



CLIF Impact Project

Community Learning and Socially Vulnerable Groups

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niace
promoting adult learning

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1 Overview

This report presents the findings of work to identify the impact of community learning on socially vulnerable groups, undertaken as part of the Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF). The evidence gathered from CLIF projects shows how even modest amounts of investment can produce significant outcomes for learners, families and communities, and confirms that community learning can make a tangible and lasting difference to members of a variety of socially vulnerable groups in ways that cut across a wide range of social policy areas. This report will be of particular interest to national and local policy makers and commissioners of public services. Community learning providers in local authorities, colleges and third sector organisations will also find the report helpful in supporting their work and in making the case for the impact of community learning on socially vulnerable groups.

With grant funding from the Skills Funding Agency, CLIF supported the delivery of 96 new community learning projects across England to run from September 2012 to August 2013. The projects aimed to empower adults, particularly those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, to improve their own lives and those of their families and communities. Through new partnerships and a wide range of creative approaches, CLIF projects engaged more than 15,000 learners, many of whom were from groups that are among the most excluded and least likely to participate in learning. Most projects have firm plans in place to continue at least some elements of the work initiated through CLIF, highlighting the way in which diverse sources of funding can create sustainable opportunities for learning in communities.

The report is one of a series of six thematic papers demonstrating the contribution of community learning to key policy areas produced by NIACE (the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) as part of its management of CLIF.¹ NIACE is an independent charity which promotes adult learning across England and Wales. Through its research, development, publications, events, outreach and advocacy, NIACE works to improve the

¹ See also the thematic reports on *Digital inclusion, Employability, Families, Health and Volunteering*.

quality and breadth of lifelong learning opportunities available to all adults. As part of its commitment to strengthening the role of learning in communities, NIACE has undertaken a considerable amount of research and development work in relation to the learning needs of socially vulnerable groups, including older people, offenders and ex-offenders, people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and people who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

1.1 Key messages

Socially vulnerable individuals face multiple barriers in relation to confidence and self-esteem, health, poverty, social inclusion and the ability to live independently, among other factors. Evidence from CLIF projects demonstrates that learning can transform the ability of individuals facing such a complex range of barriers to manage these challenges and to aspire to a better future. Learning almost always leads to an increase in self-esteem, confidence and autonomy, which can manifest itself in increased involvement in community life, the strengthening of family bonds, greater responsibility for personal lifestyle, tangible steps towards a positive daily routine, and the ability to set and achieve realistic goals. The key messages from the project are as follows.

Effective learning programmes are designed and delivered in a way that is responsive to the needs of learners. The programmes are seen by learners as relevant and useful to their real-life requirements; a purely utilitarian focus on vocational skills and immediate employment outcomes will rarely achieve this.

The most valuable outcomes for socially vulnerable groups – those that will transform their lives and support them to progress in ways relevant to their personal circumstances – are those which **permit them to act independently and make their own choices**, while giving them an opportunity to benefit from enhanced social interaction.

For older people especially, **learning can have a significant impact in reducing social isolation and bringing about greater engagement in community life.** This, in turn, can lead to an increased

ability to maintain an independent lifestyle and increased resilience to cope with everyday situations.

Vulnerably housed and homeless people can and do engage in learning, achieve and progress, but **sustained and effective learning is most likely to be delivered flexibly and informally** in settings where they feel secure and understood.

Learning can make a real difference to the lives of people with learning difficulties and disabilities by boosting their confidence and self-esteem and increasing their capacity to act independently and make their own choices.

Offenders and ex-offenders can be motivated to participate in learning despite obstacles such as chaotic lifestyles and mental health issues.

1.2 Actions

The project findings suggest a number of actions that would help to realise the benefits of more integrated approaches to community learning and vulnerable groups.

1.2.1 For policy

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA), local authority health and wellbeing boards, social care services and community safety partnerships should **work together to identify ways in which their respective funding streams can be aligned in order to achieve shared priorities for older people**. There is ample evidence to demonstrate that learning for older people can reduce the need for other, often more costly, services by extending working life, maintaining health and wellbeing, and offering opportunities to prevent isolation.

Consideration should be given at national level by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the SFA to **ensure that funding regimes do not militate against delivery models and learning providers**, which have been shown to be effective in meeting the needs of socially vulnerable groups, including those who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

The SFA (using both its Adult Skills and Community Learning budgets), DWP and local authority adult social care services should align budgets and require contributions from learners, where appropriate, to **ensure that a coherent programme of learning opportunities for people with learning difficulties and disabilities (including those aged over 25) is available and accessible in each local area**. Key design elements should include developing confidence and self-esteem, achieving independence, and maintaining community safety and cohesion.

The SFA, DWP and Ministry of Justice should align budgets in order to **ensure the delivery of a programme of offender learning in the community which meets their shared objectives**. There would also be considerable benefit in providing training for community learning champions in order to assist them to effectively engage offenders and ex-offenders in learning and to support them to achieve and progress.

1.2.2 For practice

Strong local partnerships should be formed to ensure the delivery of excellent outcomes for all learners, especially the most vulnerable. Imaginative and creative partnerships involving agencies with a range of expertise and contacts with vulnerable people in all parts of the community bring about the best outcomes for learners where they work together to identify shared priorities for vulnerable groups and ways in which these can be addressed.

Community learning partnerships should work in collaboration with third sector organisations which are in close contact with socially vulnerable groups. With each agency playing to its strengths, even small injections of funding will be seen to make a real difference to the lives of the most disadvantaged. Other key partners are likely to include adult learning providers from both public and private sectors, the SFA, Jobcentre Plus, social care services, health and wellbeing boards, community safety partnerships, offender learning planning groups, homeless organisations and residential social landlords.

