Colleges in their Communities

Community curriculum: developing area adult learning and skills strategic partnerships

May 2013

Contents

About NIACE

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is an independent charity which promotes adult learning across England and Wales. Through its research, development, publications, events, outreach and advocacy activity, NIACE works to improve the quality and breadth of opportunities available for all adults so they can benefit from learning throughout their lives.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those organisations and individuals that supported and contributed to the three area events in Hastings and Rother, City and Islington and Hull.

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Foreword

The Sharp report, *Colleges in their Communities: A Dynamic Nucleus*, set a challenging but exciting agenda for further education colleges. It proposed that colleges are and need to be at the heart of their communities, accountable outwards to the people they served, working with a diverse range of partner organisations. To achieve this, the report argues for colleges exercising a subtle leadership role, working alongside, nudging, and bringing together that range of other organisations which are vital to the local learning ecology.

The ultimate goal of this greater accountability and partnership working is to provide better learning experiences and outcomes for the communities served by the college and its partners. The discussions we had at the Sharp Inquiry meetings and workshops often focused on how this grand theory would work in progress. There were concerns about raising expectations beyond the resources available if a college opened up discussions with a wide range of partners. Many people worried that too much engagement with communities would only result in disappointed people. In other discussions it became clear that many colleges and other organisations wanted to put the theory into practice, but needed some support, guidance and examples of good practice.

Since the Sharp report was published in late 2011, there have been many changes in policy and funding. Three of these are particularly relevant to this short collection of case studies: funding has got tighter with cuts across the public sector; localism has strengthened across Government policy, particularly with the advent of Local Enterprise Partnerships and City Deals; and, there has been a strong shift of power in learning and skills to both employers (Employer Ownership Pilots) and learners (Advanced Level Learning Loans). Each of these increases the need for stronger partnerships at a local level.

This report sets out three detailed and impressive examples of local partnerships in action. They provide pointers to what works and what the potential pitfalls are; they show that colleges and community learning providers can benefit from outwards accountability; and, they show that the diverse needs of local communities can best be met when a range of organisations come together to plan and deliver together.

I am excited about the partnerships highlighted here and about the many others across the country. I hope that they provide some inspiration and support to other organisations wanting to take up the challenge set out in the Sharp report.

David Hughes

1. Introduction

This report outlines the processes and activities which were organised by three Colleges of Further Education, with their partners, to take forward the shared agenda recommended in the Sharp Report. It describes, through a case study approach, where each college and its partners are along the road to greater strategic partnership working, as well as their aspirations for the next steps. Working with NIACE helped them to realise some of these steps.

The focus of this report is on how colleges and their partners respond their local communities in a systematic and rigorous way. It includes the entirety of college provision in a locality whether that is supporting employers, individuals or groups in the community. This is not to be conflated with the 'Community Learning' funding stream, which predominately supports non-formal learning, although how this funding is utilised is a crucial part of the work.

The report also highlights the challenges that colleges face, some of the solutions found and how their experiences might inform other colleges and their partners in collaborative approaches to responding to their communities. The work took place between February and May 2013.

2. The Context

Following the publication of the Sharp Report[1] a number of initiatives have developed, which were designed to encourage and support the Commission's recommendations for changes in the ways colleges of further education in England work in partnerships to respond to the communities they serve. These have included a series of NIACE events and a report on developing community curricula; the Association of Colleges' (AoC) study on governance and accountability; and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) work on community engagement.

As part of its ongoing support work to its members, in the autumn of 2012, NIACE helped organise an event for Hastings and Rother Education Trust. The event aimed to bring together stakeholders in order to:

- understand the direction of government policy for adult community learning and the limitations on government funding now and in the future;

- understand the thrust of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) policy and how an adult learning and skills strategy for Hastings and Rother can fit within it;

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[1] , *A dynamic nucleus: Colleges at the heart of local communities: the independent commission on Colleges in their Communities* (NIACE, 2011),

- understand the process for developing the adult learning and skills strategy for Hastings and Rother;

- recognise the many positive aspects of the current situation in Hastings and Rother, as well as the challenges presented by the need to be more independent of government funding in the future, and to start thinking about how to work better together whether or not Community Learning Trusts are the next step forward;

- identify strands within the Hastings and Rother strategy that will make the strategy relevant to the delegates; and

- to enable delegates to start to feel some ownership of the strategy, know what they will do to help develop it and how they can help make it work.

A report was drafted which highlighted some of the opportunities and challenges associated with taking partnership working forward.

The main conclusion from this work was that effective local planning was crucial to the creation of sustainable adult learning for local people. There was also the realisation that colleges, as the major providers of adult learning in a locality, did not always have the reach to meet the needs of the most disenfranchised and excluded groups. This could only be achieved through effective partnerships with community groups and associations.

Following this event, further discussion with officials in the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) resulted in a case-study approach to identifying some of the ways in which three colleges and their partners in different parts of England are addressing the challenges set out by the Commission's report. This work included further activities with Sussex Coast College, Hastings.

The case studies in this report aim to highlight processes and approaches for effective partnership working, in terms of the 'shared agenda' outlined in the Sharp Report. Colleges, community groups, local partnerships and commissioners, as well as central government agencies and sector support bodies, all need to work together. In *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* April 2013, the Department for Education (DfE) and BIS suggested that partnerships are not just about meetings but were **active coalitions leading to learning for adults**. How this is achieved will be a major concern of learning providers and the agencies that support them and their staff.

3. The Process

NIACE identified three colleges in England with different geographical and social contexts. These were: the Hull College Group, Sussex Coast College (Hastings), and City and Islington College in London. Each has previously been involved in other development work with NIACE on the Colleges in their Communities agenda. They were invited to take part in the study and all three colleges accepted. The colleges acknowledged that taking part would help them to further conceptualise their role with their communities, reflect on their current situation and plan and implement the next steps. Each college accepted the challenge.

NIACE designed a framework pro-forma for college staff to assess the current situation at each college and record the planned next steps. This was followed up by visits to Hull and City and Islington colleges and a conference call with Sussex Coast College and its lead community partner, the Extending Horizons Educational Trust. At each planning meeting, other partners with a commitment to adult learning partnerships were present. These included representatives from, for example, local authorities, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and voluntary sector organisations. Once the framework document was completed, agreements were reached about the next steps at each site: what should be planned, where, for whom and for what purposes, including the sorts of participants who might join in the activities.

Each college decided that a partnership event of invited stakeholders would best suited to help them to achieve the next steps of strategic partnership working, in order to better respond to their communities. The events were entitled: *Getting Together and Joining Up: Developing Adult Learning and Skills Strategy for*…[with the name of the area inserted].

