

DEVON COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

LEARN DEVON 2 PROJECT

EVALUATION REPORT 2010-11 (provisional)

Purpose of the project

This project aims to make it easier and more cost-effective for employers and individuals to engage in learning. It builds on the experience and infrastructure developed by the Devon Community Learning Partnership, especially through the "Learn Devon" programme. And it aims to give providers the ability to manage and deliver the new opportunities for unit credit in a way that meets the needs of Devon people, whether in or out of employment, as part of a work-based programme or in their own time. It has been trialling the delivery of unitised programmes for learners who would otherwise have been reluctant to participate, and will track their progression towards qualifications so as to determine the most effective approaches.

Project funding and timescale

The project was made possible through funding of £50,000 from Productive Skills for Devon, running from July 2010 to September 2011. Match funding was found from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) which effectively provided for a further year of work in which to develop the partnership model of progression.

Objectives and targets of the project

- To develop a learner engagement programme of tasters, IAG and web-based activities: Target 65 activities
- To trial the delivery and unit-funding of 1-3 credit programmes from the QCF; Target 80 learners with at least 6 providers
- To record progression from the above to further units, full qualifications, or other activities, as a basis for a future model
- To further develop the Learn Devon website in line with the above

How the project was managed and delivered

The project was managed centrally by the secretary of the Community Learning Partnership responsible to the lead agency Devon Adult and Community Learning (DACL) and to the Executive of the Partnership acting as the Steering Group. All members who might be interested were invited to apply to participate with tasters and engagement activities (during 2010) and for unit delivery (in 2011). There were extensive negotiations in some cases, in order to develop a range of suitable courses and programmes. Applications were approved in several phases, according to criteria agreed with the Steering Group.

How the project was evaluated

All learners were asked to complete questionnaires on their experience and planned progression, and providers were asked to highlight issues. The secretary of the Partnership, with the help of a project officer, then telephoned as many learners as could be reached, and visited all providers to meet staff and a sample of learners. The particular questions to which answers were sought were:

- Why this course was chosen and how it is part of a progression pathway
- How learners were advised before, during and after their course
- Whether learners were pleased with their experience
- What learners hoped to do as a result
- What delivery and management issues arose

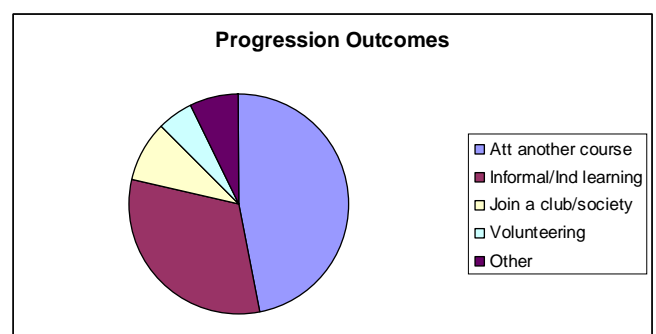
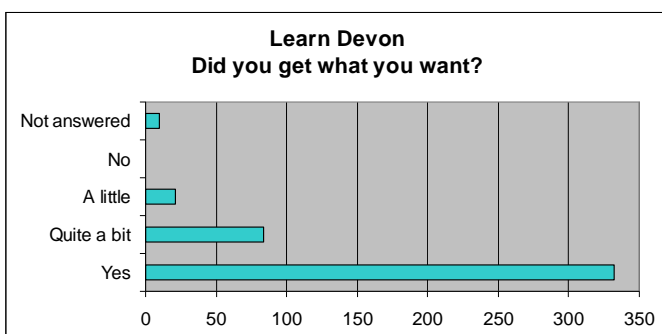
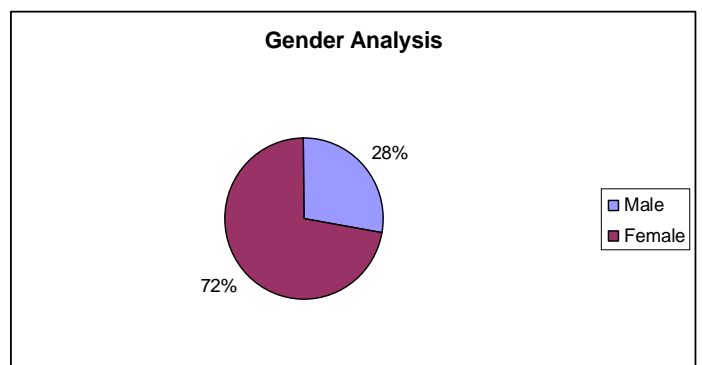
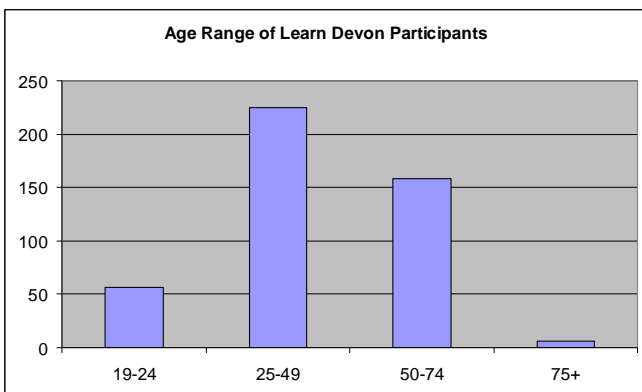
Achievements

