

NIACE Research and Development



Key Findings



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The Provision of Practice-Based Toolkit for Walsall Borough Council

Abstract

Walsall Borough Council aims to substantially increase participation in adult learning and training opportunities in a borough that has high levels of poverty and deprivation. The borough council offers leadership in this respect through its lifelong learning, neighbourhood renewal and culture strategies. The commitment to supporting community development activities involving relevant frontline staff in outreach and development work, together with the appointment and training of local citizens as learning champions, are current strategic priorities in the borough.

NIACE was commissioned to:

- ❖ Produce a practice-based Toolkit to support the work of development workers and learning champions drawn from, and working in, a range of contexts in the Walsall area, including neighbourhood renewal and regeneration, the cultural sector and adult and community learning. The Toolkit would support participative, democratic ways of working, which empower both the development workers and learning champions and the local people they work with. The Toolkit would help to reposition local people's views at the centre of educational planning processes in Walsall, and support more sustainable approaches to widening participation
- ❖ To develop a complementary training and support strategy to enable local development workers and learning champions to use the Toolkit effectively. The strategy would comprise a sustainable 'cascading' training process to secure greater ownership of the Toolkit by development workers and learning champions, and to support its long-term use.

Research methodology:

The research team used an action –research approach comprising:

- Desk research/ literature review to understand the social and economic context and strategic priorities in the borough.
- Informal and semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders to gauge commitment and concerns.
- Large stakeholder event with managers and frontline workers.

Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ Walsall Borough Council is committed to increasing resident participation in educational, cultural and regeneration activities.
- ❖ The materials produced are appropriate to this intention.
- ❖ The Participatory Appraisal (PA) Network in Walsall should take forward the production of the toolkit and related training with support from the NIACE research team as appropriate.

Recommendations

- ❖ The Toolkit should be produced and published within the remit of the Council.
- ❖ The PA Network should co-ordinate the production and organise the related training and support strategy.

Output

- ❖ The creation of a practice-based toolkit.
- ❖ Large stakeholder/consultation event to plan the production of the toolkit and related training and support.

Funder: Walsall Borough Council

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Requests for 'Key Findings' in other formats, such as large print, are welcome. We would be pleased to consider your request.

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