2 Introduction

This report presents the findings of work to explore the impact of community learning on socially vulnerable groups, undertaken as part of the Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF). It is one of a series of six thematic reports demonstrating the contribution of community learning to key policy areas, as evidenced by CLIF.²

CLIF provided grant funding from the Skills Funding Agency for 96 community projects across England to run from September 2012 to July 2013. The projects – which reached more than 15,000 learners, including many from socially excluded groups – provided creative learning opportunities that aimed to increase learners' self-confidence and give them a better quality of life, as well as building stronger families and communities. One of the primary objectives of CLIF was to generate robust evidence on the impact of community learning, in order to help strengthen the case at both national and local levels for sustainable and diverse funding for the sector in challenging economic times. NIACE was commissioned to manage the fund. As part of that role, it supported projects in the collecting, analysing and reporting of evidence on the difference that their work made for learners, families, localities and delivery partners.

The evidence on which this report draws comes from two sources: the final evaluation reports submitted by CLIF projects in August 2013, and the data returned by the 31 projects that opted to take part in an additional exercise to collect quantitative evidence from a sample of learners at the beginning and end of their episode of learning to show 'distance travelled'. NIACE did not stipulate what methods and tools individual projects should use to collect the data. Instead, it assisted in identifying and applying the approaches that were most appropriate for the projects' context, learners and learning activities.

² See also the thematic reports on *Digital inclusion, Employability, Families, Health and Volunteering*.

Projects were, however, required to apply a consistent framework to their evaluation. The *Wider Outcomes Planning and Capture Tool* is an innovative model for identifying the wider social outcomes of community learning.³ It was developed by NIACE to address the need for resources to support the community learning sector to engage with the growing public policy agenda on wider social outcomes. The tool supports all stages of evidence collection, analysis and reporting, and encourages a clear focus on capturing outcomes in the key areas of mental and physical health, family and social relationships, volunteering, employability, progression and personal agency. This approach has enabled data from multiple projects to be collated to build up a picture of the focus, scope and scale of the outcomes achieved with CLIF funding.

A technical annex, including a detailed description of the additional evidence collection exercise and data charts and tables, is available to download.

³ www.niace.org.uk/communitylearning

3 Policy and research: learning and socially vulnerable groups

3.1 Why is this work important now?

CLIF was designed to support new and creative learning opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged people. The majority of projects reported significant and lasting outcomes for what might be termed socially vulnerable groups, including refugees and asylum seekers, people living with HIV, those suffering from mental health issues, young carers, the rurally isolated and people living in poverty. However, this paper concentrates on four socially vulnerable groups which are currently the focus of some attention in terms of public policy and which were particularly well-represented among CLIF projects: older people, homeless and vulnerably housed people, people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and offenders and ex-offenders. Community learning has a huge potential role to play in supporting and encouraging vulnerable people from each of these four groups and, in recent years, there has been growing recognition of this potential role among policy makers and funders. Furthermore, research has produced a wide range of evidence to support targeted policy intervention in this area. There is, of course, a huge diversity in terms of experience and interests across the four groups, as well as in the particular social and policy challenges they face, but there are also common challenges and opportunities.

3.1.1 Older people

England is predicted to see a 51 per cent rise in the number of people aged 65 and over and a 101 per cent increase in the number of those aged 85 and over between 2010 and 2030. Longer lives represent progress and opportunity but they also present major challenges for individuals, employers, welfare services and the government. A recent select committee report warns that both government and society are woefully unprepared for ageing, and that a major shift in attitudes will be

needed to exploit the opportunities represented by demographic change.⁴ The retirement from paid work of millions of people will pose a wide range of specific issues, and older people may need to deal with a reduction in income, new caring responsibilities, the loss of some social networks, health issues and bereavement. As Lord Wei has argued, we need to rethink retirement to enable people to better manage this transition.⁵ Learning that develops financial and health capabilities and helps to balance caring responsibilities with other commitments is likely to be important. Evidence shows that learning can be critical to maintaining health and wellbeing in later life.⁶ Isolation and loneliness are further issues where learning can play an important role.⁷ There are numerous examples of effective learning initiatives in parts of the care sector,⁸ though the picture is patchy and provision is largely unfunded with considerable reliance on the efforts of volunteers.

3.1.2 Homeless and vulnerably housed people

In England, almost eight million people live in social housing,⁹ 43 per cent of them in poverty.¹⁰ More than 53,000 people were newly classed as homeless in 2012/13.¹¹ Research by Homeless Link indicates that eight in ten homeless and vulnerably housed people have one or more physical health issues, while seven in ten have at least one mental health problem.¹² For those who are homeless or in social housing, welfare reform is having a

4 House of Lords Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change (2013) *Ready for Ageing*.

5 Lord Wei and Hulme, A. (2013) *Next Steps: Life Transitions and Retirement in the 21st Century*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

6 Jenkins, A. (2011) 'Participation in learning and wellbeing among older adults', *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 30 (3), 403–420.

7 Figures from the Campaign to End Loneliness suggested 800,000 older people were chronically lonely in England. Read more at www.campaigntoendloneliness.org

8 Aldridge, F. (2009) *Enhancing Informal Learning for Older People in Care Settings*. Leicester: NIACE. See www.niace.org.uk

9 English Housing Survey (2013) Headline report 2011–12. Department for Communities and Local Government.

10 Aldridge, H. *et al.* (2012) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation / New Policy Institute.

11 Department for Communities and Local Government (2013) *Table 773: Homeless households accepted by local authorities, by priority need category*.