The events [2] were planned between NIACE and a key contact at each college who had responsibility for contacting local partners. NIACE drafted invitation letters and programmes and shared them with the key contact. NIACE also prepared a list of publications and resources, which gave partners links to current relevant government policy direction; partnership working; governance; and curriculum development. (Appendix 2)

Notes were written up after each event and shared with each college for verification in order to record discussion and decisions, share with partners and feed into this final report. These also captured the processes, content and outcomes of the consultation events held with City and Islington College, prior to their Adult Skills Strategy Meeting.

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[2] In the case of City and Islington, there was a series of four events

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4. Emerging themes and issues

4.1 Information and understanding

- Although most of the information about current government policies in relation to adult learning and skills is widely available via the internet, many participants commented on how useful and helpful it was to have an 'interpreted' perspective on them. Participants felt that the ability to ask questions of clarification and seek further information, following presentations, was very helpful.

- The Hastings and Rother event organisers invited a representative of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to share information and offer ways of joining up with local policies and practices. However the other two areas were still in the process of developing working arrangements with their LEP at the time of the event, so there was no representation.

4.2 Partnerships

- Whilst the Sharp Report presented a case for putting colleges at the heart of adult learning development, it was felt that this did not mean that colleges must necessarily drive the agenda. They are a central part of the network, not the controllers of it. Colleges alone cannot take forward all the agendas in relation to strategic planning, accountability, responsiveness, partnership effectiveness and widening participation; the imperative is to work with others to realise a shared vision, ambition, plan and priorities.

- There is an appetite for partnership working. It is seen as the right approach in the current context. A wide range of community organisations is interested in the adult, learning and skills agenda and how it helps the most disenfranchised groups in a locality. They are keen to work with colleges, local authorities and other agencies in the agenda.

- Conceptualizing partnerships can be challenging as they mean different things to different people and organisations; they must be a lot more than meetings.

- Partnerships are multi-layered; not every organisation can be part of a strategy or executive group but lines of accountability and communication must be clear so that all players feel part of the wider partnership.

- Partnerships must be 'real' with a clear value base; shared visions; articulated and recorded strategic purposes, priorities and accountability

to not only the member partners but also the communities they seek to serve.

- Partnership working requires high levels of trust; this takes time to establish when there has been a history of competition rather than collaboration.

- Time to invest in partnerships is not always readily available to smaller organisations in particular.

- Governance arrangements were discussed with questions raised about who was included and who not; such decision-making is challenging.

- The roles and contribution of such organisations as the National Careers Service was not clear to many participants at the time of the events. It was felt that it can be difficult to identify and engage relevant partners.

- Creative and open ways of engaging partners, listening to each other and listening to communities are needed.

- All of the above highlighted the need for continuing professional development (CPD) in partnership building. Some of this is about how college leaders perceive their role and work with community partners.

4.3   LEPS

- At the time of events, there was only an emerging understanding of what LEPs are for, how they operate, how they communicate and how they might be influenced.
- Despite this, LEPs were seen as potentially very influential bodies. More information is required on the role and their *modus operandi.*

5. Lessons learnt about developing learning and skills partnerships from the three case studies

5.1   All three colleges allocated the task of partnership building to senior staff, all of whom were knowledgeable, skilled and committed. They were already well-known in the area and well-networked individually.

5.2   None of the three areas had an Adult Learning and Skills Strategy and accompanying action plan, although Hastings and Rother area had a draft which was open for consultation. City and Islington College had a Strategic Statement of Intent. Strategic plans, supported by annual priorities and

action plans were regarded as important, in order to help cement partnerships. The leadership skills of college staff need to include being able to work responsively and collaboratively with community partners, including employers.

5.3   All three areas wanted to progress their strategic partnership approach and were willing to engage in clarifying what was necessary and relevant to their situation. However, they had not decided on the way to progress this, although the involvement of a third party in the planning process was regarded as helpful in clarifying the current situation and agreeing responsive action.

5.4   Whilst there were many commonalities between the areas in their desire to organise an event, the implementation of them was different. Each activity responded to the local situation, endorsing the message that each college and partnership must determine its own ways of working.

5.5   Inviting stakeholders to an event and providing opportunities for networking, discussing common issues and consulting with one another seemed to be productive. It suggests that this sort of activity does not happen very often. This may be because of a lack of strategic direction and a reflection that organisations are at early stages of developing trust.

5.6   At each site there was evidence of partnership working which was very successful; these arrangements were often with selected organisations to meet specific interests and needs.

5.7   However, not all possible partners understand the potential of involvement in adult learning and skills but providers must be clear about their roles and contributions. There is a responsibility to begin with the most willing partners, create some impetus and visibility and it is likely that others will then want to be involved. Waiting until all the relevant partners are 'round the table' could be unnecessarily time-consuming.

5.7   A clear rationale for the membership of a strategy group must be agreed and communicated as part of the strategic process and documentation.

5.8   The voluntary and community sector must be represented at the strategic level: there is a danger that the links are only at an operational level, rendering the partnership less effective.

5.9 Exploring and identifying the 'best fit' with other strategic groups and plans was not always obvious.

5.10 In some instances, there was an understanding of the need to link to wider strategic purposes and direction as well as mechanisms for being informed by and informing other agendas e.g. health and well-being; adult basic English and Maths across an area; social and civic involvement; and employability.

5.11 The work and role of the LEP in relation to local agendas was not fully understood by any of the areas. The greatest insight was gained in Hastings and Rother but it was clear that prior to the event, knowledge and understanding was very sketchy.

5.12 An external organisation, such as NIACE, with credibility in the area of adult learning, was helpful in acting as a catalyst for development.

6. Recommendations

- Updated guidance on effective models of partnerships should be produced; participants wanted to know where there was evidence of who was developing successful practice.

- A simple guide to understanding LEPs, their purposes and priorities, as well as how the further education and skills sector might communicate with the LEP, and keep informed, would be helpful to learning providers and their associates.

- An overview survey, through one of the national development agencies, to discover which colleges have worked with partners and created an Adult Learning and Skills Strategy, including their approaches to governance and implementation of priorities and plans, would help government agencies to understand the 'state of play'.

- A support programme for developing partnerships should be considered. If three colleges of further education, with a strong commitment to the Colleges in their Communities agenda, experience challenges, some colleges will have barely begun the journey. A development programme would act as a catalyst, share information about diverse and effective practice and help create momentum towards realising the ambition.

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Annex 1. Case studies

Case Study 1: City and Islington College, London

1.1 Background

This College has a strong reputation and, at the time of the work, was the only London college assessed by Ofsted as outstanding in all aspects. It has a long history of offering diverse Lifelong Learning opportunities, much of which is organised from its Centre for Lifelong Learning in Finsbury Park. Following the college's agreement to participate, a meeting was held on 6 February 2013 with several representatives of the college, the local authority and JCP. A presentation was made which outlined the key providers and partners, including information about the joint publicity offered by the Learning and Working Service (including Community Learning) of the local authority, and the college. Working relationships between the three organisations was good. The Local Authority identified how it works with over 40 community organisations and how developments are shaped by the London Borough of Islington Strategic Framework.