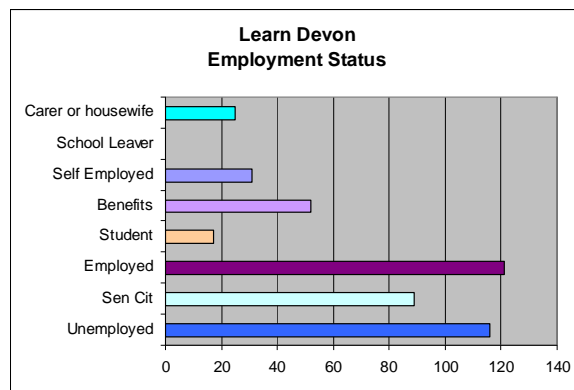
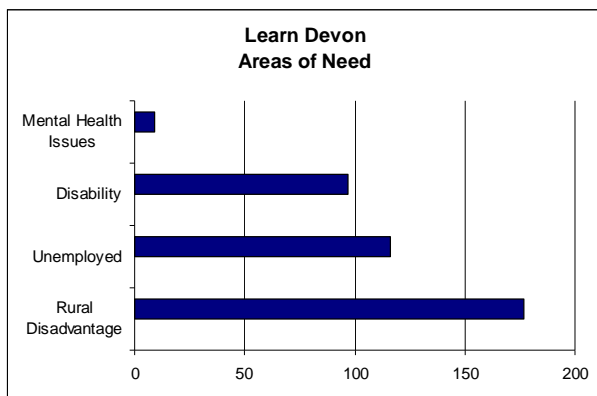
1. Learner engagement programme

A total of 62 engagement activities were approved up to 30 June, with some further IAG and other activities expected in September

A total of 56 engagement activities were completed – the September activities should increase this figure. A full list of activities is available. There were a total of 462 learners.

The charts show that there was a good range of ages and backgrounds, and a large number of disadvantaged learners. There was a high degree of learner satisfaction and a very positive set of intentions for what to do next. 47% intended to progress from the activity to another course, 33% to more informal learning, 8% to a club, and 5% to volunteering.





Specific comments of learners about their intentions included:

- Horticulture: some came for employment reasons, other for interest. Intentions at the end included an RHS distance learning course, Bicton, Duchy, Dartington and South Devon colleges, and becoming a member of the local society.
- Volunteering: all participants went on to an accredited volunteering programme (NCFE).
- Arts and crafts: progression offered included NCFE Creative Crafts but all the learners spoken to were only interested in more non-accredited workshops.
- Photography: progression offered was to a Level 1 accredited programme through Devon ACL, nearby, and an intention to do this was in fact stated by several learners, as well as clubs and activities.
- Spreadsheets: 3 learners intended to progress to an ITQ level 1 through Devon ACL, others to use their skills in their home or business.
- Flower arranging: 6 out of 13 learners actually went on to a further programme, though the planned City and Guilds course had to be postponed. One learner obtained work in a florists.
- Psychology: this was targeted at carers, and some people did indeed use this for their work. Others stated an intention to progress to more advanced courses.
- Counselling: 9 people said they would go on to a Level 2 Counselling course
- Making Christmas Wreaths: 5 learners were going on to Flower Arranging at a nearby Community College, and others to join the women's institute activities
- Vocational tasters through Pluss: most learners did in fact progress to other work-related training.