12 Homeless Link (2012) *The Health and Wellbeing of People who are Homeless: Evidence from a National Audit*.

significant impact. Among the issues raised for working-age 'Universal Credit' claimants is the requirement that claims be made online, which creates an urgent need to address the digital skills gap for many of the most vulnerable tenants and homeless people, while the payment of the housing element of Universal Credit to the tenant rather than the landlord means that people will need budgeting skills to ensure that their housing costs are paid.¹³ However, the skills levels of people who are homeless or vulnerably housed are often low and such people frequently lack confidence as learners. Evidence suggests that tailored learning and skills provision within housing and homelessness organisations can make a huge difference to tenants and clients, helping them to rebuild their self-confidence, move away from negative behaviours, sustain tenancies and ultimately prepare for and make a success of employment. Over half of social housing tenants who are of working age are unemployed and low skills and qualifications levels are a significant barrier to them gaining work.¹⁴ Research indicates that the Work Programme is failing to engage with people who are the most excluded and furthest from the job market.¹⁵

3.1.3 People with learning difficulties and disabilities

Adults with learning difficulties and disabilities are among the most under-represented groups in the labour market. While 65 per cent want to work, only ten per cent actually have a job. Low levels of skills and qualifications, and labour market discrimination, are big parts of the problem. Adults with learning difficulties and disabilities may also have high support needs or challenging behaviour, limiting the opportunities they have to gain skills or improve their situation in life. As a result, they are more likely to live in poverty, experience poor mental health, rely on public services and be excluded from local decision-making processes. Changes brought about by the Care and Support Bill, coupled with cuts to social care, mean that many

13 Chartered Institute of Housing (2012) *Making it fit: A Guide to Preparing for the Social Sector Size Criteria*.

14 Gardiner, L. and Simmonds, D. (2012) *Housing providers' approaches to tackling worklessness: Assessing Value and Impact*. Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion / Housing Associations' Charitable Trust.

15 Homeless Link, Crisis and St Mungo's (2012) *The Programme's not Working! Experiences of Homeless People on the Work Programme*.

people with learning disabilities fear that they may not get the essential support that they need in order to live independently. Reform to the welfare system, the drive for personalisation in adult social care and new powers under the Localism Bill combine to make this an uncertain time for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. They need better learning and support for adult life, with research recommending the 'co-production' of solutions by education and care agencies, together with families and learners to help them build confidence and self-esteem, achieve independence and participate safely in their communities.¹⁶ The Children and Families Bill and the proposed joint Education, Health and Care Plan are opportunities to include learning in a coherent cross-service support plan.

3.1.4 Offenders and ex-offenders

A high priority in government policy is to reduce re-offending, which costs the economy in the region of £7 billion per year. This is, in part, an educational issue. It is estimated that 48 per cent of all prisoners are at, or below, the level required to function in everyday life in reading, 65 per cent in numeracy and 82 per cent in writing. Nearly half of those in prisons have no qualifications.¹⁷ The vast majority of prisoners do not have paid employment to go to on release and a significant number have never had a paid job. Evidence shows that prison education and vocational interventions produce a net benefit to the public sector ranging from £2,000 to £28,000 per offender (or from £10,500 to £97,000 per offender when victim costs are included).¹⁸ Raising educational and skills levels has a positive impact on employability, a key factor in reducing re-offending. However, we should not focus purely on employment outcomes. Offenders who conclude that employment is not an option for them may discount the possibility of educational participation and hence may not

16 See Norah Fry Research Centre (2004) *The Road Ahead*, University of Bristol; HM Government (2011) SEND Green Paper; Department of Health (2010) *Valuing People Now*.

17 Prison Reform Trust (2011) *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile*.

18 Matrix Knowledge Group (2009) *Lifelong Learning and Crime: An Analysis of the Cost-effectiveness of In-prison Educational and Vocational Interventions*, IFL Public Value Paper 2. Leicester: NIACE.

gain from the other, wider benefits that this learning has to offer.¹⁹ The Ministry of Justice recognises that, as with other learners, offenders should have access to a wider offer of informal learning that brings with it benefits such as improved health, including mental health.²⁰

¹⁹ City and Guilds Centre for Skills (2011) *Outside Chances: Offender Learning in the Community*. Development in conjunction with De Montfort University, Leicester.

²⁰ Ministry of Justice (2011) *Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation – Review of Offender Learning*.

4 What does CLIF tell us?

Evidence from the CLIF projects confirms the important role that community learning plays in providing opportunities and motivation for some of the most socially vulnerable adults. The range of outcomes these adults gain from participating in community learning is wide, from improved social relationships and greater personal agency to better job prospects and progression to further learning. In addition, the evidence highlights the benefits to communities and to the lead and partner organisations themselves from involvement in community learning.

4.1 Outcomes for learners

4.1.1 Overview of the evidence

Twelve projects focused either exclusively or substantially on older learners. The outcomes they attributed to CLIF involvement are summarised in Figure 1.