An Adult Learning and Skills strategic group is in place; it has declared strategic intent and some joint activities and developments. The local authority's Learning and Working Service had already arranged three consultation events in the north, central and south areas of the borough.

1.2 Planning

The planning meeting agreed that a stakeholder event would be held in order to share:

1. a national overview – *The Sharp Report*; national drivers and why adult learning collaboration is vital – including *New Challenges New Chances* and Community Learning Trust developments;

2. an Islington overview – including economic, social and demographic issues; and drivers of change such as welfare reform, housing demand and employment rates;

3. the development and progress of the Adult Learning and Skills Partnership and declared strategic intent;

4. the Community Learning context – feedback from the three consultation events in Islington in relation to what has been learnt so far;

5. six round tables with key questions and action plans on three themes: Skills for Work; working with people with complex needs (health, disability, residents in social housing, experiencing unemployment), supporting people to move on and raise aspirations;

6. feedback from round tables with action plans regarding who, how, and what resources might be mobilised;

7. key stakeholders to be invited including local politicians, private providers and voluntary and community organisations.

However, within a few days, and following reflection by the partner organisations, it was felt that there was insufficient evidence of interests, wants and needs in local communities to bring strategic partners together in order to influence strategic planning priorities. In the light of this, a revision to the way forward involved NIACE working with the local authority on the three planned community consultation events, followed by a meeting of the Adult Learning and Skills Strategic Partnership which would incorporate some of the aspects outlined above as well as the outcomes of the community consultation events.

1.3 Consulting with communities

Three dates in March 2013 had already been arranged. Although venues and invitations to key community stakeholders in the three areas of the borough had gone out the process had not been finalised. NIACE staff agreed to work with the Learning and Working Service manager to plan and facilitate the consultation. This process was agreed and adopted and involved an open space approach to address an open question of, '*How can we offer the best possible adult and community learning service to the people of the London Borough of Islington through partnership and collaboration?*'

Subsidiary questions were considered, participants were encouraged to move freely between discussions and everyone had an opportunity to indicate what they believed to be the most important priorities for the Community Learning Strategy to address.

Following each consultation event, NIACE wrote up notes which were shared with participants and collated to inform a presentation to the Adult Learning and Skills Strategic Group.

The events attracted a wide range of organisations involved in adult learning, but for whom it was not necessarily their prime purpose. They included primary schools, children's centres, family intervention services, drug and alcohol abuse agencies, the library services, art galleries, the Job Centre, mental health charities as well as representatives from Islington Learning and Working Service and City and Islington College. At all three events, participants said that getting together had helped them to engage with organisations with whom they had previously intended to hold conversations. The consultation acted as a catalyst for such contact. All participants felt that the opportunity to network was important and many individuals exchanged contact details and identified opportunities to work together. Whilst this was not the prime purpose of the events, these were identified as positive outcomes. Levels of participation and involvement were high with lots of conversations, discussion and ideas being expressed and recorded. Several flip chart posters were completed and shared, which informed the record of the meeting. Participants at each event suggested that they would like more similar opportunities to meet and plan together.

1.4 Adult Learning and Skills Strategy Group

Representatives of several departments of City and Islington College, the local authority, East London Advanced Technology Training' Jobcentre Plus and Remploy were present along with two people from NIACE. Presentations were made on national and local contexts including the key messages from the community consultations. Many questions were raised, information shared and common understandings established.

1.4.1 Welcome

Grant Glendinning, Director of Centre for Lifelong Learning, City and Islington College, welcomed everyone and presented a slide which graphically presented the Adult Learning and Skills Partnership. The key members are London Borough of Islington; City and Islington College Centre for Lifelong Learning and Jobcentre Plus.

1.4.2 Presentation 1

Ian Yarroll (Programme Manager, NIACE) presented a national overview on current policy drivers.

He emphasised that much of the information presented is not new but there is a strong impetus to 'up the game', with a greater imperative to demonstrate partnerships and accountability. Colleges and their partners must develop a strategic approach; work with LEPs; and link social and economic agendas.

Questions were raised to clarify the purpose and functioning of the local LEP; what 'local' means to London boroughs where there is a great deal of cross-authority

working and what implications there are in local agendas for Higher Education (HE institutions. Questions were also raised about the likelihood of the policies outlined continuing beyond the life of this government.

1.4.3 Presentation 2

Maxine Holdsworth (LBI, Head of Partnerships and Employability) presented the London Borough of Islington perspective

Islington is the most densely populated area of London and England, with24% of the population living with a long term health problem/disability; 17% have no education qualifications; although 48% have a university degree.   41% of children are growing up in poverty with the highest level of child poverty in England

As part of the London and South East region, some of the key economic drivers include the Central Activity Zone for London, which has now extended to Angel and the development of the major transport hubs i.e. Eurostar, Crossrail and Thameslink, and major growth in the Thames Gateway to the east.

Labour market data was presented indicating key areas of employment. Construction is a major sector for employment, where the local authority had some influence over procurement. Arts and culture are significant industries with more organisations supported by the Arts Council than in any other area of the country; such developments had a positive effect on the local food and hospitality employment sector

But Islington is a borough of dichotomies and sharp contrasts – rich and poor; buoyant economies alongside high poverty; high density of population but some very large properties; high proportions of social housing but also 'high-end' properties. Corporate priorities for the London Borough of Islington (LBI) include: affordable housing; lower crime; reduction in poverty; promoting health and well-being; and effective delivery of basic services.

Questions were asked about what drives such high levels of child poverty; the response related particularly to large proportions of densely occupied social housing. Another question asked whether Islington has a negative image, but the general consensus was that this was not the case.

1.4.4 Presentation 3

Ellen Ryan (Manager of Learning and Working, London Borough of Islington) presented on: Adult and Community Learning – what where and who? Emerging grass roots messages from recent community consultations

Ellen reported on the role of the Learning and Working service, its purposes provision and partnerships. It is now receiving Adult Skills Budget funding and developing, in partnership with City and Islington College, vocational programmes; opening up English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) pathways linked to vocational courses and employment areas and embedding employability into provision. The service is trying to look at ways of developing health and well-being activities and initiatives. The Community Learning policy recognises that informal, non-accredited learning is often a motivating, stepping-stone to further development, education and training. New funding flexibilities from the Skills Funding Agency were being used for small chunks of learning, independent study on-line and self-organised groups. Big questions arise about how Ofsted will view and judge these forms of learning.

Community Consultations - a local response to *New Challenges, New Chances* (detailed notes of each event were drafted and sent to all participants). Ellen summarised the three consultation events.

35 participants attended from different organisations (although there were some gaps especially in relation to older people and health and well-being sector, these are people to encourage to join up with this agenda), who addressed the overall question, 'How we can offer the best possible adult and community learning by working collaboratively?

