

Community Learning Reform

Support and Resources for Providers

Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF) projects: curriculum approaches

The Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF) projects that ran from September 2012 to July 2013 offered interesting and creative learning programmes to attract different learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The CLIF projects contain valuable lessons for community learning curriculum design. They drew on the complementary strengths, and sometimes funding streams, of community partners to develop curriculum offers that were very responsive to the social and economic needs of diverse groups and communities. Learning for both individual and community benefits were strong themes across the CLIF programme, and the skills needed to co-create the learning were enhanced as the projects developed.

A number of projects are outlined below to illustrate different curriculum areas. In practice, however, projects tended to ripple across one or more different areas with multiple benefits for learners, their families and communities. Fuller information on these and other CLIF projects is available on the following link which will take you to a list of the CLIF projects. This list contains a brief summary of each project with a link to their *Project in a Box*; web pages containing information and documents such as plans to assist organisations to replicate or adapt their work.

<http://www.niace.org.uk/clif>

- 1. Learning that enriches life by enabling people to fulfill their ambitions, pursue their passions and interests, address health and well being needs, and build resilience and confidence**

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Out of the Frame Loan Boxes

This project worked with older people in care home settings to enable them to access the arts and the Wallace Collection. It create six themed 'loan boxes' that were lent to care homes and day centres. The boxes and their contents were designed specifically to aid the learning experience and interpretation of the works of art. They contained a variety of different resources such as high quality handling items, guide books, high resolution images, a specially written accessible booklet, and an iPad loaded with resources including audio. The iPads facilitated digital inclusion as staff, volunteers and residents found them easy and enjoyable to use. In addition they proved valuable tools for working with residents living with dementia and those with visual impairments. The project involved families in the project through attendance at box sessions, family days or through conversations with their relatives provided an intergenerational element. Care staff and volunteers were also trained to use art and heritage to stimulate learning, discussion and reminiscence with residents which ensured a learning legacy for the residents.

Back from the Brink

This project provided innovative, informal community learning opportunities for people in early recovery from substance misuse and other forms of recovery. Engagement in education supported transition from addiction to a lifestyle of healthy choices and activities. It developed a sustainable local infrastructure across treatment, recovery and education services to provide joined up, co-created learning opportunities focused on re-integration, relapse prevention and assertive in-reach into wider progression opportunities. The programme was taught by highly inspirational tutors who had a history of working with marginalised people. It enabled learners to regain aspects of themselves 'lost' through addiction, learn new skills and see a clear route forward. Embedding learning within recovery linked it in to families and wider social networks and raised awareness of the profile of the needs and assets that people in recovery contribute to local communities.

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Creative Well Being

This project provided creative learning for adults attending a hospice day care centre. The learners, who were mainly aged 60 plus, had life minimising illnesses and a high proportion had disabilities, restricted use of limbs or dementia. Creativity in its broadest sense was the main area of learning. An imaginative and empathetic approach was adopted to devise ways of making the learning activities accessible to learners who had physical disabilities and cognitive impairments. Taking part improved their sense of achievement, social interaction, confidence and well being. An important element of the project was training for hospice staff and volunteers that equipped them to continue to lead creative learning sessions after the end of the funded project.

2. Learning that builds skills and knowledge for local leadership

The Regeneration through Learning Programme

This project offered a programme of training and support across the "urban villages" of Bradford centre to give residents the skills and knowledge they need to contribute towards local regeneration. The learners were, typically, renting accommodation and in unskilled short term and low paid work, and living in city centre areas where there is little in the way of social interaction or community activity. The learning content included setting up neighbourhood councils, neighbourhood planning powers, community assets, community-run services, the Sustainable Communities Act, creating and protecting green spaces, community food projects, community renewables, community recycling and supporting community economies. The project combined training sessions with follow up activities to encourage people to develop ideas for new projects, support them to develop these and ultimately put them into practice. Learning together increased the community identity of some of the "urban villages" as well as the amount of voluntary activity across Bradford centre. Participants took forward project ideas into practice or started to volunteer with existing groups.

