

How to work in partnership to fund projects for older learners

This briefing sheet highlights some of the benefits that partnerships can bring to projects for older learners (i.e. those aged over 50). It is aimed mainly at providers looking for new ways to organise and fund their learning programmes, as well as those learners who are seeking different sources of provision.

All the learning projects on page three use partnerships with other agencies to achieve their goals. Quite often these partnerships are developed to access new funding as well as to create new learning opportunities. As the time to write and coordinate learning programmes and bids can be quite daunting, joining with other organisations to share time and resources can be a good idea. Also in the current climate, where it may be difficult to access 'traditional' funding for older learners, new ways have to be found to provide access to learning for this age group. Although we recognise that partnerships and funding are relevant to all learners, these areas are particularly relevant to older people now, with the publication of the CSCI Inspection Guidelines which will affect those in care homes, and the Pathways to Work initiative to help people back into work.

In addition to the above, the government is encouraging all public sector agencies to participate in Local Strategic Partnerships. A Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is a single body that:

- brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together; and
- operates at a level which enables strategic decisions to be taken and is close enough to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be determined at community level.

It may require some imaginative thinking to find a partnership that suits everyone's goals and careful thought should be given as to how to set up and sustain partnerships. Here is a list of some of the potential advantages and disadvantages for you to consider:

Advantages

- enhanced opportunities for access and participation;
- bigger pool of clients so bigger market share for everyone;
- avoids overlap and duplication of effort and addresses gaps in provision;
- able to secure niche markets;
- economies of scale – broader, more flexible and cost effective offer;
- sharing of information, resources and premises;
- reduction in workload, wastage, cost and time;
- brings together complementary skills sets and expertise;
- stimulates mutual learning and innovation;
- dissemination of good practice.

Disadvantages

- loss of autonomy / fear of take over;
- increased complexity of financing, managing and monitoring such arrangements;
- diffusion of responsibility and potential loss of accountability;
- unrealistic expectations on the part of some partners.

Dos and don'ts:

Do:

- have a very clear objective for the collaboration – it gives a precise, identifiable focus and a time horizon that people can cope with;
- define, at the outset, what will happen if / when the objectives have been achieved;
- acknowledge the importance of inter personal skills, establish networks, teams and ownership;
- trust your partners;
- ensure demonstrable accountability on both sides;
- be realistic about the time and resources required;
- be aware of the implications of the Data Protection Act when sharing information;
- have effective communication;
- have commitment of all partners to collaboration;
- have representatives of the right level able to make decisions;
- acknowledge each partners explicit goals and targets;
- ensure that you involve older people in the planning;
- have a means of assessing the student views of the collaboration.

Don't:

- assume the collaboration is, of itself, 'a good thing';
- assume that you know what older people want;
- assume you know the goals or agendas of the other partners;
- be afraid to say no to unrealistic expectations of service delivery;
- hold or share data without reference to the Data Protection Act (1998);
- have too large a group;
- be frightened to share planning and resources;
- impose lengthy formal processes where creativity may be stifled.

Partnership success

Partners' motivation to continue as active members is likely to be enhanced if there is early and ongoing evidence that progress is being made. It is always a good idea to build opportunities for 'quick wins' into your partnership plan and to ensure that the necessary resources are committed. These help to keep everyone on board.

It is particularly important that new or sceptical partners see benefits in participation at an early stage. Where the partnership focuses on engaging new or reluctant learners make sure you watch closely for signs of tangible benefits to learners and listen to what learners are saying. Appropriate ways of recognising and celebrating learners' successes can increase motivation for the learners themselves and may encourage others to engage. Celebrations offer one way of disseminating the value added by working in partnership.¹

¹*More than the sum – partnership for adult learning and skills, Kate Watters, 2005.*

These projects, from the Older & Bolder database, demonstrate the diverse partnerships and funding they have selected and are not intended to show whether their work is embedded or continuing, that will be the subject of a future briefing sheet.

