

DEVON COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Secretary: John Willis, 28 Cross St, Moretonhampstead, Devon TQ13 8NL
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MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING

Friday 28th May at 10.00 am in the Ockment Centre

1. Present

Peter Harding, Community Council of Devon (Chair)
Margaret Davidson, Devon ACL
Jacky Lock, Exeter College
George Curry, Westward Pathfinder
Frank Gent, Workers' Educational Association
Huw Davies, Petroc
Maureen Wheeler, JHP Training
Ian Fleming, PLUSS

In attendance:

John Willis, Consultant / Secretary
Wendy Head, Minutes

1. Apologies

Ros Simpson, Petroc
John Demeger, Torbay ACL
Danni Goff, Exeter College

2. Minutes of February meeting, matters arising

Minutes agreed as a true representation of the meeting.

Action points - Protocol for Partnership funding bids – proposal from John Willis and Peter Harding:

Any partner who wishes to say in a funding bid that "This project is supported by Devon Community Learning Partnership" should make a request in good time to the Secretary. The Secretary will consult the Chair and if appropriate make a recommendation to a forthcoming Executive meeting, or if this is not convenient by email to all Executive members. It is expected that this project will be delivered in partnership with other members of the Partnership. Resources would be shared with other members or with the Partnership as a whole.

This proposal was agreed and adopted by the Executive.

Action points relating to Learn Devon and the BBC involvement have been completed.

LSIS bid – the third and final round for applications for the Flexibility and Innovation fund are due by the end of June. The criteria relate to quality issues and engaging new learners is a priority. The maximum funding is £50,000 and there has not been a successful south west bid to date. A college, ACL or training provider has to make the bid. A proposal to support joint classes for slower learners with the voluntary sector was circulated, but there was reluctance to lead such a bid because of the potential impact on providers' performance levels. A preferred alternative was a match funding bid for Learn Devon 2. Also JHP training may submit a national bid.

Action point: John Willis to invite interest in becoming the lead partner for an LSIS bid which matches Learn Devon 2 for match funding and provide a link for the LSIS bid. Maureen Wheeler to advise further on the National JHP bid and how far this has progressed.

All other action points will be covered by agenda items.

3a. Additional agenda item – Threats & Opportunities, cuts in funding, Parliamentary changes, Partnership activity and aims

Margaret Davidson advised that the County Council will be the lead accountable body for informal adult learning, which includes ACL & Family Learning. Local authorities and colleges are asked to provide accommodation at low or no cost for community groups.

She felt that there is an opportunity to extend the Learn Devon 2 website's role in providing access to a range of accommodation available e.g. village halls.

The Partnership needs to have a more flexible and creative approach and it is envisaged that the lead body will work in partnership with the Community Learning Partnership.

Petroc are moving away from reliance on government funding, and are looking at full cost recovery (so would not offer concessions)

Train2Gain is still going but not growing, more money is going into apprenticeships.

Autumn conference: could this be linked to a launch event for Learn Devon 2?

Skills Funding Agency - Action Point: John W to invite Pam Coles to our conference once a date has been fixed.

3. Learn Devon

The project was a tremendous success with achievement of all outputs and targets. A new website was established and a range of new providers, venues and activities were available to learners. There were lots of exciting new organisations on board with new opportunities.

Acknowledgements go to Margaret Davidson DACL - lead partner and for the financial responsibility; to John W and Wendy Head, for the marketing, delivery and administration of

the project; to Philip Done and Oenone Thomas for their work on Learning Hosts; and to Oenone Thomas for compiling the evaluation report.

The following is a summary of the key achievements – for more details please refer to the attached evaluation report.

<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Tasters	250	256
Hours	750	823
Providers	40	59
Learners	>1499<2000	1466*

*More in reality, as not all learners completed the evaluation forms.

Equal Opportunities – there was a good spread with 300 out of 1500 unemployed and learners with a disability at 21%. Disadvantaged learners by postcode – just under 50%

Learner responses were generally good and positive.

Progression – 500 learners said they would attend another course, and 80 learners said they would like to follow the taster activity up with volunteering activities.

Average cost of the taster was £195, with an average of 7.5 learners with a cost per learner of £26.