The three sub-questions informed the overall question:

- **What are we doing already?**
  focus on some of the most vulnerable; strong support for families; good range of basic skills provision; good links with JCP and Work Clubs; responsive regarding mental health, drug and alcohol recovery and living with disabilities; progression routes to college provision.

- **What do residents want?**

  To be listened to; more awareness of what is on offer, where and when; hand-holding – ambassadors/learning champions, trained-volunteers; more steps from informal to formal learning tasters and joint activities with the local authority and City and Islington Colleges; community engagement; support for wider learning (health and well-being; older people); arts-based activities; tailored support for those with mental ill-health and disabilities; ESOL for employment; parenting support; ICT/on-line support for welfare changes and uploading CVs, personal budgeting etc; childcare support for learning; involvement of men and dads.

- **How can we work together more collaboratively?**

  Form adult and community learning partnership – planning, networking and themed, joint funding bids

  Develop awareness of what other services can offer – more use of libraries etc.

  Create central information sharing resource – moodles? Sharing databases of partner organisations/groups

  Join up at big community events/festivals

  Train ambassadors/volunteers

  Create more progression pathways between services

  Develop joint assessments with City and Islington College, LBI Learning and Work Service and JCP

- **5 key priorities had been identified:**
  Set up a community learning partnership
  Jointly bid for funding to further partnership activities
  Widen community learning to include community engagement activities relating to health and well-being and arts
  Develop the roles and work of learning ambassadors and trained volunteers to champion learning
  Create an online forum to share information

1.4.5 After the presentation, three buzz groups then worked on ideas and issues, for the strategic partnership to consider, on the following themes. Flipcharts recorded the discussions and suggestions from the buzz groups.

Moving on and raising aspiration

- Volunteers could be trained to support, encourage and buddy learners to take next steps. What would the curriculum for volunteers look like? How would we engage them? How manage them? There are some college-trained volunteers who could take up community placements!

- Careers development and guidance is vital in raising aspirations of all learners

- Creative ways of sharing information with learners in relation to skills shortages and job vacancies is important

- Taster courses, embedded English and Maths courses and a wider and informal curriculum could open up opportunities

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- Commissioning franchised opportunities by the college could help to bridge gaps in vocational provision e.g. construction, software programming and catering.

Supporting people with complex and multiple needs

- Location of education and training must meet learner needs

- Additional support must be available e.g. small groups

- Mental health awareness and training across the partnership is vital; work-shadowing with specialists in the area could help

- Capturing learner voice, using DVDs of their stories and working with ambassadors/buddies would help to remove barriers and open up opportunities

- A case study approach could be used to capture the impact for individuals and then raise awareness amongst others as well as amongst providers

- Developing ways of capturing the social return on investment

- To focus more on social skills and capture the impact of them

- Guidance Services should be geared to helping people to realise they can make choices and supporting them to make them.

Skills for Work

- Skills gaps identified from data[3] should be matched with residents' skills sets to determine areas of development; this data to be shared across partner organisations

- Digital inclusion is a challenge for many JCP clients; job search, new welfare reform; and skills for the work place - responding to these challenges is vital

- Employability embedded into training and skills acquisition could be helpful

- Tasters and work experience should be developed and opened up

- Sector based Skills Academy models should be developed through dialogue with employers and partners

- Employers should be offered simplified, coherent and consistent messages rather than information which is segmented according to funding

- Devise ways to measure impact/outcomes for learners; celebrate success and share outcomes from tracking activities

- Develop in-work support, regular contact, on-line learning, negotiating with employers re. career/job role development.

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[3] Such as up to date local labour market intelligence

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In conclusion it was felt that the morning had produced a rich and diverse range of information; a general consensus that working together is productive and helpful to all and a broad agenda from which SMART objectives could be agreed and implemented by the strategic partnership.

1.5 Outcomes

A range of outcomes arose from NIACE working with City and Islington College and its partners:

- an impetus was created to help existing commitments to partnership working move forward;

- greater understanding of policy context at national, regional and local levels was generated both through community consultations and the Adult Skills Strategy meeting;

- partners developed greater understanding of each others' chances and challenges as well as the opportunities for collaboration;

- partners were able to make links with each other to take areas of joint interest forward;

- the community messages will be incorporated into the future LBI Learning and Working Community strategy and implemented in many cases through greater partnership working;

- commitment was made to working more closely on creating links and pathways between community learning and college provision;

- a clear agenda of five priorities for the future was identified;

- a diversity of organisations was able to join the meeting but only one voluntary sector organisation was represented.

1.6 Lessons learned

- Bringing partners together to reflect and assess their current position is helpful in identifying the next steps; these might not always be obvious.

- Creating opportunities to network, share information and problem solve must be part of future activities, in order that the largest organisations (colleges and local authorities) don't dictate agendas.

- There is a danger that voluntary and community organisations are well represented at community level but less so at strategic level.

- Future actions should have lead organisations linked to them via action planning, in order to begin to realise visions and aspirations.

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Case Study 2: Hull College Group

2.1 Background

Hull College Group is outstanding in all aspects, according to its last Ofsted inspection and a recent visit by the Chief Inspector praised the aspiration, ambition and achievements of the college, its staff and students. Community learning is a high priority and many coalitions and partnerships are in place with employability as a cross-cutting theme in most aspects of foundation and community learning. A Community Learning Trust is being developed with the voluntary sector as well as the college and the local authority. No strategic adult learning and skills group or plan was in place at the time of the event.

2.2 Planning

A consultation and planning meeting was held in February 2013 to gain insight into what Hull College and its partners are doing to further partnership working, respond to the communities they seek to serve and develop greater accountability. Several members of the college were present as well as a representative of the sector. The Local Authority was unable to attend but was committed to being involved in partnership developments. Through joint assessment of the current position and consideration of the next appropriate steps, it was agreed to hold an event. This would bring some of the key organisations and partners together, with a focus on understanding national drivers; sharing what is already going on in Hull; and exploring how some key issues of adult skills and learning might be addressed in a more collaborative way.

2.3 A Community Learning Event

The event was held on 22 March 2013 with around 35 people attending from diverse organisations. It was hosted by Hull College who also provided a delicious student-prepared lunch. Elaine Agar, Head of School of Foundation, Community and Employability, chaired the event and Gary Worke, the CEO designate of Hull Colleges welcomed everyone to the college.

2.3.1 The national scene

Ian Yarroll, Programme Manager at NIACE, gave a presentation on a national overview with particular reference to partnerships. He highlighted the messages from the Sharp Report; the Government's strategic review of Further Education, *New Chances New Challenges* and indicated the key messages of the recent Ofsted survey of 35 colleges in relation to autonomy and accountability. He examined

recent developments in relation to localism, LEPs and the Heseltine report and presented some of the key issues and questions.