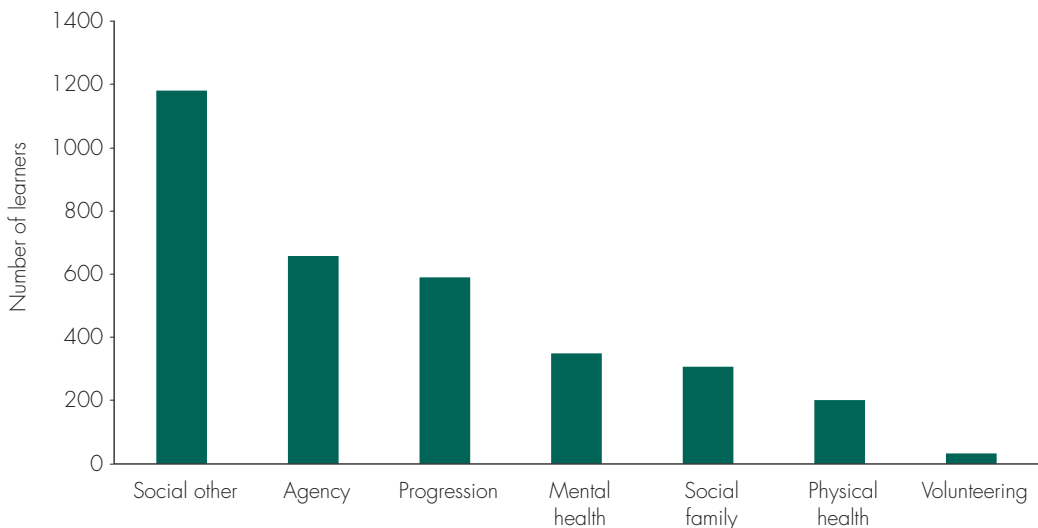


Figure 1: Number of older learners experiencing outcomes under each domain

Overwhelmingly, participants in this group reported improved social relationships as among the key outcomes of their involvement with CLIF projects. Many projects offered learning opportunities which were explicitly social in focus – such as forming a choir or reminiscence – but almost all learners reported an improvement in socialising and a decrease in feelings of isolation. Greater personal agency and improved mental and physical health were other important outcomes for older learners.

Eleven projects focused either exclusively or substantially on people who were homeless or vulnerably housed. The outcomes they attributed are summarised in Figure 2.

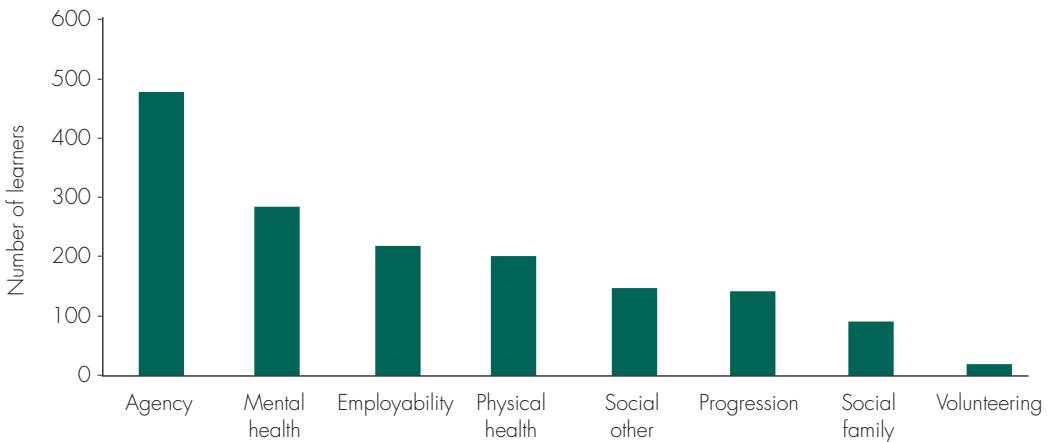


Figure 2: Number of homeless/vulnerably housed learners experiencing outcomes under each domain

Increased personal agency was the most significant outcome for this group, with almost all projects for homeless and vulnerably housed people reporting this. Many participants were more confident and better able to act independently as a result of their involvement with CLIF projects. Mental and physical health and employability were additional widely reported outcomes for this group.

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Five projects focused exclusively on adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, one on adults with physical disabilities and another on both of these groups. The outcomes attributed to CLIF involvement are summarised in Figure 3.

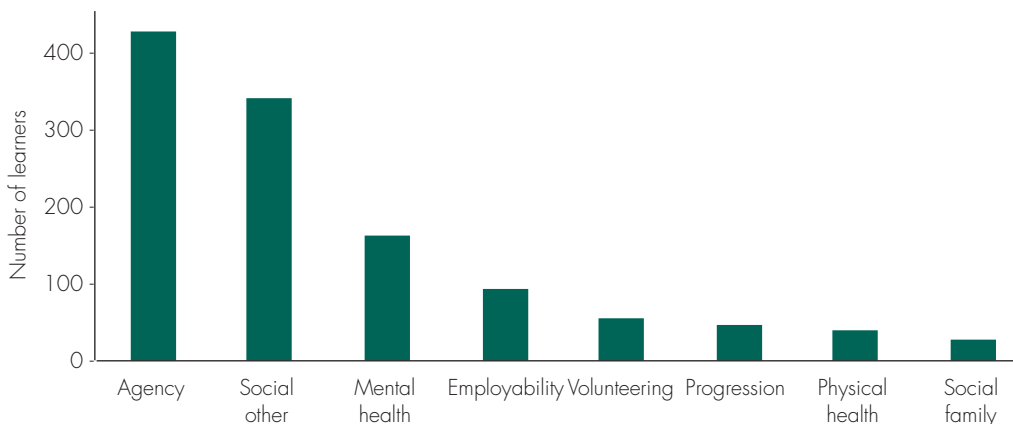


Figure 3: Number of adults with learning difficulties and disabilities experiencing outcomes under each domain

Greater personal agency was the most widely reported outcome attributed to CLIF involvement among these projects, with key outcomes including increased confidence, decreased social isolation and a greater ability to act independently. Social outcomes were important for this group, with many projects reporting improvements in social relationships. Improved mental health was another important outcome.

