2003; 36).
- Better transition support is needed, with a learner-centred approach. For outreach with hard to reach groups to work in moving them on, there needs to be a commitment on the part of vocational providers to support such learners more effectively onto, and to retain them in, follow-on courses. The small details

are important in supporting learners into new learning environments with bus timetables, maps and personal welcomes and buddying schemes (see Field, 2002).

3.6 Information, advice and guidance

- Providing an information and advice service to learners was a key element of the Project brief and essential for an integrated community-based access point into adult learning.
- At present, the Project facilitators are insufficiently trained to offer a more extensive IAG service to learners. This could be addressed though appropriate levels of training for Project workers, in addition to introductory workshops in IAG for staff in community venues (as stated in the original Project brief).

3.7 The needs of Chinese learners

- There is a need to be more aware of the specific needs of the Chinese communities in the city. This could include use of bilingual trainers in work through the Voluntary and Community sector.
- There is a need to acknowledge specific occupational patterns common to the Chinese communities and a need to rethink timing and location of language provision to take account of this.
- There are equity and access issues regarding health and social welfare services and the Chinese community's sense of entitlement to use of public services. This has particular implications given proposals to introduce a 'Sure Start' model into delivery of services for the elderly in the city.
- There is a need to understand the range of community organisations in order to identify training and development needs and address the issue of capacity building within the Chinese communities.

3.8 Education outreach in the city

- Outreach projects, particularly those aimed at contacting marginalised groups, need a long period of time to carry out initial research, develop networks, develop continuing support mechanisms and establish services. Future plans for education outreach should be embedded within long-term delivery plans for education provision.
- While outreach is useful and valuable in reaching and engaging people on the 'borders', educational outreach isn't just about 'bringing learners in' but also about promoting learning opportunities wherever it is appropriate.

- There is a range of models for outreach work generally following a community development approach. The difference with educational outreach is its focus on identifying learning needs and developing courses. This is crucial to reach and support people into learning opportunities who do not routinely see themselves as learners.
- One approach to educational outreach is to use community-based activities to make contact with learners and encourage them into learning centres, such as the Friends Centre or Portslade Community College. Another is to use a community development model and engage with groups in the community, work with them on significant tasks in order to signpost learning opportunities offered by other providers, and develop complementary activities from the original task. These are not mutually exclusive and should be seen as different strands of the same process.
- There is a range of community outreach activity across Brighton and Hove by statutory providers in health and social care, family support organisations as well as community development workers. The range of outreach across the voluntary and community sector is similarly varied. However, many elements of this jigsaw of provision overlap but do not necessarily meet. This requires some research to identify what is happening, where and by whom.

3.9 Recommendations
relating to the CLO Project:

1. Future Projects should extend their knowledge of adult learning and undertake further training in supporting basic skills development with adults in hard to reach groups, and in understanding the structure of adult and vocational training in general.

2. Develop a more diverse curriculum portfolio to be delivered in community venues.

3. Investigate the provision of awareness training in IAG for front line workers in community venues.

4. Explore the range of possible delivery methods for IAG in community settings drawing upon the experience gained by Gateway at the Whitehawk Inn, through its EQUAL funded IAG post.

5. Explore potential for local volunteer programmes to train and support teams of 'study buddies' in community venues.

6. Explore other funding sources to provide greater flexibility for the Gateway model in delivering targeted education programmes to 'hard to reach' groups across the city.

relating to city-wide action:

7. Instigate discussions with other outreach providers from both the statutory sector (health and social care and family learning, as well as education outreach), and the voluntary and community sector, to explore the range of outreach activity across the city, to share and extend practice, and to develop a strategic overview of future delivery and development of outreach across sectors.

8. Work with the Chinese communities in Brighton and Hove to establish more coherent links with their community organisations; organise participatory events with the Chinese communities to involve project workers, learning and other service providers, and community organizations; record and circulate key issues and suggestions to everyone involved; use this information to identify community needs and inform future activities.

9. Liaise with providers to map coherent and sustainable progression pathways that enable learners to move on, with adequate support at key transition points.

10. Explore ways of collecting data on learner recruitment by programme (including tasters), venue and area to aid future planning. This could be linked to tracking learner participation across providers currently being investigated by the Adult Learning Group of the Learning Partnership.

11. Investigate potential for establishment of outreach bases in localities such as Portslade and Hangleton – this could involve a mix of 'core and hub' along the lines of the local 'learning hubs' piloted at the Bridge and Whitehawk Inn, as well as 'gateway' models, as appropriate.

12. Organise regular events for education providers, community and voluntary groups and policy makers in the city, to showcase the education outreach work across the city, and invite dialogue about future developments.

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