2.3.2 The Hull scene

Presentations were made by Elaine Agar, **Hull College Group**; Margaret Woodcock, **Hull Adult Education**, Hull City Council; Isabelle Tracey, **Volcom** and Gill Dillon from **Jobcentre Plus**.

Elaine spoke about current partnership working particularly with the School of Foundation, Community Learning and Employability and the range of curricula on offer. She indicated the range and diversity of partners as well as the volume of activity which comes under the Community Learning umbrella. Especially innovative work in specific communities is being carried out with the Prince's Trust to reach younger adults and get them involved in 'into work' activities.

Margaret spoke about an innovative approach to gaining customer insight across the areas of responsibility of Hull City Council and how the process is being used for community learning. The mapping uses analysis of data collected in the 2011 Census and gives feedback on which residents are likely to be interested in particular offers of learning activities. The process gives insight into employment, education, health and ethnicity and how people like to be contacted. A pilot area is also using resident feedback, designing a pilot programme, developing a tool kit for staff as well as a contact database. This appears to be a leading initiative in determining highly focused and responsive services; the outcomes of the pilot will indicate some important insights and understanding of wider applicability.

Isabelle reported on the development of a Community Learning Trust (CLT) in Hull. She described the development work, using the mapping approach above, which is using post-code data to identify gaps in SFA funded provision and to map and match Skills Funding Agency provision to identified learner requests. The need for skills for work and employability are clear but delivering a responsive programme is more problematic when faced with childcare, timing and venues challenges. An entry-level requirement, termed 'engageability' has been identified, which is being trialled currently. This is designed to use the good practices and experiences gained through various learning partnership models to open up opportunities; these features, such as location and support, will be embedded and integrated into SFA provision. Re-modelling of services will take place, including charging approaches. The CLT is seen as a support to Early Support and Intervention Strategies of the Council; Community Learning is an implicit rather than explicit aspect of the City Learning and Skills Strategy. Further work will identify more clearly the evidence to support a city-wide Community Learning Strategy.

Gill outlined some of the partnership work in which JCP is involved. The success of the Work Skills Academies, involving particular sectors and employers as well as Hull College, in developing skills opportunities was highlighted. A new short engagement programme has also been developed for 18-24 year olds, which is proving effective in helping them to develop employability and move into work.

2.3.3 Small groups

After the presentations participants moved into small groups to network by sharing information about their organisations and services, share questions about what they had heard and record comments and questions to feedback to the wider group. This was also an opportunity to look at display materials.

Feedback and questions included:

- How to share information and data and link up to learning opportunities with other providers, with an over-riding concern that there seems to be a lack of networking/communication process to join up.

- How effective careers information might be offered and how to support learners who might be reticent and taking small steps to progression.

- Getting the 'learning message' to residents and offering the necessary support to encourage them to take up opportunities, are challenging. This stimulated responses about the work being done on segmentation and customer information.

- Childcare support seems to be a perennial challenge, along with having enough people in a group to make them financially viable, in relation to funding criteria.

- Understanding the spread and range of Information Learning Technology (ILT) across the City and East-Riding and how this is being mapped and coordinated is needed.

- Concerns were raised about how the anticipated funding changes are going to be communicated to the wider networks. Is this a role for the local authority?

- Concerns were expressed about a possible conflict between a centralised Ofsted assessment process and the localism agenda.

2.3.4 After lunch, **more small group work** took place on particular themes, which had been identified, in the planning process, as challenging. Key discussion issues were shared with the wider group.

ESOL

A great number of opportunities are offered by Hull College through its Community Learning provision. This is often in partnerships with Hull Ethnic Minorities Community Centre and asylum seekers and refugee groups. Gaps were felt to be at the most basic levels in relation to engagement including relevant cultural awareness. It was felt that links with other cities which have experienced multi-culturalism over longer timescales might help, for example Leeds, Manchester. It was also believed that some Jobcentre Plus staff need greater awareness of diversity. The cost of provision is a barrier for some people. The group felt that greater communication between providers would help along with the development of cultural awareness education.

Literacy and Numeracy

As in other areas, the key providers of literacy and numeracy are Hull College and Hull City Adult Learning, as well as some community providers. Barriers and challenges seem to be related to a fear of 'formal' learning and 'tests'; more imaginative ways of delivering skills are needed. Overcoming stigma is a challenge for many, as people feel uncomfortable about seeking support, especially where they have experienced repeated failure. Literacy and numeracy must be seen as relevant as well as address issues of low self-esteem. The inflexibility of funding leads to formally structured courses which do not always meet individual needs.

A 'think tank' of providers, including employers, could be formed to develop an innovative curriculum, to offer different and imaginative approaches. Capacity-building re. embedded and integrated approaches in informal learning using functional skills are needed. Embedded approaches tend to be linked to vocational programmes but wider contexts should be explored.

Employability

Key providers are believed to be colleges, adult education at Hull City Council and some providers from the voluntary sector. The provision is usually age-specific, and includes vocational programmes; Skills-Based Work Academies; work skills; IT; universal jobs match; and English, Maths and/or ESOL.

It was felt that employer engagement can be challenging, especially in an area of micro/small businesses and that there are geographical gaps in the Hull area.

Opportunities could arise from more job vacancy information was felt to be important and the role of the LEP should be harnessed to address this major area of concern.

Making partnership working effective, a shared and joined up way of offering learning opportunities and progression into work are big challenges.

People not in education, employment or training (NEET)

It was felt that there are lots of employability courses but participants need many of the skills offered in place before they begin.

This suggested that a more responsive, learner-focused approach, which responds to the needs of the individual rather than that of the funding regimes, is needed. Independent living and life skills should start much earlier than seems to be the case currently. Guidance was felt to be vital and should begin in school, before the young people/adults become 'NEET'.

Partner organisations such as sports clubs etc could help in offering IAG as these are often places where the young people are known and feel supported. Family-centred approaches should also be explored.

2.4 Outcomes

- The consensus of the meeting was that greater networking, both in generic and specific ways, would help all the identified areas of concern.

- Sharing ways of informing, raising awareness and engaging new learners in relation to particular curricula areas is vital.

- The availability of more IAG in differentiated ways was felt to be important and a priority for development.

- Greater insight into work vacancies via JCP and employers would assist in the development of progression routes in employability programmes and activities.

- Getting together more often and joining up provision would better meet the interests of the communities which Hull College, the local authority and voluntary sector partners seek to serve.

2.5 Lessons Learned

- There is no Adult Learning and Skills Strategy to drive a co-ordinated approach to development. A partnership group of key players could begin to draft such a strategy for consultation. Developing an Adult Learning and Skills strategy supported by working or operational groups seems vital if the issues raised in discussion are to be harnessed and actioned to meet learners' aims and potential learners' aspirations.

- There is no shortage of information and ideas about what must be done to widen learning opportunities; these were fed into the discussion. However, it is unclear who might take ownership of these ideas and challenges and plan how

to address them and share the solutions to the challenges. If priorities were agreed through a strategic partnership process, action plans on specific areas could be developed in order to address some of these challenges.