Six projects focused either exclusively or substantially on work with offenders and ex-offenders and two of these worked specifically with people recovering from substance abuse. The outcomes they attributed to CLIF involvement are summarised in Figure 4 opposite.

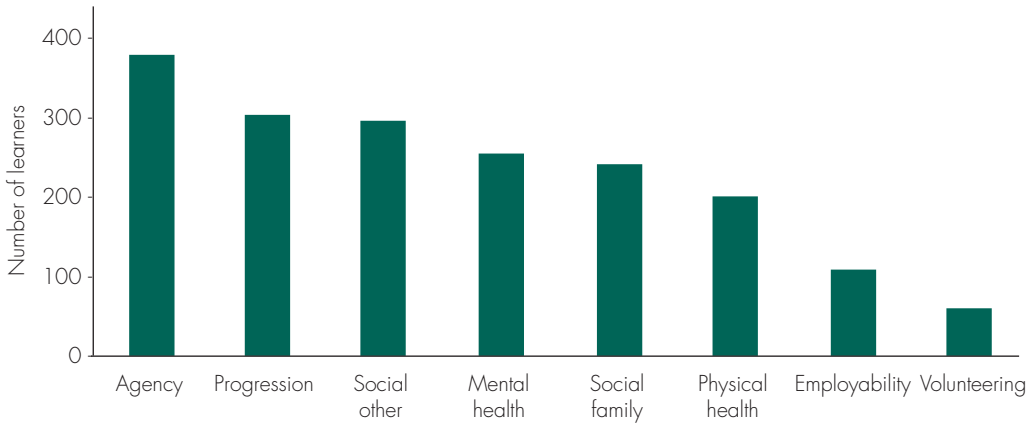


Figure 4: Number of offenders/ex-offenders experiencing outcomes under each domain

Greater personal agency was a significant outcome for learners on these projects, reported by all projects. Key outcomes included increased confidence, an increased sense of purpose and increased personal responsibility. Progression to further learning, improved social relationships, particularly with family members, and improved mental and physical health were additional important outcomes attributed to involvement in the projects.

4.1.2 Improved social relationships

Social relationships are particularly relevant to wellbeing in later life. CLIF projects showed that involvement in community learning can have a significant impact on the social networks of older adults, with learners reporting improved social relationships, more opportunities to meet new people and greater confidence to develop new relationships and cope in social situations, as a result of participating in group activities, sharing experiences and skills, continuing social intercourse outside formal sessions, becoming more involved in community life and engaging in new activities. Almost all learners in these projects reported an improvement in their socialising and social networks and a significant decrease in feelings of social isolation.

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Social isolation is a major issue for homeless and vulnerably housed people. Among the outcomes reported by the 11 projects which focused exclusively or substantially on this group were:

- increased positive relationships
- decreased association with negative social contacts
- less reliance on external agencies
- the creation of positive social forums where a diverse group of people could come together to support each other educationally and socially.

Participants also reported improved relationships with family members and being better able to take care of their homes and families. In one project, where learners undertook a family relationship module, participants reported improved understanding of, and assertiveness in, resolving family disputes.

Improved social relationships was another of the major outcomes of the five projects which focused exclusively on adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. Participants reported developing a wider circle of contacts with whom they could share experiences and feelings, as well as increased support via positive relationships. Some of the projects reported improved family relationships as a result of family members participating in activities and supporting learners.

CLIF projects that focused on work with offenders and ex-offenders demonstrated how community learning can provide the right environment to develop the sort of positive relationships that reduce re-offending. All of these projects reported existing relationships being strengthened as a result of increased trust and shared understanding accompanied by a deepened knowledge of how learners could help themselves and each other. Learners also reported being more comfortable with other people, feeling part of a community and being more confident in breaking free of existing negative relationships. Several projects reported the development of new and positive relationships with people from different backgrounds, and stronger bonds between family members.

4.1.3 Greater personal agency

Increased confidence and a greater sense of personal agency were significant outcomes across all the projects, but particularly those focused on people who are homeless or vulnerably housed, people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and offenders and ex-offenders. Homeless or vulnerably housed learners demonstrated increased confidence in managing their money; taking care of their own health and wellbeing; managing their tenancy successfully; undertaking new activities they had previously found daunting; and engaging with professional agencies such as the Home Office, DWP and local authorities, as well as increased knowledge of which agencies to turn to for support. Several of these projects reported improved communication skills, including in relation to legal and financial matters. One project reported that 211 socially isolated individuals improved their sense of self-worth and social connectedness and were thus able to increase their involvement in community life and engagement in community activism.

All of the projects working with offenders and ex-offenders reported strengthened personal agency in a number of respects particularly relevant to combating anti-social tendencies linked to re-offending. Key outcomes included:

- increased self-esteem
- confidence and autonomy
- an increased sense of purpose
- greater feelings of being valued and of belonging
- increased personal responsibility for lifestyle.

Activities which contributed to these outcomes included:

- providing support to other ex-offenders
- increased involvement in community life
- strengthening fragile family bonds
- taking responsibility for personal finances

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- taking tangible steps to establish a positive daily routine and manage a self-harming lifestyle.

Learners who took part reported communicating more effectively, both individually and in groups, displayed greater confidence in their own abilities and set themselves goals in relation to lifestyle, learning and employment.

Increasing autonomy is, of course, particularly important for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities and the CLIF projects demonstrated the relevance of community learning to this goal, with key outcomes including:

- increased confidence and self-esteem
- increased ability to carry out day-to-day tasks independently
- decreased social isolation.