Most learners had had some form of IAG before or after their activity, but this was generally confined to giving information about other provision. Although applications were encouraged for IAG activity per se, none were made. However, this is understandable given the small amount of resource devoted to these activities, and the greater focus on it in the unit delivery (see below).

2. Delivery of accredited units

To date, 61 learners have completed individually-accredited units under the project – though a higher number started the courses, and more still are in progress.

The units have been:

- Components of C&G Skills for Working Life – Healthy Living, Improving Personal Manner and Conduct, Working Safely (Entry Level)
- Component of OCR Employability Skills – Presenting Personal Information Effectively (Level 1)
- Component of EDI ITQ Certificate – Spreadsheets (Level 1)
- Components of NOCN Progression Certificate – Developing Own Interpersonal Skills (Level 2), Understanding How Children Learn (Level 2)

Generally the learners spoke positively of the experience they had received and the advice they were given, though in most cases it had been suggested they take part by their employer, adviser or other contact to help with their own skills and to develop confidence. Learners' responses varied with regard to their understanding of units, credit and progression. Most had considered it a one-off training opportunity which could help them in their role as a volunteer or in the search for a job. They would be interested in other units but the attraction of a Certificate or Diploma was not a key factor.

Two tutors / organisers reported problems within these groups of different levels of ability, that required specific changes in delivery style. When these were overcome the whole group benefited from the interaction. All agreed this was a challenge that had to be faced when free single courses were offered in this way.

Some excellent examples of practice were observed. For example, in two groups of students with a learning disability, the accreditation had provided a manageable structure for the course, within which they produced high-quality portfolios and gained work experience or healthy activities linked to course criteria. In the group taking "How children learn", learners were sharing their experience and using the knowledge gained through the unit to explore their career opportunities. In the Presenting Personal Information group, learners gained in confidence through practice telephone calls and CV preparation.

In all these cases, most of the participants were hoping to progress to a relevant full certificate, or at the least to take further units along the way (if they could be funded). For most learners in the other groups, their progression routes were more varied (employment, volunteering, leisure, another course) and often the course was seen as a free activity in its own right, a free-standing opportunity which might have been funded in a different way previously. Despite the benefits for the individuals concerned, it is hard to see how this project has added value in these cases.

Most learners were pleased with the IAG they had received prior to and during the project. In the case of the "How Children Learn" group, they were already involved in other activities in the centre and this unit had been a part of their individual learning plans for the year; they were also going to benefit from a final session with a Next Step adviser. In several other units, advice on progression was observed as part of the main session, with an option provided of a Next Step

interview as well. (This was generally seen as not so suitable however for those with a Learning Disability.)

No provider had discussed use of the Personal Learning Record and My Next Step with their learners. If you know your ULN, in theory you can access your Record – however, it is currently taking four months for awarding bodies to get credits achieved on to these records, so they can only be viewed as a historical record at present (for credits gained since ? 2007). My Next Step is however available to anyone, and it is supposed to be able to import data from the PLR. Nobody has yet explored this despite it being an expectation of project funding. (A plan to develop a module which could be run separately to do this, is under way.)

Providers have universally welcomed this funding to offer new opportunities for a target group, and would continue to welcome funding for any short courses that get people into learning or move them on. There have been no significant management issues for anyone who has run a course under the project. Providers are generally more keen now that part-achievements (i.e. of units) do not count against their overall minimum levels of performance. However, funding issues remain:

- Most awarding bodies still charge significantly more for a qualification gained in separate units, to cover their administration and verification costs
- Employed learners still have to pay the full cost of a single-unit course
- If a learner gains a single unit and then wishes to progress to a full qualification, the provider of the latter will not be able to draw down the full funding. This might seem fair, but if delivery is in groups, and not all students are in this position, the course still has to be run with a reduced number of learners but the same level of cost. This fear (in a large college) has prevented one unit being delivered through the project.