- Leadership in forming a strategic group with a supporting plan and priorities should drive future agendas but it must consider how it links with the proposed CLT and local authority strategic priorities and plans.

- Creating thematic working groups, e.g. on literacy, numeracy and health and well-being, could begin to address some of the issues raised by identifying who is doing what and where; exchange data on current work; what gaps exist and who is missing from provision as well as possible capacity to respond.

- More impetus may arise once the Community Learning Trust has begun to define its membership, purposes, processes and priorities. The work of the Geographical Information System along with the Census data could help to inform the way forward.

Case Study 3: Getting together and Joining Up: Developing an Adult Learning and Skills Strategy for Hastings and Rother, May 7th 2013

3.1 Background

At the request of the Local Strategic Partnership, the Vice Principal of Sussex Coast College Hastings is leading a steering group to create an adult and learning strategy for Hastings and Rother.

In November 2012 NIACE worked with the Extending Horizons Educational Trust and Hastings and Rother Adult and Community Learning Forum to identify and discuss policy and practical issues around the community learning element of the emerging draft strategy.

A report on this event was drafted, shared and distributed. It was strongly felt that there was scope for a follow up event in the new year (2013) to improve the potential for exploiting existing resources in the most effective and efficient way. NIACE offered to explore with government the potential for a pilot project in the area to ensure planning was linked to the latest national thinking and materials, as well as for other localities to learn from the good work already started in Hastings and Rother.

The first full draft of a strategy was shared for comment at the end of February. An event led by NIACE to further consult and explore the governance of the proposed strategy was agreed for March but severe weather caused major disruption in the area and it was re-scheduled for May.

Wider consultation in relation to the strategy was then made during April and extended to 17 May 2013.

3.2 Planning

A telephone planning meeting was held in early February between the Extending Horizons Educational Trust, Sussex Coast College Hastings and NIACE, addressing questions about progress and clarifying possible next steps. It was felt that there was a plethora of partnership meetings which lacked strategic direction but which could eventually link into a Learning and Skills strategy. The key issues aired were around the governance of a strategy; sharing information and data on learners' identified needs and learning provision and joint planning, including bidding for funds in co-operation and not competition. It was agreed to organise a stakeholder event which examined the national policy drivers and developments, including the Sharp Report recommendations; Local Enterprise Partnerships; the work on the Learning and Skills strategy for Hastings and Rother; and discussion and decision-making on key issues, including governance. The event would be held in March (subsequently moved to May which enabled the government's response to Lord Heseltine's Review and emerging findings from the Community Learning Trust pilots to be included).

Key tasks were agreed between all the partners involved in preparing for the event, offering invitations and running the day.

A list of resources around the broad agenda of partnership working in adult learning and skills prepared by Janine Eldred was circulated prior to the conference.

3.3. Getting Together and Joining Up: the event

Approximately 70 people joined the event, held at the University of Brighton's Hastings Campus, Priory Square Building.

Participants were drawn from Further Education colleges; the university; community and voluntary sector providers and groups; mental health organisations; Hastings Borough Council; three Community Learning Trusts; Hastings Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses; Housing Associations; Children's Centre; National Careers Service and U3A.

Margaret Wallis, Director of the University of Brighton in Hastings and Chair of Extending Horizons Educational Trust, welcomed everyone to the university's new

building. Janine Eldred, NIACE, set the context of the three areas where NIACE is working, and the anticipated outcomes of the process. The latter included deeper understanding of the challenges of forming strategic partnerships; the possible responses to them; learning from the experiences of different colleges and partnerships in different parts of the country and drawing lessons which might help other partnerships. The day had been planned to share information, actively involve everyone, draw on experiences and local knowledge and agree the next steps in realising the learning and skills strategy for Hastings and Rother.

3.3.1 Mark Ravenhall, NIACE, made a presentation on: *The national picture; why partnership working is the order of the day*.

Mark's key messages related to the work and recommendations of the Sharp Inquiry into Colleges in their Communities; in particular:

- Whilst the Sharp Report supported and encouraged partnership working, government strategies also set out their importance, including in the *Skills Strategy* (November 2010) and *New Challenges, New Chances.*

- Partnership working is not an end in itself but must respond to the questions – *for whom? for what purpose?* Partnerships are essential aspects when colleges seek chartered status; partnerships highlight different and more sustainable ways of working; they lead to collaboration and greater autonomy for participants and suggest less institutionalised models and approaches. College leaders must not see themselves as captains of educational ocean liners but admirals of flotillas of small, responsive craft.

- Colleges must reflect on their origins and local purposes (the collegium[4]); be collegial in their leadership style; be champions of learning across all sectors; work with others to develop and create new and responsive curricula that involve learners in its co-creation.

- The way forward is a shared agenda with colleges; local partnerships and commissioning; central government agencies and sector support bodies. *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* (April 2013) stated that partnerships should not be just about meetings but about active coalitions.

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[4] 'A group whose members pursue shared goals while working within a framework of mutual trust and respect: *"This standing firm ... enables the college to be a community, a collegium of students and faculty working at common problems and possibilities" (Robert A. Spivey)* ' See http://www.thefreedictionary.com/collegium.

- More work has to be done with the Skills Funding Agency in relation to the 'Innovation Code'; trust has to be built that providers can match quality and deliver in order to persuade funders to 'let go' more.

- Key themes are: greater local engagement with communities; increased responsiveness to local priorities; improved accountability to communities; improved leadership and governance.

Additional imperatives are set out in *Rigour and Responsiveness*, which include greater dependency on loans for individuals; more partnerships with employers; and sharing of data across sectors. In the light of these, there's a need to re-model ways in which we all work. Partnership working is not a luxury but a necessity and if publicly funded organisations do not respond, they may be required to.

3.3.2 Zoe Myddelton, South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)

Zoe set out the background to the development of LEPs, including the work of the SELEP; she suggested that the first 18 months have been focused on organising the infrastructure and appointing staff as well as agreeing strategic priorities. The SELEP is the largest in England and covers Essex, Kent and East Sussex and Zoe outlined its activities and purposes; one workstream is concerned with Skills. A group has been set up with 4 ambitions: a) to set the skills priorities for the SELEP area; b) to listen to employers and key sectors in relation to learning; c) understand the current skills provision situation, including influencing provision and d) represent stakeholders across the LEP and add value, not replicate.

Next steps:

- LEP skills review and secure associated resources;
- identify priorities with delivery plans by Quarter 3 or 4, 2013;
- influence the Growth Strategy and EU policy and programmes.

A Growth Strategy will:

- identify skill gaps amongst existing businesses;
- determine the skills needs of growth sectors;
- influence skills and training provision;
- support the skills development of those outside the workforce.