Projects	Partnerships	Funding see further details page 8.
1. <i>Health Learning Works</i>	Various	Various – so far, Job Centre Plus, European Social Fund, National Health Service University, Strategic Health Authorities, Regional Development Agency, Learning and Skills Council. Any funding available through partnership working.
2. <i>Life is for Learning</i>	Cheshire CCC Lifelong Learning Service, Macclesfield Borough Council, Age Concern East Cheshire, representatives from residential homes/sheltered accommodation	Local Education Authority funding.
3. <i>Savera</i>	LAMP (Mental Health Charity), CLASP (The Carers Centre), AK-WAABA YEH, ADHAR Project, Nirankari Advice Centre.	Leicester City Council/Social Care and Health.
4. <i>Digital Unite Programme</i>	Housing providers and funders, e.g. Learning Skills Council	Learning and Skills Council, Community Investment Teams within housing providers/ activities budgets, within housing providers.
5. <i>Reminiscence in Sheltered Housing</i>	Year 1 Chelmsford Borough Council - Year 2 Chelmer Housing Partnership Chelmsford & Essex Museum	Adult and Community Learning, Widening Participation.
6. <i>Delta Plus</i>	Colleges, IAG, London Borough of Enfield, Brimsdown Business Association, ISTC Community Union.	European Social Fund co-financed.
7. <i>OWEN</i>	East Riding of Yorkshire Council, University of Hull, Scarborough Campus.	EU Equal Programme.
8. <i>new start 50+</i>	Prospects Services Ltd	European Social Fund & Learning and Skills Council
9. <i>Computer Friendly</i>	Oakland College (F.E.), St. Albans Herts C.C. Library Services, St. Alans. Various Schools	Local and County Council, Learning and Skills Council, National Health Service, donations and other.
10. <i>Older People's Advisers</i>	Portsmouth City Council, Pensions Service	Pensions Service Partnership Fund
11. <i>Representations of Older Women in Film</i>	U3A	British Film Institute internal funding.
12. <i>Wirral Standard One Group (Age Discrimination)</i>	NHS bodies, the Local Authority and various voluntary agencies, plus several reps from Wirral Senior Citizens Forum and patient groups	Minimal additional funding, other than National Health Service, Local Authority and Age Concern to cover time of employees and expenses of older persons reps.

Details of Projects

Health and well-being

1. Health Learning Works

Health Learning Works is a programme that brings together unemployed people who want to work, but may never have considered a career in health or care, and employers who are willing to ring-fence entry level jobs for them. It is designed to fill entry level vacancies in a range of occupations with job-ready recruits. This helps employers with diversity, workforce planning, recruitment and retention and brings non-traditional learners into learning with a supported entry into employment with a work placement in the guaranteed job. Aims and Objectives: by targeting people who may never have considered a job in health or care, the programme encourages people from diverse backgrounds, with a range of abilities and disabilities to work in the above sectors. Staff recruited from the local communities are more reflective of and responsive to the users of the services and begin to meet targets placed upon public employers. The process develops partnerships between learning providers, agencies, community organisations, independent and public employers and government bodies.

2. Life is for Learning

Various activities are organised each year by the Coordinator, involving a mix of new courses and courses which have run since inception in 2001. The project itself derived from a County initiative/pilot around 2000. Activities are coordinated by a steering group made up of partners which meets once a term. Aims and Objectives: to enhance the health and wealth being of the over 70s; and to continue the processes of learning into the "fourth age".

3. Savera

Savera which means a New Beginning or Dawn is a Resource Centre which was set up as a joint initiative between the Health Authority, Social services and the local community in 1990. The Group initially mushroomed from the Mental Health Seminar which was held in the same year, where the issue of lack of support for Asian people using mental health services was raised. Savera Resource Centre is unique in the area of providing mental health services as it promotes empowerment in the Asian Community and highlights the success of Community Care in a multicultural society. Savera provides a culturally appropriate and sensitive service to all Asian Communities taking in factors such as language, religion, gender and culture into consideration. It also helps to address the stereotypes that exist in relation to mental illness within the Asian Community. The overall aim at Savera is to provide a range of services for their users and carers that enable them to enjoy the best quality of life that is achievable in a framework of mutual trust, respect and confidentiality.