Participants took part in a wide range of activities which help to build autonomy, including:

- creating artwork and organising an exhibition
- setting up a social enterprise
- co-developing an inclusive online community learning environment
- learning to travel independently
- speaking in public in order to influence local services.

CLIF projects working with older adults also reported increased self-esteem, a renewed sense of purpose, and an increased capacity to cope with everyday situations, among other outcomes likely to develop personal autonomy. Other benefits included greater engagement with external agencies and services, including providers of advice on debt, money management and legal issues, greater confidence in using digital technology and confidence to take up volunteering.

4.1.4 Improved mental and physical health

Projects reported a range of health benefits for learners. Improving the health of people who are homeless or vulnerably housed is a particular priority in reducing health inequalities. CLIF projects working with this group reported improved mental wellbeing, increased ability to manage mental health and reduced anxiety and stress, including about financial matters. This was the result, in part, of a greater understanding of factors affecting their situation and of developing the confidence to implement strategies to make positive progress with plans for the future and to take control of their own lives. One project reported that regular and meaningful integration with people outside their normal social circle engendered a greater sense of self-worth among project participants.

Co-creating and co-delivering the learning programme gave participants a sense of achievement, while the skills gained provided a sense of empowerment and control. Homeless and vulnerably housed learners additionally reported being better able to manage their physical health through improved diet and increased exercise.

Many offenders need help with mental health problems. All CLIF projects for these learners reported an improvement in mental wellbeing and a decrease in anxiety and stress. This was the result of a range of factors, including increased confidence as a result of gaining a new skill, developing effective strategies to manage anxiety, becoming more assertive and forming a positive view of themselves, and undertaking creative activities which helped them appreciate their personal strengths. Two projects targeting those in recovery from substance misuse both reported improvements in physical health as a result of a recorded reduction in substance intake. One project reported evidence of improved diets and greater knowledge of healthy eating as well as general healthcare, which had been of benefit both to themselves and their families. Eighty per cent of learners on this project are now undertaking regular physical exercise and have taken up new physical activities, such as boxing and running.

Older learners also reported increased physical activity, markedly improved physical skills and condition, and a general improvement in

physical wellbeing and a desire to continue to maintain increased levels of physical activity. This was as a result of engaging in activities such as yoga, dancing, walking, gardening and creative arts. There were also benefits to mental health for this group. Evidence from the projects demonstrated how learning can improve emotional and mental wellbeing and combat isolation, increasing involvement in positive activities such as social interaction, community work, discussion groups, creative arts and developing IT skills. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities also reported reduced anxiety and stress and improved mental wellbeing. Each project achieved these outcomes in different ways, whether through improving understanding of the impact of welfare reform, creating and exhibiting artworks, or increasing confidence in dealing with bullying and harassment.

4.1.5 Progression into further learning

Projects reported that participation in CLIF projects gave learners the confidence to continue with and broaden their learning experiences. All of the projects that worked with offenders and ex-offenders provided evidence that they successfully motivated a difficult-to-engage client group, despite obstacles such as chaotic lifestyles and mental health issues. Learners reported increased confidence in learning new skills, a willingness to engage in further learning and a feeling of positivity about themselves. In many cases, learners had already joined further learning programmes. Projects working with homeless and vulnerably housed people also reported instances of learners moving on to further subjects and cited evidence of increased motivation and confidence, detailed in individual learning action plans. There was evidence, too, that older learners and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities had been motivated to continue to learn new skills.

4.1.6 Improved employment prospects

CLIF projects brought learners closer to the labour market by helping them to move into employment, self-employment or work placements in a range of spheres. Projects working with homeless and vulnerably housed people reported learners finding work in gardening, car maintenance, retail and

catering, among other employment areas. These projects reported that developing transferable skills in communication, research and IT increased learners' confidence and motivation to seek employment. There was considerable evidence of increased aspiration and motivation. In one project, 79 learners visited the job club on three or more occasions, while, in another, 173 learners completed an NOCN job search award, including interview skills and CV writing. Other projects reported success in achieving employment outcomes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, with one project leading participants to set up their own social enterprise, while three projects working with offenders and ex-offenders reported that learners had developed new employability and entrepreneurial skills. In addition, learners on these projects reported increased motivation and confidence in seeking employment.

4.2 Outcomes for volunteers

Those projects which involved volunteers reported significant outcomes for them, including increased interaction with the community through their volunteering work, developing new skills which often enhanced employment prospects or led to further formal learning, and increased self-esteem through giving something back to the community. All of the projects that focused on adults with learning difficulties and disabilities used volunteers and reported positive benefits from increased interaction with the community. In some cases, volunteers reported increased understanding of, and skills in working with, this group. This was particularly evident in a group of young volunteers who increased their awareness of the impact that even good-natured teasing can have on vulnerable adults. In four projects, some of the volunteers were drawn from the principal target group, giving them an opportunity to give something back to the community. Projects involving homeless and vulnerably housed people reported increases in confidence and self-esteem as a result of volunteering and found that participants gained skills which would assist them in seeking employment.

4.3 Outcomes for communities

Projects reported a number of positive outcomes for the wider community, including:

- strengthened links between different community groups involved in project activity
- new community groups and activities
- enhanced community facilities (for example, a community garden and a volunteer centre)
- a renewed sense of pride in local facilities as a result of engagement in the creative arts.

Some projects reported more specific outcomes, such as:

- overcoming tensions between different groups and achieving a much greater degree of mutual understanding and collective action
- a reduction in anti-social behaviour (on the part of the homeless and rootless community of a city centre)
- the creation of a more pleasant local environment by volunteers engaged in gardening activity in social housing estates.