A large area of development is that of influencing and responding to EU Growth programme; the EU Growth Programmes will be incorporated into LEPs' growth prospectus. Investment priorities focus on jobs and growth. Zoe said it was vital to respond to the consultations on ESF and ERDF during this formative period.

3.3.3 After a break, participants joined small groups to discuss their responses to the presentations, particularly how partners can work together to realise the vision of the Sharp Report; and how the Learning and Skills strategy and area partners might influence the LEP's Work and Skills strategies. One key question was raised by each group and addressed to Mark Ravenhall and Zoe Myddelton.

Flipcharts and notes recorded the key aspects of the discussion, which included:

Partnerships:

- Colleges work well with existing partners in Hastings but must extend to include the Rother area.

- BUT, do colleges have the resources and knowledge to lead and realise the vision?

- Colleges are only part of the model – lots of provision is offered by other organisations.

- Stop talking about partnerships and 'get on with it'; some partnerships are quietly getting on but with little visibility; we should review all the different partnerships and determine their purposes and where they 'fit'.

- Communications are key to success.

- We must forget competitiveness from the past and work towards co-operation;

- We must be clear how government vision and policies work out at a local level and be open and transparent in the way we work.

- Must consider how partners might bid for EU funds together for shared purposes.

- We could explore existing relationships and networks and explore whose delivery is best for which learners and where; this would begin to address some barriers to learning.

- Schools could be part of the partnership because of the physical and human resources they can offer to adult learning in all facets; some of this exists but should be developed.

- Provision/the College should go to the community as well as community join up with the college.

- We must work out how together how we charge businesses and what fees will be levied on whom.

- Governance of the learning and skills partnership strategy must reflect the community; it must think and act in a business-like way, invest in the community and returns will follow

- Are there partnerships we can learn from? Is anyone already 'doing it' successfully?

Employers/businesses

- We must work more with trade and industry, including small businesses, but not ignore the large employers in the area, including the public sector.

- Businesses want provision when it's appropriate to them, not necessarily when colleges say they can offer it; we must be more responsive.

- Employers want co-designed curricula, not competitive tendering.

Reach and engagement

- U3A could begin to address some of the issues of health, older people, civic engagement – but they are often missed out of discussions and planning.

- Many potential learners 'fear' the college; community venues are less threatening and hold less 'stigma'; must extend provision to less usual venues; more creative timetabling using evenings and weekends could extend resources and opportunities;.

- We could map delivery venues and address the '2km' challenge.

- We could consider a learning continuum e.g. SCCH Community, where learners do not have to continuously re-register but can move 'seamlessly' from one learning activity to another.

- Is there a tension between 'employability' and learning? Some people want to learn who are not linked into employability agendas e.g. older people; and people with multiple and complex needs or health issues.

- How do we ensure we are listening to learners and potential learners?

- Will the college use funding to 'make money' at the cost of prioritising social benefits to the local population?

- Do colleges have the 'right' governors? Do they represent different communities?

- Where do we find the data? What data is needed?

SELEP

- How can the LEP respond to local needs when it is really a regional organisation?

- How can communities influence and encourage LEPs to listen at a more local level? We must use the contacts we have and inform and influence them. We must respond to their consultation.

- Who are the representatives whom we might approach to voice our ideas, opinions and contributions?

- We must have strategic lead in our area, with clear objectives which influence and link with LEP so that the regional work of LEP becomes local for Hastings and Rother.

- How can we make sure that all businesses are represented, as well as voluntary organisations? The conceptualisation of employers as only private sector is misleading. We have large public sector employers in the area too.

- Communication is two-way; how does the LEP propose communicating with us?

3.3.4 Dan Shelley, Sussex Coast College, Hastings presented an update on the **Hastings and Rother Adult Learning and Skills Strategy.**

A rapid overview of activities so far indicated the process of development, co-operation and consultation. Current consultation is extended to 17 May 2013 via a survey monkey web-link. The strategy format is a high level document with the socio-economic background as an appendix, along with an action and implementation plan. There are four strategic priorities and each one of these was explained in greater detail, including examples of possible actions. A proposed governance structure was presented, demonstrating linkages to other existing strategic and development groups. A brief analysis of the responses to the consultation to date indicated general agreement of the tone, priorities and governance proposals. Finally, Dan presented the role of Sussex Coast College, Hastings in the process of development.

Participants were invited to ask questions for clarification and further information; they then formed buzz groups to raise issues and discuss implications. Significant discussion was held about how to link up the different groups; how local strategic partnerships would be part of the process; how the strategy might address, 'who is missing from learning?'; whether the Economic Task Force is the most appropriate strategic link group and how cross-cutting groups might help e.g. equalities.

Small groups then discussed their responses to the presentation and were encouraged to be challenging, act as critical friends and highlight gaps, in order for the final strategy to be robust, reflecting as many aspects of adult learning as possible. A full plenary discussion followed, which raised some of the following issues, questions and suggestions:

The plan should:

- include targets and goals in the priorities which feed into the action plan;

- set out the vision, values, transparency, relationships etc especially in the commissioning role, so that equalities are visible and monitored;

- make sure that Rother is represented as well as Hastings;

- listen to the two forums; the Adult Learning Forum and the Employability Forum but also challenge them to have clear terms of reference and, where appropriate, priorities for action;

- consider how relationships with local councils and the LEP should be developed; the plan should not exist in isolation to other plans and strategies;

- establish clarity about terminology; for example, the business community is wide and diverse, including not only private sector, profit-making companies but also public sector and voluntary sector companies. These reflect the reality of employment in Hastings and Rother;

- articulate approaches to co-operation in relation to EU funding and project priorities.

The Strategy Group should consider:

- how to engage with and involve public health agencies and NHS providers in the group;

- how to harness collective experience and history to inform creative development;

- celebrating learning in a collective way;

- what is 'affordability', including current market research on Advanced Learning Loans for adults over the age of 24 years;

- its terminology, such as whether Community Learning can be both accredited or non-accredited;

- how to have a LEP representative on the strategy group; (the representative for the Federation of Small businesses was at the event and could be a possible link);

- how to become 'investment ready' with projects ready to propose to EU structural funds.

Task or working groups should address:

- how we engage those people who are 'furthest away' from learning;

- issues of rurality and transport and link up with others considering similar challenges;

- how the U3A approach could be replicated with other groups; where U3A fits in;

- how we listen to learners and potential learners; using social media has been very effective in some parts of the country;

- how we engage with the business, trade and commerce sector re. their learning and skills needs; the challenge is to work with large companies who do not have local autonomy e.g. supermarkets or Saga; with large public sector organisations and with small enterprises. Sectoral approaches might be productive e.g. hospitality, catering, care, financial services etc.

The session closed with Dan indicating that his priorities for action following the event were to:

a) propose a governance structure and ensure that it was representative of the Hastings and Rother learning providers and communities;

b) develop five priorities;

c) create an action plan to realise the five priorities.