Sheltered/Residential Homes

4. Digital Unite Programme

Bringing ICT literacy to sheltered communities in a way that engages and sustains the learning group so that it's a permanent piece of communications infrastructure that underpins independence and digital and social inclusion. Aims and Objectives: ICT skills for beginners and intermediate - up to 20 in any sheltered community - group ownership of own learning/communicating - permanent outcome.

5. Reminiscence in Sheltered Housing

Relaxed informal reminiscence sessions that took place in sheltered housing units, with residents aged 60+. The majority of participants were 70+, some who were 90+ years of age. Six weekly sessions, each with a leading topic, negotiated between tutor and learners handling collections from the Chelmsford and Essex Museum and music quizzes were used to stimulate memories and discussions – these proved to be very valuable tools. *Aims and Objectives:* to introduce participants to adult education; to reduce isolation among those living in sheltered housing; to encourage interaction between residents; and to encourage participants to value own and others' experiences.

Training - employment

6. Delta Plus

Retraining and up-skilling those under the threat of redundancy, many that have been in the same employment for over 25 years and taken no learning since leaving school. Offering advice and guidance and support as well as arranging any training that the individuals feel will aid their return to employment. Available to any individual that is under the threat of redundancy and lives or works in the London boroughs of Enfield, Haringay, Waltham Forest or Barnet.

7. OWEN

Older Workers Employment Network (OWEN) aims to test and promote new ways of tackling all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market. OWEN will promote to potential employers the advantages and benefits that the older worker can bring to the workplace. Older workers will be eligible to join the OWEN project if they fit in to the following categories: are aged between 45 and 65; are unemployed, employed, or facing redundancy or retirement. *Objectives:* to provide direct support to older workers, both employed and unemployed; and to enable and empower the target group to take part in designing, developing and evaluating the activities, recommend modifications, and lobby employers, statutory and public bodies.

8. new start 50+

Employment support for people aged 50+. Offers one-to-one confidential interviews with an employment advisor offering help with: thinking through interests and ambitions, confidence building; finding the right course or training programme; career progression; tailor-made action plans; CV production, job search, help with application forms and interview skills; referrals to employment or volunteering; and other relevant services.

Volunteering

9. Computer Friendly

Using community venues (libraries, schools) and a team of volunteers to provide free/internet non-accredited training to adults in the district. Topics include basic skills and applications such as Microsoft Excel and family history. Progression to accredited courses through F.E.College. *Aims and Objectives:* to provide free computer/internet training for adults who experience social exclusion; to develop a team of volunteers to deliver the training (many retired); and to develop an outreach programme to identify excluded groups.

10. Older People's Advisers

The project aims to improve the finances and quality of life of 'hard to reach' older people in the North of Portsmouth. This will be achieved with the help of a group of volunteers,

who will help to assess whether people may be entitled to further benefits. They will also be able to provide information on other topics, such as services available, and leisure and learning opportunities. These volunteers will be trained to give information and advice on benefits, as well as other services and opportunities that are available to older people in the city.

Other

11. Representations of Older Women in Film

This project aims to: research films that feature older women as main characters; compile a web Study Guide to feature on British Film Institute website; key films to be watched and commented on by U3A film club attendees and comments incorporated into Study Guide; host study day at National Film Theatre for Adult Learners Week 2006 to launch guide and disseminate and discuss findings. Objectives: to open and encourage debate about representation of older people in film, in particular women; to encourage U3A film club attendees to become involved in further research; to produce a web publication for use by other students; and to encourage the use of the BFI's Library facilities.