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Community Agents

This project trained people across Lancashire as nationally certificated 'community agents' for their local communities. The programme provided the skills and knowledge people needed to develop and stimulate local action in their neighbourhoods through meaningful negotiation with residents, policy makers, local authorities and service providers at all levels. It contained a balance of theory and practice to develop knowledge and confidence to understand community need, how to engage community members, negotiate effectively with statutory and other bodies and maximise resources for local service improvements. The project was very successful in enabling all participants to either start a new community initiative or enhance a group currently working in their locality so that they could meet local need in a way that made the community feel empowered and engaged with policy makers. The empowerment ethos combined with ongoing one to one learning sessions combined with peer support and networks to support the sharing of best practice was critical to this success. All started to bring about positive change within their communities in different types of projects ranging from parent support groups to leading on a community asset transfer of a public building for community use.

3. Learning that builds capacity to shape or manage services, local spaces and amenities to make sure they meet community requirements

Living life and taking part

This project supported Copeland Occupational & Social Centre (COSC) members to carry out research and develop advocacy skills and resources to support them to become more active in their local communities, campaign for disability rights, improve and shape services and raise awareness of disability issues. The programme included research on issues affecting disabled people, including their experiences of social care services which they then used to we drew up a charter for care companies and the new Personal Independence Payments (PIP) that is

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replacing Incapacity Benefit over the next couple of years then producing a 'Helping you to help yourself' resource. Participants also explored the social isolation and inclusion issues for disabled people through creative approaches that included poetry and photography. These sessions generated resources, such as a set of Conversation Cards on the theme of disability awareness, which learners then used in their local communities. Learners also developed skills to feed their views into local consultations on disability issues to get their expert voices heard. The groups also explored social media such facebook, twitter, blogging and online forums, keeping safeguarding as a priority, to support further participation.

Learning to sow, cook and grow. Creating community gardens in East Brighton

This project offered residents the opportunity to take part in learning whilst creating two new community food growing spaces, a community garden and an orchard, on disused and derelict land in two local communities. Learning opportunities included garden construction (raised beds, rainwater harvesting, shelters, composting systems and ponds), fruit tree planting and care, food growing and cooking. Tutors were specialist in the activity they were teaching and had experience of working in the communities. The learning was mainly informal, and focused on practical activity. Individuals also learned how to run a small project and set up as an independent group. From the start, the project supported some of the learners to form a steering group to help with plans for the site including deciding what learning activities should happen, what should happen on the open day and working with them to submit funding applications for the project's future. This helped ensure that the growing spaces will become a community asset, managed and used by the communities.

Northern Lines

This project had a community theatre and arts focus. The critical, creative and thinking skills that participants gained through engaging in a creative learning project

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together were those needed to revitalise and regenerate communities. It worked in an area of deprivation with socially isolated individuals to devise and perform plays on issues that afflict and affect their communities. The learning activities consisted of informal structured learning programmes that were informed by *Theatre of the Oppressed* approaches adapted for the local context. The content included CV writing and interview skills as well as assertiveness training, anger management; poetry and fiction writing workshops, cultural and heritage workshops, therapeutic workshops, devising workshops, performance skills workshops and eventual community sharing of the work that participants have made. Participants also developed and led cross community historical walking tours that gave them the opportunity to learn and teach other about the histories of their communities. They completed training and accreditation in skills that allow them to pro-actively challenge and resolve shared community problems, many of which have been aggravated by austerity focused political economy.

4. Learning that enables democratic and civic participation, activism and volunteering, engages communities in dialogue about local issues and supports them to begin addressing them

Time to Learn

This project established a Time Bank with the aim of raising the level of community participation and learning among city residents and helping to address significant local issues relating to poor health, worklessness, poverty and the lack of opportunities for social and cultural learning. The Time Bank approach encouraged volunteering by valuing equally the contribution that everyone in the community can make, and providing a framework for people to share and develop their skills, knowledge and experience. Led by Northfield Town Centre Partnership (NTCP), in partnership with the Eco Centre, the project created a diverse range of community learning and volunteering opportunities to engage local residents, foster community involvement, and build cultural capital. Specific initiatives included: the development of a community garden and related environmental projects; family learning days;

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inter-generational learning; and local cultural events. Beyond this, numerous sustainable community learning groups were established that reflected learners' needs and interests. Volunteer opportunities and work experience placements were also available. An innovative aspect of Time to Learn was that hours "banked" through volunteering could be exchanged for the opportunity to undertake structured learning on a wide range of subjects, from Introduction to Volunteering to Beginners' Gardening to Building a Creative Community.