Now that the tasters have been completed there are case studies on the website, a course search, membership pages, tutor pages, venues and Partnership projects. Philip Done has worked on a database of providers so that community groups can contact them and request delivery in their communities. The course search works well with a link to Devon Floodlight for local courses.

Lessons learnt: (1) The weather played an important part in whether tasters took place, were cancelled, or were delayed, causing problems towards the end of the project. (2) As we did not set a minimum group size, some tasters did run with very low numbers, though in a way this was the purpose of the project. (3) The promotion of the project via the new website should have occurred 2-3 months earlier than it did; there was a big delay in the beginning which then affected all subsequent stages of the development. (4) We need to work harder on progression, as some providers were not used to the concept and seemed unable to provide the information as to what courses or training would be available to learners following the tasters. We need to broaden the scope for any further projects (e.g. Learn Devon 2) and “re-badge” it perhaps as “further engagement / opportunities / volunteering” - as the jump from informal to formal learning has become too large and too costly for many learners.

Action point – John to check on the number of hits on the website and how these are being monitored and followed up.

4. Learn Devon 2

As progression from Learn Devon we have £50,000 from PSfD for the 2010-11 year in response to our larger bid which included: tasters, IAG, web-based activities, & trialling unit funded accredited modules. Bearing in mind that the QCF will not be available until September and realistically this may mean delivery of accredited units may not get off the ground until Christmas the length of the project (to September 2011) will mean a tight timescale for allowing progression. If a bid to LSI S is successful this could extend the time available for the project rather than increase the number of learners.

The revised timetable, budget and outputs in the project proposal were agreed.

There were concerns that the funding for unit delivery would be too tight, but after discussion it was felt that this should cover a normal range of group and individual learning, though we might need a contingency fund as well. Also Margaret was concerned to ensure there were sufficient funds for DACL's management costs.

Action point - John W to revise the budget figures further with Margaret and return the signed agreement form to PSfD.

A specification for project management of the new Learn Devon 2 project was circulated and agreed. Whilst John and Wendy left the meeting room, the Executive discussed how the manager should be appointed; it was agreed unanimously for consistency and quality assurance, that John would manage it as it would be a continuation of the Learn Devon project. The existing website can be used for marketing and details of the new project can be circulated to the existing providers and other groups as before.

5. First Steps for Adults with Learning Disabilities/ Devon Learning Account

Take up at first was slow but now applications from the voluntary sector have taken off and we have now actually overspent on the original budget, but with the First Steps funding applications received will be covered. The First Steps project is more about supporting learners into work but the two projects are now combined. Exeter College, PLUSS, ROC have run courses for learners and more are planned (and now possibly City College Plymouth and PAFL).

Action point - Any suggestions as to how we can feed into other projects or for any additional courses need to be put to John W.

6. Research into Devon participation

The University of Plymouth has carried out research but the data only relates to public sector provision. The number of adult learners has decreased from 69500 in 2003/3 to 48131 in 2005/6 but we do not have any more up to date information than this. What appears to be missing, besides voluntary sector and private provision, are Learndirect, WEA and Cornwall College. Please see the attached table .

7. Plans for autumn conference

It was agreed that an autumn conference would provide an opportunity to promote Learn Devon 2; provide an update on First Steps and other projects; and provide a forum on government funding and obtaining alternatives to it. A date for early October was proposed but not finalised.

Action point - John, Huw, Peter and Danni to get together to discuss this further and make some plans for the content of the conference. Ian Fleming also to check on his contact at YMCA who may also be able to help out with 'funding survival tactics'.

8. Budget and Future Partnership Activities

We discussed a budget report showing that there is a total of £8850 for 2010-11 and 2011-12. Consideration needs to be given to the election of officers at the conference. Peter is quite happy to continue in his role as Chairman, but he wanted to ensure that if anyone wishes to take on the role he would be happy to step down.

9. News Round-up

Ian Fleming reported that PLUSS have been working with Bidwell Brook School providing work placements for younger disabled learners (16-19). Action Point - John and Ian to discuss this further.

George Curry from Pathfinder advised that the organisation is now called Westward Pathfinder having bought out Westward Training.

Margaret, DACL advised that following the major restructuring process, Jenny Thorns has taken over from Carolyn Godfrey as Partnerships officer.

Next meeting

This is on Friday 3rd September at 10.00am to 12.30pm at the Ockment Centre.