



NLDC 2008-2009 Bradford District

Final Report

Executive Summary

The 2008/09 contract was the 7th NLDC Programme delivered in the Bradford District and represented a cumulative investment over the years of around £2.2m. This year's focus for NLDC continued the recently established emphasis on the LSC's Skills for Jobs agenda through community learning, addressing the "hard to reach" barriers that contribute towards *worklessness*. To that end, 75% of NLDC investment was targeted on activities of an employability nature. The Guidance re-affirmed that the target group of individuals were those aged over 19 years of age, not currently in employment, either in or not in receipt of benefits but wanting to work, ie *workless*, and subject to further disadvantage through being, for example, lone parents, disabled, over 50 years old or from an ethnic minority. Over and above, NLDC activities would then be targeted within the deprived wards or communities of need.

As in previous years the contract was placed with Bradford College as the Accountable Body and project management through Bradford and District Learning Partnership/Partnerships Team. Following formal application to the LSC allocations under NLDC were approved as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Recurrent funding: | £309,675.00 |
| Capital funding: | <u>£163,845.00</u> |
| Total | £473,520.00 |

The following summarises the contracted outcomes:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Learning Centres assisted | 30 |
| Voluntary sector organisations supported through capacity building activities | 30 |
| Individuals from VCS organisations accessing training | 30 |
| Learners recruited onto NLDC programmes of which 75% would undertake Skills for Jobs related activities (375) | 550 |

The contract was formally received by Bradford College in December and therefore actual delivery of activities commenced much later than the

proposed start of 1 August 2008. The Capital contracts were further delayed in contract arriving from the LSC.

The Commissioning Round set out 3 specifications as follows:

- B1 **Consortia delivery of community-based learning for employability – Recurrent Funded** contained the largest allocation of NLDC recurrent grant at £220,000 and was intended to secure 550 NLDC learners with an emphasis on employability skills. A major emphasis placed through the NLDC Guidance was in the quality of learner experience and the use of RARPA to capture formative development.
- B2 **Developing Community Management Skills – Recurrent Funded** containing an allocation of £14,970. The specification was seeking providers who could support VCS groups to improve their management capacity and raise the skills of the individuals within the groups. A total of 30 individuals from VCS organisations was sought.
- B3 **Improving the Community Learning Infrastructure** provided VCS groups with access to capital grants to carry out minor refurbishments to centres and associated equipment to improve the learning experience for community residents. A total of £133,845 was allocated. As in previous years, a Small Grants chest was also available to provide for minor purchases taking the residual of the NLDC capital grant allocation.

In addition to the above, NLDC has undertaken new research considering the practical barriers faced by Bradford over 50s when seeking or undertaking employability support measures.

Despite the delayed start to the contract, NLDC partners worked closely within their communities to deliver outcomes that either met or exceeded contracted outcomes. In terms of final out-turn of the 2008/09 contract against the performance indicators, the following table illustrates:

| Contract Outcomes | Contracted | Achieved |
|---|---|-----------------|
| Learning Centres assisted | 30 | 44 |
| Voluntary sector organisations supported through capacity building activities | 15 (additional from Small Grants Chest) | 48 |
| Individuals from VCS organisations accessing training | 30 | 32 |
| Learners recruited onto NLDC programmes of which 75% would undertake Skills for Jobs related activities (375) | 562 | 641 |

The NLDC programme has operated at a core cost-per-learner of £483.11 (recurrent funding divided by total learners). The success of the NLDC partners in delivering responsive, effective and local community-based learning opportunities for the disadvantaged communities is well evidenced by the data collected for the full report. All centres report continuing demand for the provision, with waiting lists in place. However, this demand comes at a cost which, for some centres, is too great. During this contract year, centres that have formed components of consortia have closed simply through lack of core funding for the voluntary sector. Maintaining NLDC's ability to penetrate through to the hardest to reach community residents must remain the key focus of the Programme, with consideration made as to how delivery barriers can be overcome.

A further observation is the increased levels of internal capacity management expertise, responsibility and resources required from consortia leads participating in public funded programmes. Consortium leads now not only have the responsibility for ensuring the collection and quality of NLDC records, maintenance of audit trails and health and safety standards, but also for the overall quality management of learning and the continuing professional development of learning managers and teaching staff. VCS centres need to embrace continuous improvement but this naturally requires financing.

Community venues have made good links with providers of progression routes, such as FE Colleges and JCP/LSC products. However, the destination outcomes illustrate that for many learners "moving on" is not a first option; rather small incremental learner progression is noted which for some will result in employment or NVQ2 qualifications. Without prejudicing the positive work currently being achieved to engage with community learners, supporting learners to progress beyond the community venue often via extended partnerships incorporating other statutory and funded providers remains the underpinning NLDC principle.

The out-turn of the 2008/09 contract confirms that the NLDC Network of VCS community learning centres is a capable delivery vehicle and that the consortia approach continues to add value though not without resource implications. Quality assurance and continuous improvement relating to teaching and learning practices are bound to impact on the number of VCS groups capable of taking on consortium lead responsibilities.

Bradford College Partnerships Team
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