Unlock the box

This project celebrated the many dynamic cultures and communities of Peterborough. Disadvantaged adults from a range of heritage backgrounds took part in informal learning that supported them to create cultural boxes. Each box was a physical learning resource containing items and artefacts that represented a community. The boxes can be handled, discussed, used and recreated. In learner led sessions participants made decisions on content of the boxes as well as the direction of their learning. The project supported the acquisition of practical skills such as IT and photography as well as social skills such as confidence building, integration and cultural awareness. The programme also supported learners to share skills, support each other's development and get more involved in community life at neighbourhood and city wide level. In a second stage learners took the boxes out to display and demonstrate them to communities. The boxes created sustainable resources which helped break down barriers between the different communities by fostering cross cultural understanding, tolerance and respect for other cultures.

Telling & Sharing Our Histories: A Gypsy Roma & Traveller community project

This intergenerational project brought together Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, who are among the UK's most marginalised groups, experiencing the very worst in education, employment, health, accommodation and racism. The learning programme comprised three intergenerational residential programmes of three days each, supplemented by workshops between the residentials. The dual

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strands of the project were designed and planned in consultation with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The first strand developed creative and media literacy skills which were then used to produce a living archive book, touring exhibition, films and audio vignettes that contributed to Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month. The second strand developed 'live wires' – people who could continue to participate actively in developing their communities as well as themselves. This has been a springboard for participants to initiate learning activity and other developments in their own communities. The residential setting structure was challenging in terms of time, cost, and logistics. However it had enormous benefits including providing a space for members of these particular communities to take part in intergenerational learning, intense skills development, cultural exchange, citizenship and community building.

5. Learning that supports pathways to employment

Employment through refurbishment, maintenance and retrofit

This Housing Association led project developed learning with tenants living in supported accommodation, many of whom had a range of mental health issues and limited English language skills. The main areas of learning were construction, business development, maintenance, renewable energy skills and employability skills. The project trained community members and local trades people to become qualified trainers which led to employment as paid trainers rather than as unpaid volunteers. The community trainers' cultural understanding and language skills enabled them to engage and support a wide range of tenants in learning. The project successfully supported a group of tenants to establish small businesses and others to secure employment and volunteer placements. The project also uses tHousing Association properties and community facilities for the training which helps improve local buildings and encourages tenants to move from passive recipients of services to taking an active part in shaping them.

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Sew Good

This project offered learning that improved the economic, social and mental health of residents of a disadvantaged area through providing opportunities where individuals could connect with each other, share ideas, and learn new skills. The project ran two 26 week intensive sewing courses, that brought people with little or no sewing experience to a level where they could make clothes for themselves, and provided them with a route to further learning, employment or self-employment. Learners from the project did progress to setting up their own dressmaking businesses with support from the project, securing employment using dressmaking skills, and setting up Sew Good. This is a social enterprise offering training in dressmaking to other people in the area. The project approach used expert tutors alongside peer support. Residents have now been trained as community learning champions to engage more residents in the legacy initiatives.

Equip

The EQUIP project offered learning that addressed the multiple employment and participation barriers for socially disengaged, isolated, and chronic jobless people living with HIV. The project accomplished this through a holistic package of learning interventions that included empowering individuals in the learning and job search process and building awareness of worker rights, supported job search and work placement. The programme also addressed health and well being. Participants self-structured their learning process and were referred into specific learning projects. Because all learning took place in an organisation for living with HIV, participants were able to discuss directly the impact their HIV diagnosis had on employment, participation, isolation and confidence, thus enabling them to confront these barriers more effectively and take more control of their situations.

6. Learning that supports the development of life skills including English, maths, and financial and digital capabilities

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This project combined the skills and experience of community partners to identify and train Community Learning Champions. These champions helped set up, promote and deliver courses, at the same time increasing their own skills and confidence. The project worked with existing initiatives to improve access to IT via innovative, informal and intergenerational community-based learning. Other courses were run based on the needs and requirements of learners, the local community and partners. The project promoted the sharing of skills and knowledge between generations, targeting hard to reach learners amongst unemployed 19-23 year olds and older participants, valuing volunteers and encouraging lifelong learning. Staff from partner organisations involved in the project feel that overall it has helped strengthen links between different community groups, increased the sense of community cohesion and brought more new people into the Community Centre, as well as increasing the IT skills of members of the local community. The project, through tutors and volunteers, made IT more accessible to older learners, via predominantly history projects, informal IT courses and in some cases keeping in touch with family via email and Skype. Younger people of working age have also benefitted, all of whom have gained an understanding of applying for benefits and managing money, including how to save/make money using the internet, as well as increased confidence.