The duration of CLIF projects was too short for it to be possible to make any definitive claims about any sustainable contribution to reducing reoffending. However, one project reported that 135 learners had reduced their involvement with the criminal justice system and had developed the resilience to desist from further offending.

4.4 Outcomes for lead and partner organisations

CLIF projects reported significant outcomes for lead organisations as well as for their partners. These included:

- more extensive and effective partnership working both within large organisations, such as local authorities, and with external partners able to play a role in signposting and delivery
- raised profile and increased positive publicity leading in some cases to an increased uptake of services
- increased ability to meet organisational objectives
- reduced costs as a result of sharing services with partners
- improved staff skills, including in relation to teaching and learning, supporting volunteers, evaluation and monitoring, and working with specific groups of socially vulnerable adults, such as older learners and adults with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Some CLIF projects were able to improve their ways of working and offer an enhanced service to clients; for example, taking a more imaginative approach to digital inclusion, developing better relationships with families of beneficiaries, and improving systems of monitoring and evaluation. Some projects saw staff morale improve as a result of the difference they were able to make to their local community.

5 Case studies

Case study 1

Silver Creative Arts Learning Programme

Summary of the project

Led by ARC Stockton Arts Centre, this project aimed to increase the number of older people regularly participating in high-quality creative arts learning activity. Between September 2012 and July 2013, the project worked with potential learners to design relevant programmes of activity, up-skilling arts practitioners to deliver activity for this target group while developing a proactive engagement campaign working with older learners and volunteers to attract and retain participants and improve their access to learning. Collaborating with older people on the content of the programme was a critical factor in the project's success.

The project engaged 66 older people to volunteer their time to shape and develop a programme relevant to their needs. More than 100 new arts opportunities were created, including ballet, Pilates, ukulele, creative writing, arts, drama and iPad creativity, delivered by ARC, and attended by 199 older learners. Consultation with learners continued throughout the project, with learners represented on a project steering group, alongside external partners and ARC staff, and an evaluation plan was created with support from learners so that the outcomes of the project could be measured in a robust and meaningful way.

Impact on learners

The project has supported older learners living in Stockton-on-Tees to engage with high-quality creative learning activity and to develop their social relationships and improve their physical fitness and mental health and wellbeing. Participants reported an increase in personal self-esteem,

a renewed sense of purpose and a broadening of their social circle. Involvement in the running of the project gave learners a focus in their lives and a sense of a strong relationship with ARC. The project adopted a volunteer 'buddy' scheme which allowed existing learners to support newcomers to the group in taking a first step into learning. Some learners commented that they couldn't have taken that first step without the support of their buddy. ARC worked with practitioners to develop their skills in working with older people and to support them in leading inclusive and high-quality sessions. Learners cited practitioner quality, accessibility of the session and quality of content as reasons for re-attendance. Typical comments from learners include:

When you retire you still need a focal point and interest and the writing really bought that back for me. I've become fit in body and fit in mind.

It is an opportunity to mix with like-minded people, where you can support and develop together.

When you look at the stories when I first started you would think they were written by someone else; I'm better than that now, I feel that I could do better ... I want to get published.

Project evaluation found that 76 learners either did progress onto further learning or had a desire to. The project also encouraged autonomy and a sense of pride in local facilities, while strengthening the bond between the organisation and the local town.

Case study 2

Design/delivery of 'Finding a Property and Maintaining a Successful Tenancy'

Summary of the project

This project, led by Calderdale SmartMove, a charity helping homeless and vulnerably housed people find accommodation, aimed to create and deliver bespoke learning opportunities to teach those who are vulnerable how to find somewhere to live, how to find monies for a bond and how to maintain and sustain their tenancy. The design and delivery of the project was learner-led, with support, through a series of workshops, to research and create a six-week practical course following the journey from homelessness to sustainability of a property. The course was then taught by clients, both at SmartMove and at two other providers in the community.

The project set out to recruit and engage more than 40 client learners and volunteers to take part, through the workshops, in the design and delivery of the course. In total, 42 learners attended one or more sessions, with ten volunteers also involved in various capacities within the project. Workshops took place two or three times a week covering different aspects of the course, including what it's like to be homeless, moving in, utilities and services, benefits and grants, tenancy agreements, bonds, repairs and emergencies, budgeting, employment, education and health services. A further 18 sessions took place on developing, planning and reviewing the course. Learners were fully involved with setting aims and objectives, lesson content, researching and preparing resources, planning and discussion and working in small groups to produce specific pieces of work, for example on housing allowances or how to deal with nuisance neighbours. The 'Finding a Property and Maintaining a Successful Tenancy' course was run three times, with different agencies, over six two-hour sessions. The course was taught by both clients and volunteers involved in researching and

creating it, while other learners and volunteers were encouraged to proactively engage in the sessions.

Impact on learners

Learners on the project have developed new skills and knowledge of a range of topics, as well as gaining in confidence and self-esteem. Working as a team to develop the project, they felt happier and more in control, and reported improvements in their relationships with others as a result of participating. A number have used their new skills and improved confidence to begin volunteering or to access further education and employment opportunities. One learner was inspired both to find a job and to begin an Open University degree. Another described the sense of agency the project had developed: 'I have much more confidence now and it's as if I have taken control. Today I had to teach on the course and it felt really good'. He is not alone. Many of the learners reported feeling more empowered when making decisions about tenancies. One said, 'I can sit down and talk to people now, and my family have noticed an improvement in me'. Others described overcoming anxiety and fear about their ability to learn, gaining a structure and sense of purpose which helped divert them from negative behaviours. The project had a 100 per cent success rate on maintaining successful tenancies among learner clients who attended the project.