3. Recording progression

This will need to be undertaken in September.

4. Website development

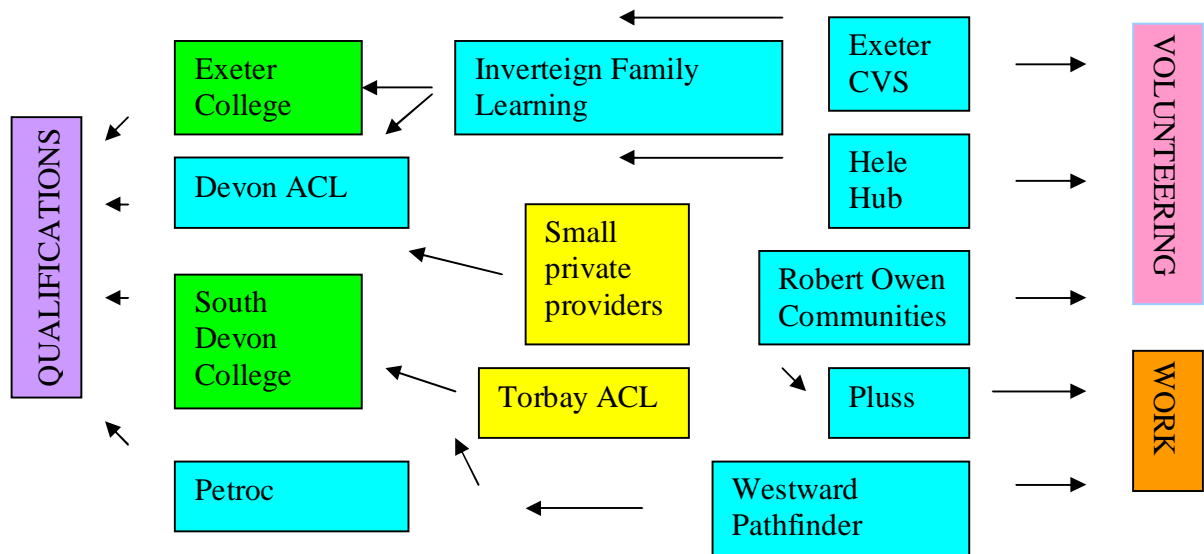
The website is running as planned but its success as a marketing tool seems very limited. See the project report for numbers of hits. Further development around progression may pay off.

