

Creating the Masterplan

**The findings of an event to explore the potential of learning
as a tool for community regeneration
DRAFT for CONSULTATION**

Introduction

On June 29th 2005 over 70 people met at the University of Glamorgan School of Health Sciences. The event was organised by the People and Work Unit as an opportunity for people from education and lifelong learning, community regeneration and economic development to share ideas about Community Learning and its role in developing communities.

This paper summarises the discussions at that event. It is intended as a contribution, from people working in communities, in schools and colleges and in building local economies, to the development of policy and the vision that underpins it.

Section 1 outlines people's vision of a future for Wales. In section 2 there is a description of the learning communities that would underpin that vision. Section 3 outlines the learning opportunities and structures that would enable a learning community to operate and, finally, section 4 describes some of the steps needed to realise the vision.

This draft is being sent to everyone who was that the event and contributed to the discussions. We would welcome feedback on:

- a. whether the draft is adequate as a record of the discussion, including identification of important omissions
- b. whether appropriate weight has been given to the points in each of the sections
- c. whether you would like to see a further development of the paper published and, if so, how and who it should be targeted at (any final document would be bi-lingual and could be available as a printed and/or electronic document)

Please respond with comments/ amendments by August 2nd to the People and Work Unit, 32 Monmouth Road, Abergavenny NP7 5HL or peoplework@btconnect.com

Section 1: Wales 2025 - A Vision of the Future

In 2025 Wales will be a country where people

- feel valued
- are economically active and successful
- live healthy lives
- are culturally active
- are part of supportive communities
- value the learning opportunities available to themselves and their children.

There will be vibrant local economies that:

- require and use learning and skills
- focus on long-term gains as well as immediate benefits
- build on the strengths of Wales including a stunningly beautiful environment; friendly, warm people; a rich history; strong communities

Together, economic development and community regeneration will have **built an economy based on Learning Communities** that involves

- local micro-enterprises that offer specialist 'niche' products and cottage industries endorsed by the 'Wales' trademark to an international market
- Wales leading the world in clean energy technologies
- a tourist and leisure industry that enhances and promotes the environment
- learning centres of excellence that sell expertise on environmental and local enterprise to people across the world.

Section 2: 2025 - The learning community

Across Wales Learning Communities

- Prepare their children for lifelong learning (including school)
- Encourage and endorse participation in formal and informal learning opportunities to all their members
- Celebrate achievement and embed learning activities into community and family life using the model of the local eisteddfod of the early 20th Century
- Promote and support (and sometimes target) learning opportunities to all community members, from informal through to formal qualifying courses
- promote learning progression routes to community members and learning providers, linking them to local economic development
- Intervene and advocate on behalf of local people to ensure that they are receiving high quality learning provision

Community learning supporters

In each community there are community learning supporters that:

Identify needs - targeting support and encouragement at those most likely to need it; promoting real equality, not just of access but of participation

Provide practical support - help with barriers like childcare, transport, access issues

Provide moral support - building confidence, accompanying the local learner to college/school if helpful, helping the local learner stay on track through setbacks

Build community support - encouraging and supporting parents to help their children through learning; working with the whole family including partners

Manage learning - advocating with providers to monitor quality and ensure that people can move in and out of learning as appropriate to them but still continue to progress

Provide information - investigating progression routes, navigating ways around setbacks; identifying any financial support available

As a friend - listening, 'hand-holding', praising, sharing ambitions and visions and protecting them from pit-falls, endorsing, respecting and believing in the learner.

Section 3: Learning provision in 2025

Learning provision is shaped to meet the needs of Learning Communities and their members. Providers

- Recognise that learners, and Learning Communities, need to focus on long-term outcomes as well as the immediate learning target
- Involve economic development analysts in planning learning for the local economy, linking learning opportunities to economic outcomes when appropriate
- Recognise learning as an interactive process between teacher and learner
- Recognise that learning styles vary
- Train tutors and teachers in community and youth development processes
- Ensure flexibility, to enable people to move in and out of learning without sacrificing progression
- Recognise and celebrate success, viewing failure as a setback, not an end
- Incorporate learning relevant to the local and global market; broadening horizons and understanding
- Recognise diversity and variation of need *within* communities

Funding Community Learning

Funding for learning

- Rewards collaboration and partnership working amongst learning providers and facilitates progression routes across providers
- follows the learner and enables progression at a pace, and place, that best meets needs
- views lifelong learning as lifelong - not for over 16s - and funds strategically across *all* forms of learning within, or used by, a community

Credible learning

Learning is seen by all people are relevant and important because it provides access to employment, builds cultures, frees and expands people's horizons and nurtures equal, fair and accepting communities.

This learning is:

Applicable - offering knowledge and skills that can be applied in the learner's 'real' world; developing ambition and broadening capacity; impacting directly on self and community; providing qualifications and skills that people can recognise and that are valued within the community

Useful -achievable and with evident functionality providing a direct and clear advantage in community life and/or employment; aspirational, supporting learners to develop a vision of the future for themselves and their community; flexible enough for people to develop at a pace appropriate to them

Attractive - high quality and clearly worth doing; enjoyable and challenging; able to attract and work with all people, including men and people with health and disability barriers

Section 4: **From 2005 to 2025 - The Way Forward**

Steps to achieving the vision

Building a learning economy

- Identify and explore how other small countries and regions have had success in building a powerful local economy.
- Involve economists in planning and developing community and local learning plans.
- Develop global networks (internet) that allow even the most local initiative to market to the world.
- Develop the existing national economic development infrastructure (WDA, Sell-2-Wales etc..) to adopt a strategic approach to supporting the local
- Build an understanding of education and learning as a key tool in cultural change and as a way of building the local economy.
- Ensure all community regeneration work embeds skills (and qualifications) in local people so that even short-term funded activities leave a sustainable legacy.
- Require a learning plan to form a part of every community strategy.

Building Learning communities

- Identify, train and employ Community Learning supporters
- Develop learning venues and resources owned and managed in the communities and 'serviced' by learning providers
- Build strong links between community based learning (including primary schools) and specialist learning centres (including secondary schools) to ensure progression is planned and as effective as possible
- Develop learning delivery processes that allow for individual and small group learning to higher levels
- Exploit resources within the community - such as inter-generational learning and informal transference of skills between community members
- Find and promote role models within the community
- Promote global awareness and broaden horizons as part of all learning programmes

Learning providers

Promote and support learning providers that are:

Committed - genuinely interested in the community and wanting to work with it

Collaborative - willing and able to work with new partners and take an holistic view of learning even when they provide only a small and specialised aspect of it

Flexible - recognising qualifications and credits *wherever* they have been earned; focused on enabling progression; willing to work where the learners are

Respectful - valuing learners and communities and what they bring to courses and activities and accountable to them

Developmental - learning new ways of working; challenging old beliefs about learning capacity, dispelling myths

Reliable - keeping promises; never giving up on people; modelling commitment to learning and problem solving behaviour