Case study 3

Money Matters project

Summary of the project

The Money Matters project was set up by Stockton and District Advice and Information Service to help people with learning disabilities to manage their money more effectively by giving them the knowledge, confidence and skills to deal with their money matters. More than 170 people participated in a 12-hour learning programme which covered topics such as banking, budgeting, credit, debt and where money comes from. Eighty-three volunteers with a learning disability took part in the design and development of the programme and helped produce training materials and a DVD. All the sessions were interactive and visual, with learners consulted throughout to gauge their reactions to the programme. The course was accessible to a wide range of clients with a learning disability, including those with complex needs, those who were deaf or those who had cerebral palsy.

Impact on learners

The project succeeded in increasing choice and independence for people with learning disabilities around managing finances. This improved their confidence in making financial decisions, allowed them more independence and improved their economic wellbeing. Eighty-five per cent of the learners reported an increase in skills and confidence and 100 per cent were able to make at least one decision about their finances after the course. Every learner has reported that they are taking more control over their money. Interacting with other groups of people and attending different training venues gave learners more confidence and widened their social circles. In addition, the course increased their awareness of choice, which they didn't previously fully understand. After training, learners understood that the money being spent on shopping,

clothing and holidays was their money and they had the right to exercise choice on how it was spent. They were able to make decisions and take responsibility for them, saving up for items of their choice, such as a holiday or laptop, and were able to make these suggestions knowing it was within their rights to do so.

The learners were also more aware of differences in prices and felt able to shop around for the best buy rather than returning to the same shop each time because they didn't feel confident about shopping at a variety of shops. Some learners felt more able to have a go at doing their own banking and had taken steps to try and use the ATM themselves rather than let their parents or carers do it for them. Even if some did not feel ready to take this next step, they wanted to know how their money was kept safe and wanted to accompany their parent or carer to the bank to take more responsibility over what happens at the bank and how to withdraw their own money. These quotes from learners are typical:

The training made me feel better. It made me more confident and able to take control. I feel a lot more independent and can do a lot more things that I want to do with my money. I feel like I've shown people what I can do and I didn't feel confident enough to do this before.

The course helped me to deal with meeting new people and working in groups. I was very anxious about this before starting the course, but meeting people regularly helped. I feel like my confidence is growing and the course helped to build it up... Shops seem less intimidating because I know I have rights, I feel more independent... My ultimate goal is to get a job and I feel like the course has helped with this by building up my confidence in different ways. I'm glad I did it.

These changes to the learners' level of personal responsibility for their lifestyle were evidenced through feedback at the end of the sessions, through tutors and support staff observing these changes and through anecdotal evidence from the learners themselves which was recorded in case studies prepared by the tutors.

Case study 4

Peer Advisor project

Summary of the project

The Peer Advisor project, run by St Giles Trust, provided coaching and accredited learning for 70 adults to enable them to provide effective support to offenders recently released from prison, thus providing encouragement and motivation to lead positive and crime-free lifestyles. The adults engaged had all been involved in the criminal justice system, either as offenders or as family members or friends of offenders, a group who are widely viewed as 'the best therapists' in supporting offenders to desist from re-offending. They play a critical role in reducing re-offending. The project provided learners with unaccredited professional development, motivation and employability support, a Level 3 qualification in advice and guidance and short learning opportunities for family members or friends. In total, the project helped 61 people to become peer supporters, with 37 gaining the Level 3 qualification and 15 finding employment. Twenty-four families and friends engaged in bite-sized learning activities, one-to-ones and coffee mornings.

Impact on learners

Learners increased their skills and social mobility and supported other service users to move forward with their lives, acting as role models as well as agents of practical change around issues such as housing and benefits. More than half the learners reported gaining new job-related skills and feeling more motivated and confident about seeking employment. This is how one learner described his experience of the project:

I arrived at HMP Highdown addicted to hard drugs with little outlook on life. I was placed on the rehabilitation wing to detoxify and make my health become stable. Around three months into my sentence I was

informed that there was a St Giles Peer Advisor course running for six months. It sounded just what I needed to replace the void left behind when leaving my chaotic lifestyle. I have previously been a skills and employment advisor some years before and saw the opportunity to gain the qualifications needed for this role. After successfully passing interviews and training I became a peer advisor for St Giles working towards a Level 3 Certificate in advice and guidance. The prospect of gaining this gave me a different outlook on life because it opened doors to getting a job and leaving crime and prison behind me.

Throughout my time as a peer advisor I learnt a lot of new things about law, discrimination, equality, housing and benefit applications. I also gained self-confidence and motivation to change my life around. After passing my Level 3 qualification I was released from prison, but instead of worrying and stressing about not being able to get a job I now had the knowledge and know-how to make a difference in not only my life, but also in others' lives. Towards the end of my sentence my release plan became that I would volunteer for St Giles Trust and however long it took would volunteer full time on the projects until they offered me paid employment.

Working in the office and out in the community is so rewarding. I love doing what I do because I know I'm helping someone take the next step to recovery from homelessness, drug addiction, alcoholism or domestic violence and prison. I have now been in full-time employment with St Giles Trust for 11 months and in that time have achieved so much, including winning a personal achievement award.

The additional training I have received through the CLIF project has been a great tool both for me and my client group. The motivational workshops instilled confidence in my work and helped to encourage others to progress with their lives. The housing solution workshops are so useful for supporting the clients.

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