5. Recommendations for work during 2011-12 using LSIS funding

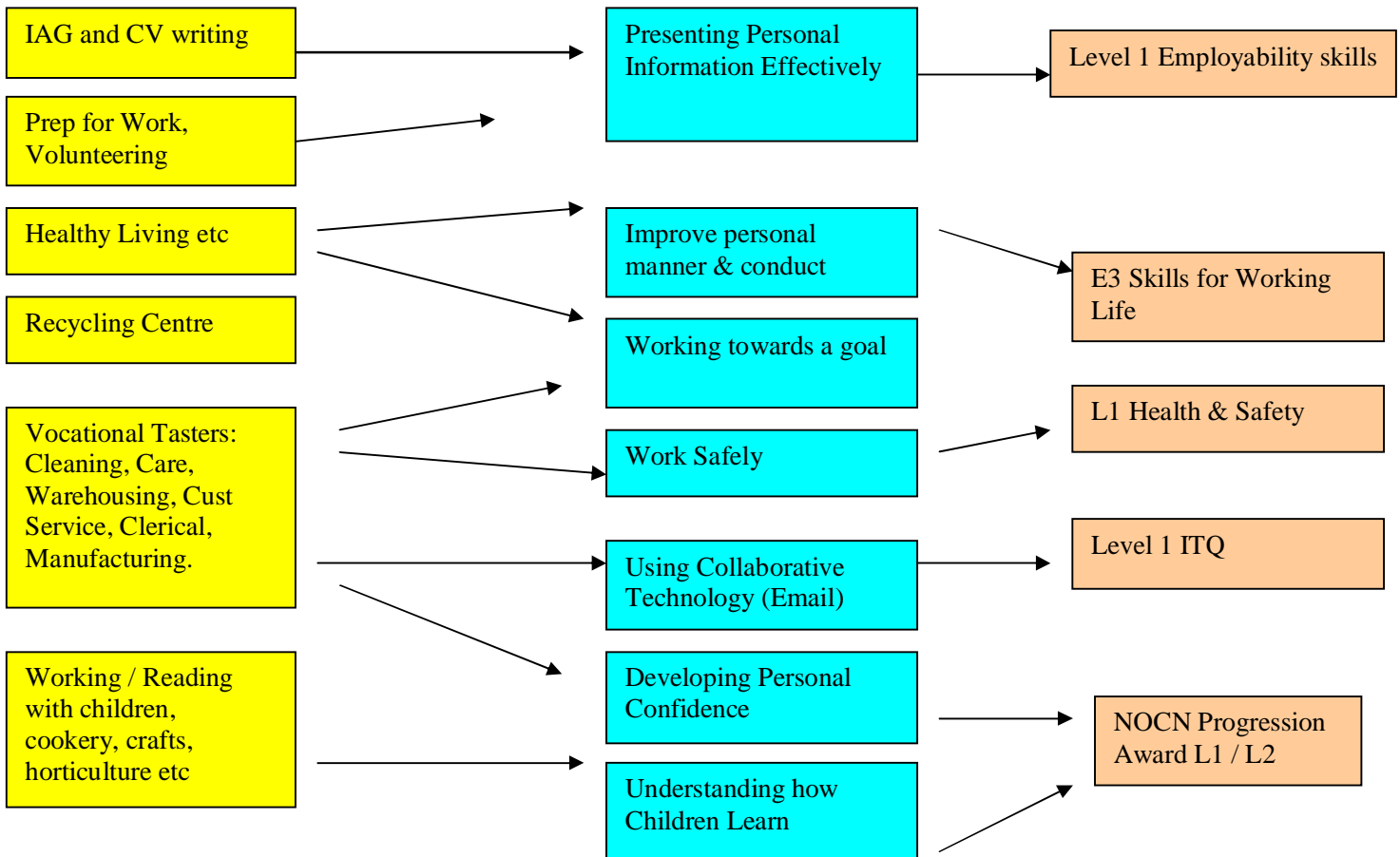
1. A shared approach to using My Skills Record , with training around our module.
2. A marketing model for individual units, sharing experience so far.
3. Delivery of specific units, funding those that:
 - have been able to show progression to a relevant qualification (e.g Employability Skills) or another specific outcome such as a job
 - are in the unit funding trials but are not cost-effective to deliver without project funding
 - are in vocational subjects not yet covered in the project such as Construction, Business / Accounting, Hospitality, Health & Social Care.