12. Wirral Standard One Group (Age Discrimination)

The original brief was to identify and eradicate age discrimination. They have chosen to extend this to looking into any area of life locally where older people may have difficulty in participating to the full. They have been consulted by the Council in the rewriting of the Local Area Review. They aim to have representation from all major local statutory and voluntary groups. They meet quarterly for 2 hours. Discussion, planning and admin (including numerous letters to MPs, Councilors, Chief Executives etc.) take place as needed. Anyone or any organisation can suggest topics and speakers to lead.

References and further information

Approaches to partnerships – who shares wins. Further Education Unit, 1994. ISBN 1853383384.

Commission for Social Care Inspection. Website: www.csci.org.uk

Local Strategic Partnerships - Government Guidance. Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2001. Website: www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163200

Mapping Learning Opportunities for Older People. Lois Gladdish et. al. NIACE, 2005. Free publication available from NIACE.

More than the sum : partnership for adult learning and skills. Kate Watters. LSDA and NIACE, 2005. Support for Success Quality Improvement Programme. ISBN 1845721632. Website: www.s4s.org.uk

Pathways to work : helping people into employment. Department for Work and Pensions. Cm 5690. TSO, 2002. ISBN 0101569025. £16.95. Website: www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/consult/2002/pathways/pathways.pdf

Funding

This is a list of some of the funding sources used by the partnerships quoted earlier. You may find it useful when working up a partnership idea, in preparation for presenting a bid to funders. This list is not exhaustive and the sources are not all current, but they do demonstrate the variety of funding that could be useful.

Organisation	Details	Website
Adult and Community Learning Fund	Now under LSC	
Age Concern	Tel: 0208 7657200	www.ageconcern.org.uk
Awards for All	Tel: 0845 6002040	www.awardsforall.org.uk
Basic Skills Agency	Tel: 0207 4054017	www.basic-skills.co.uk
British Film Institute		www.bfi.org.uk
Community Investment Teams	International Institute for Sustainable Development	www.iisd.org
European Commission		http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index_en.html
European Social Fund EQUAL		www.esf.gov.uk
Heritage Lottery Fund	Tel: 0207 5916000	www.hlf.org.uk/English/
Job Centre Plus	Email: Contact-Us@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk	www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
Learning and Skills Council	Discretionary Funding is offered via 'Bidding' or 'Tendering' rounds. Tel: 08700 9006800	www.lsc.gov.uk
Leicester City Council / Social Care and Health	Tel: 0116 2527000	www.leicester.gov.uk
Local Education Authority		Contact locally
Lottery Funding	This site allows you to search information on current funding programmes across the UK.	www.lotteryfunding.org.uk/
National Health Service	Tel: 0207 2104850	www.nhs.uk
National Health Service University	Now known as NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement Skills for Health	www.dh.gov.uk/Home/fs/en
New Opportunity Fund	Big Lottery Fund	www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
Pensions Service Partnership Fund	2004-2006	www.thepensionservice.gov.uk
Regional Development Agencies		www.englandsrdas.com
Single Regeneration Budget	Tel: 0207 9444400	www.communities.gov.uk
Strategic Health Authorities	Tel: 0207 2104850	www.nhs.uk
Sustainable Development Fund	Tel: 08459 33 5577	www.defra.gov.uk
Lloyds TSB Foundation for England & Wales	Tel: 0870 4111223	www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk/

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This is the seventy-ninth in a series of briefing sheets, which aim to provide an introduction to a variety of lifelong learning issues. Many earlier titles in the series are still available including:

78. Dyslexia and older people
77. Funding support for adult with dyslexia
76. What is dyslexia?
67. Adult education working in care settings
66. Promoting literacy, language and numeracy programmes
65. Learning and Skills Council funding for literacy, language and numeracy
64. Embedding literacy, language and numeracy
63. Promoting financial capability provision for older people

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They are also available on the website at

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NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training. It aims to do this for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties, or insufficient resources. Registered charity number 1002775; Company registration number 2603322.