Everyone was thanked for their commitment, willingness to contribute and help in shaping a productive day.

3.4 Outcomes

a. Clarification of the national skills and economic policies was offered and discussed.
b. Understanding the LEP and how it would influence local planning was presented; participants learned how to respond to current consultation invitations as well as possible representation.

c. The process of developing a Strategic Plan for Learning and Skills in Hastings and Rother was open and shared. Participants learnt what had been done and how they could engage with the process of shaping the plan.

d. Clear next steps were identified to finalise the plan and begin implementation.

e.   An opportunity to air ideas and discuss challenges inherent in partnership working was well used.

f.   Notes of the event would be drafted and shared, including lists of possible actions.

g.   Those present would like to receive a data-base of participants, their organisations (with a sentence on who, what and where) and email addresses; this will help with networking.

3.5. Lessons Learned

a.   The South East Local Enterprise Partnership covers a large area (it is the biggest LEP) and has a small secretariat; it is difficult to see how it is going to relate to local work and how local organisations will relate to the LEP.

b.   Partnerships are an imperative and not an option; organisations and individuals must work together to create efficient, effective and responsive ways of working.

c.   Partnerships are challenging and mean different things to different people and organisations; they are defined differently in different contexts. Articulating vision, ambition and ways of working will ensure a common and agreed understanding in Hastings and Rother. Making them work in practice will take time.

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Annex 2. Resource List

Colleges in their Communities: Resources to inform and support Adult Learning and Skills Partnerships, May 2013

Resource	Indicative Content
Policy Context	
Funding guidance	http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/further-education-skills/docs/S/12-p172-skills-funding-statement-2012-2015.pdf
Matthew Hancock's presentation to Chairs of Governors	Presentation in January 2013, from Matthew Hancock to Chairs of Governors of FE Colleges outlining responsibilities to meet local needs, using freedoms and flexibilities to meet the demands of New Challenges: New Chances. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/matthew-hancock-speech-at-recognition-event-for-governors-of-further-education-colleges
Colleges in their Communities: A Dynamic Nucleus the 'Sharp Report'	Inquiry report concerning Colleges in their communities; summary available. Downloadable document: http://shop.niace.org.uk/dynamic-full.html
New Challenges: New Chances	Government reforms of FE systems; development of skills systems including freedoms and flexibilities. Summary available; downloadable document. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31429/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan.pdf
No Stone Unturned: in the pursuit of growth. Lord Heseltine Review and the government's response to the Heseltine Review	Lord Heseltine's economic plan for stability and growth including outlines for devolved spending to regions and localities, such as the Regional Growth Funds, LEPs and the opportunity for LAs to collaborate or combine. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/no-stone-unturned-in-pursuit-of-growth

Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills Report from BIS April 2013	Report on raising standards; reforming apprenticeships; introducing traineeships; supporting relevant qualifications; funding driving rigour and responsiveness and better data. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/186830/13-960-rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills-amended.pdf
Partnerships	
Getting on Brilliantly	Publication offering different and imaginative ways of organising very large and very small meetings, consultations and working co-operatively: http://shop.niace.org.uk/getting-on-brilliantly.html
Partnership and Place	Five case studies of colleges playing a role in addressing social and economic issues in their local communities. www.excellencegateway.org.uk/264457
Building Community Capacity in a Time of Crisis report	A Northern College initiative working with community groups and organisations, in disadvantaged communities in Kirklees to help them to be robust and sustainable. They researched development needs and worked with partners to improve skills in curriculum development, quality assurance and approaches to service delivery. www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=319007
Collaborative Good Practice Between Local Authorities and the FE Sector Report 2009	A Local Government Association commissioned report on a study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) where collaborative partnerships were seen to have contributed to positive outcomes for young people re progression and engagement in education. www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/
AoC Collaborative	Examples of colleges that have worked successfully with schools, local authorities, employers, health and social services and voluntary and community groups. www.aoc.co.uk/en/aoc_beacon_gold_and_other_awards/aoc_beacon_gold_awards/celebrating-colleges/winning-capabilities/collaborative.cfm
Common Ground: Exemplary community college and corporate partnerships	Strategies used by 14 community colleges to meet the needs of corporate partners, discussing formation of partnerships, their structures, organisation and funding as well as lessons learned in the process. www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/
More than the sum; partnerships for adult learning and skills: Kate Watters	Part of the quality improvement programme, Support for Success http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/051974.pdf

Community Learning Trusts: Pilot Evaluation March 2013	Report on the evaluation of 15 pilot Community Learning Trusts set up stages; BIS. https://www.gov.uk/.../**community-learning-trust**-pilot-**evaluation-rep**
Third Sector Engagement and Participation in the Learning & Skills Sector" April 2013 (BIS/13/586)	Report on working with voluntary organisations in the development, promotion and delivery of learning and skills. Summary, quantitative and literature survey reports available. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/third-sector-engagement-and-participation-in-the-learning-and-skills-sector-report
Governance	
Thinking Outside the College report	Thinking Outside the College: Planning and Delivering Local Accountability: An Action Framework for Colleges in the Further Education Sector pub: AoC and LSIS Includes tools to support: drafting College Public Value Statements; reviewing governance structures and their processes; and engaging in continuous improvement in community engagement and accountability. http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/college_governors/thinking-outside-the-college/
Community Learning Learner Survey	Evidence from learner survey about community learning; participation, curricula, typographies and benefits. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-learning-learner-survey-report-march-2013
Local accountability and autonomy in colleges: Ofsted	Report on governance, community and stakeholder involvement and accountability in FE Colleges. http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/local-accountability-and-autonomy-colleges
Community Curricula Co-operation	
Councils co-operate to benefit adult learners: Bristol Learning Communities	A case study of 4 local authorities co-operating to offer a virtual learning environment for adults www.excellencegateway.org.uk/Programmes
Making informal adult learning work report	An e-champion scheme, online resources and engagement of new learners, using strong partnerships between the Leicestershire Adult learning Service and Library Services. www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=lals

Collaboration Success story report	Six local authorities in the NE of England shared a virtual learning environment called TeesLearn, to engage and support new learners across a wide geographical and rural area. www.excellencegateway.org.uk/Programmes/page.aspx?o=250707
Local accountability for adult learning and skills: a community perspective Report 2012	A case study research report, supported by NIACE and the LGA, which examines local accountability through an in-depth case study with Kirklees Council's Adult Learning team and some local neighbourhood learning providers. Free downloadable document: http://shop.niace.org.uk/local-accountability.html
"A New Curriculum for Difficult Times" project report by Simon Beer 2013	A report which shows how providers, working in different local contexts have developed new curricula. It draws on work in Hull, South London, Birmingham, Herefordshire, Redbridge and Bristol http://www.niace.org.uk/news/a-new-curriculum-for-difficult-times