John Willis, Project Manager July 2011

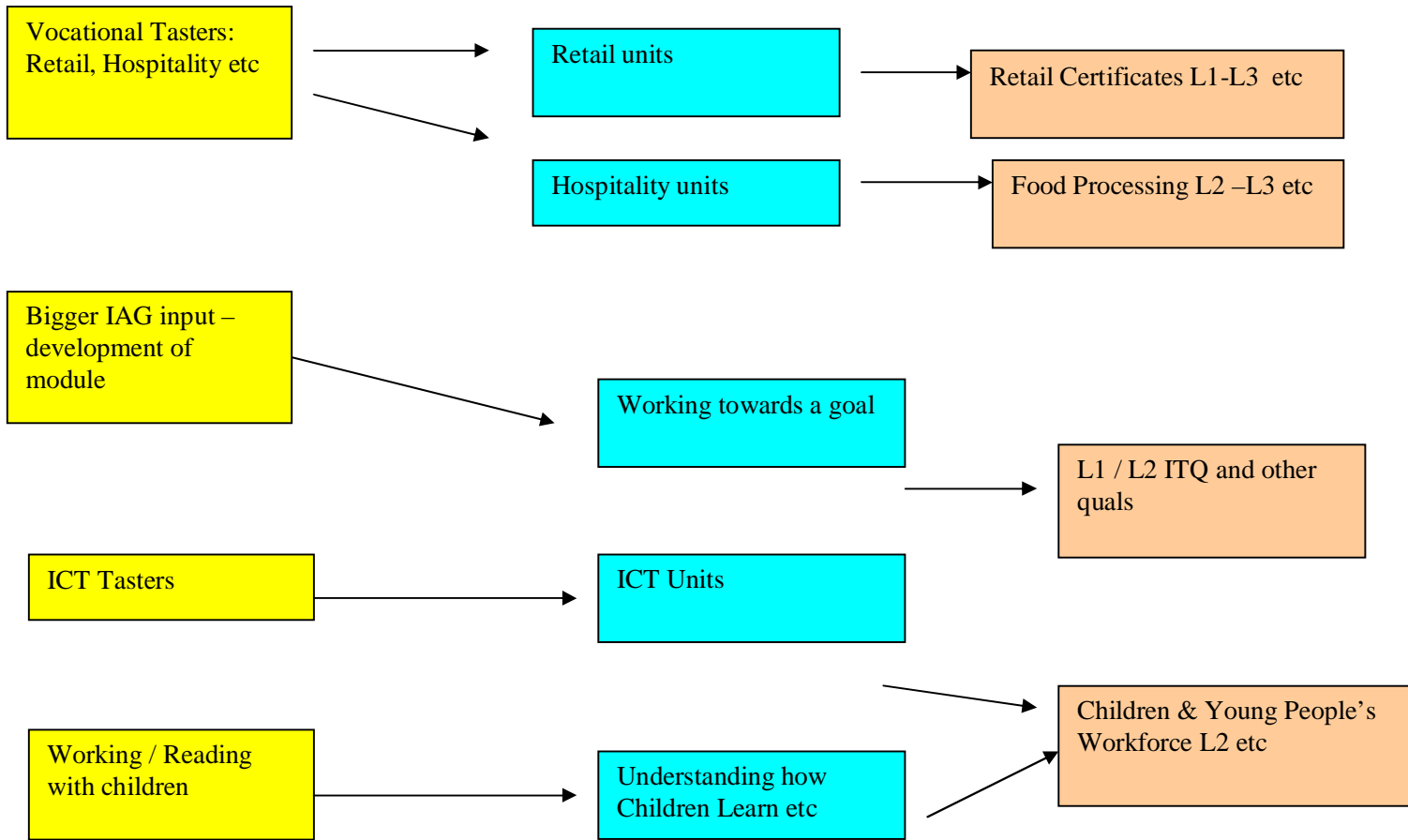
APPENDIX 1 Partnerships of Providers – current and planned



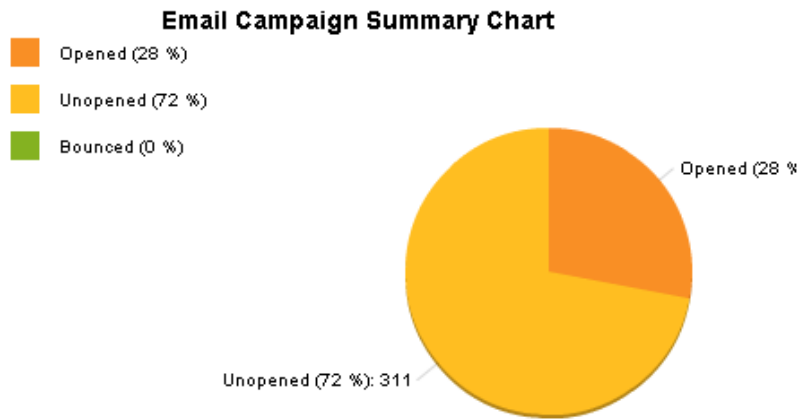
APPENDIX 2 Planned Progression from Tasters to Qualifications – First phase



APPENDIX 3 Planned Progression from Tasters to Qualifications – Second phase



APPENDIX 4 Email marketing campaign April 2011



Source: Rokk Media