Money Matters in Kensington

This project was developed in response to participants' need to be more in control of family finances in the context of the wide- ranging changes to the Welfare Benefits system currently taking place. It recognised that, with appropriate support, people can make changes to manage their money better, no matter how low their income. The project worked with specialist partners to provide accessible financial capability sessions on a range of money issues. One strand, the *Sound as a Pound* course, provided accessible financial capability sessions. The IT /digital inclusion strand provided courses on how to use the computer and how to explore the internet work

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which enabled them to operate independently outside the project. A third strand developed community research where a group of learners found out about agencies in the local area who could help and support parents with money matters. Learners produced a *Money Matters Survival Guide* resource which is a source of information for families. The holistic curriculum grew from, and was led by, the needs of the participants. Benefits included increased money awareness and learners felt more confident and less stressed about managing their finances.

Made of Money: supporting vulnerable women to rebuild their finances

This project worked with groups of women accessing domestic violence support to provide tailored financial capability training and support women leaving abusive relationships to develop the skills and confidence they require to cope with the economic challenges they faced. The programme consisted of shorter, targeted workshops that fitted in with the time pressures that many women in refuges have. The content covered budgeting, savings, credit and debt, attitudes and values towards money and the emotional impact and stresses of living on a low income or coping with changes to income. Participants learned and practised communicating better about money with institutions such as banks and energy suppliers. Women had the opportunity to talk about the impact on their children and families where applicable. Good facilitation by workshop leaders created a safe open space where women were able to share their experiences and concerns around money. This approach supported them to make more lasting changes, as they could look at money from all aspects rather than just being given basic information. The project also left a sustainable legacy by training partner agencies to provide day to day support around financial management.

7. Learning that enables parents to support their children and raises the aspirations and education achievement of all family members.

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Empowering Families - Creating Stronger Communities

This project identified and trained Black and Minority Ethnic heritage adults from a disadvantaged community as volunteer Peer Parent Mentors. After training, the mentors provided parenting support and facilitated learning for vulnerable and at risk families whose children were involved with or at risk of being involved with gangs, drugs and drink misuse and anti-social behaviour. The project worked with three partner organisations to produce a toolkit and recruit trainee mentors who attended an intensive eight week programme. An important element was the culturally sensitive approach which took into account specific community attitudes and responses to the types of challenges the families were facing. Once trained the peer parent mentors established and facilitated three self supported groups for parents from vulnerable and socially excluded families in their community and were matched with a family to offer one to one support. The mentors also accessed further learning to support their work. They reported substantial benefits to their own parenting, family relationships and aspirations to learn new skills as well as benefits for the families they mentored. Addressing social challenges, parenting and community support also helped to create stronger communities.

Creative Family Learning Using Digital Technology

This Project was a partnership between Haringey Adult Learning Services: Family Learning Department (HALS), local primary schools, children's centres and an action-research training partner. The project encouraged inter-generational family learning amongst parents, carers and children from diverse social, economic, educational and ethnic backgrounds to enable them to become more actively involved in their children's education and social development. The Project adopted a participatory approach to learning supporting parents/carers and children to co-construct stories using the "Our Story" app on a tablet device. This was a vehicle to gain awareness and skills in the process of story making and story telling which also enabled parents/carers to develop their reading and literacy skills. The other project focus was a tutor training programme that built the capacity of parents and carers to

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become Community Educators as well as up-skill adult learning tutors who gained invaluable skills as they were able to apply and extend their knowledge of oral story telling as a basis for developing and sharing their skills in the use of digital technology. As well as developing parents' own skills, the project built local community capacity by creating a pool of trained parent/carer learning champions committed to promoting inter-generational and family learning

Read Write Retell

This intergenerational project successfully attracted adult males and their families (mainly dads and grandads) from low income families to a family learning programme. It took place in schools which were finding it difficult to interest fathers in their children's education and welfare. The project combined social learning with cultural stimulation and creative practice, enabling the learners to play a more active part in family, school and community life. It offered a programme of fun, informal, creative sessions to intergenerational groups. Sessions were facilitated by artists and supported by school staff and support workers, for example making, then racing, cardboard cars. All sessions were 'group-led' with learning coming from the learners' expressed needs. Low budget activities and materials were used and resources, including the *Dadding About* book were created. School staff supported the groups and helped address difficult family relationships and situations that arose in activities. Dads learned discovering they could make things and share those experiences with other members of their families. Participants developed mutual/cross generational trust, parenting and social skills, family and home school relationships improved and the men became more involved with their children's education.

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