

Realising the Potential

Recognising Residents' Achievement in Neighbourhood Renewal



NIACE for Government Office West Midlands

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Introduction

Resident engagement is central to the Government's strategy for neighbourhood renewal. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's Learning Curve sets out a plan for ensuring that all the participants in neighbourhood renewal, including residents, can develop the skills, knowledge and behaviour they need to make a success of the enterprise.

The Learning Curve identifies three main roles for local residents, as

- Leaders
- Experts
- Emerging practitioners.

This project shows how the learning needs arising from those roles and for volunteers can be met. A particular focus is the need to provide opportunities for residents to get jobs in neighbourhood renewal (objective 5 of the Learning Curve).

There are three good reasons why residents involved in regeneration programmes should get credit or recognition for their learning:

- Fairness – they deserve it
- Incentive – it is a reward that encourages residents to get involved and to keep going
- Making regeneration work – a credit system could mean that residents' expertise is better harnessed and used to improve regeneration programmes, as volunteers or as paid staff.

This project is about developing the best system of recognition, initially for the West Midlands, potentially for England as a whole. It builds on local strengths and attempts to rectify shortcomings.

The report consists of three main sections:

3. **Context** outlines the policy background to the project and identifies the key developments with which it connects, both nationally and regionally.
4. **Findings** reports on effective practice, mainly within the region, which provides some building blocks for the future, and summarises the outcomes of focus groups involving residents and regeneration professionals.
5. **Way Forward** suggests an approach to meeting residents' learning needs consistent with the Learning Curve and proposes the main elements of an action plan.

The project was commissioned by the Government Office of the West Midlands as part of its responsibility to develop a Skills and Knowledge plan for neighbourhood renewal in the region and carried out by NIACE, the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education. The project manager was Ann Selby and the lead consultant was Martin Yarnit. Dilbagh Dhami,

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principal consultant of Positive Action Ltd, set up and ran focus groups involving residents and professionals.

NIACE and the project consultants would like to thank the residents and practitioners who took part in the Discussion Forum, the Focus Groups or were interviewed for this report.

Further copies of the report are available from:

Ann Selby

NIACE

21 De Montfort Street

Leicester

LE1 7GE

0116 204 4200

Summary

This study was commissioned by Government Office West Midlands to set out the practical implications of creating a recognition framework for residents' involvement in regeneration. The report proposes the creation of a national resident recognition and support framework.

But as a first step, the report recommends regional action to develop the resident recognition framework and to improve and assure quality by:

1. Creating a regional regeneration support framework through resident-focused
 - Quality circles
 - Quality improvement workshops
 - Centre of Excellence.
2. Publishing a regional commissioning document that would invite learning providers to propose their contribution to a new regional resident learning and development programme and, eventually, to propose the assessment criteria that would be set alongside that programme.
3. Commissioning and funding a trial Individual Learning Plan and resident support programme for a regeneration project or projects.

The outcomes of this study have been significantly shaped by discussions with residents and the professionals who work alongside them. This has led us in three directions that were not predicted at the outset.

1. It has created the conditions for a continuing dialogue that we believe will help to ensure that the outcomes will meet residents' needs and that they will feel ownership and commitment as a result. If we believe in the value of self-directed learning, then this is clearly a vital result.
2. It has led to an emphasis on the importance of peer-learning and – development.
3. Discussions with residents highlighted the inadequacy of existing support arrangements across the region. A high quality and continuing system for supporting residents' involvement is essential if their development is to be effective. That is why this study does not confine itself entirely to recognition frameworks. We touch briefly on the components of an accompanying support framework later in the report.

The main sections of the report set out

- The context
- The findings

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- The way forward

Each of these is outlined briefly below.

Context

(see section 3 of the report)

The government's concerted push for neighbourhood renewal is generating a wealth of exciting new initiatives including community empowerment networks, as well as bringing about more coordination between agencies. It is also drawing into local action large numbers of residents. Locally and nationally, steps are being taken to sustain their involvement and to maximise its impact. Imaginative apprenticeship and other programmes are being developed, but usually in isolation from each other, across the region.

As part of a programme to support the work of all the participants in regeneration, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has devised the Learning Curve which defines the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by this new industry. Government offices and local strategic partnerships are all required to draw up Skills and Knowledge plans. The purpose of this project is to inform that process in the West Midlands by developing a recognition framework through which

- *experience in neighbourhood renewal can be recognised*
- *occupational standards and vocational qualifications in neighbourhood renewal can be set out and agreed*
- *learning providers offering programmes in neighbourhood renewal accredited*

Findings

(see section 4 of the report)

An audit of existing arrangements coupled with face to face discussions with residents and regeneration practitioners has revealed the patchiness of current support arrangements for residents and pinpointed the measures that need to be put in place.

There are three main defects with the current arrangements:

- not enough residents are being drawn into activity, so that those who are active sometimes face unsustainable pressures to take on responsibilities
- the development needs of individuals or groups are rarely approached systematically, with the result that they are less effective than they could be
- progression paths, career opportunities and qualification systems are all in their infancy thus limiting the options and potentials of many.

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The views of residents and professionals who took part in the focus groups can be summed up under three main headings:

- Information – what’s happening, how can we get involved¹
- Communication – how can we communicate directly with other people in similar positions about what they are doing and what works
- Recognition and support - how can we be supported as we become more involved, how can we find out how we can move forward, how can we get recognition for the work we’ve done and the skills we’ve acquired and how can we use this to move onto further and higher education as well as to employment in regeneration and related fields.

The lack of recognition and support creates two problems. First, there is a glass ceiling that seems to stand in the way of residents moving up the employment scale into the sorts of posts usually filled by graduates. Second, there is the leaking of talent and experience as residents are burned up by hyper-activity, resign as board or trust members or simply fail to realise their potential.

Why is this a cause for concern? The long-term goal of neighbourhood renewal strategy is the creation of sustainable communities, with effective local leadership, capable of managing improved public services and generating new sources of wealth and employment. With many New Deal for Communities projects already into their fourth year, time is running out for the creation of active communities, locally led. Residents are a vital resource that merits careful husbandry.

Despite the diversity of local communities, there was a surprising degree of convergence in the views expressed to us by residents and regeneration professionals. Indeed, they expressed a strongly held conviction that the overall purpose of a support framework should be resident empowerment. We detected an anxiety that references to skills and knowledge will lead to attempts by mainstream education and training providers to re-market formal learning programmes that have failed in the past. As the Policy Action Team reports demonstrated, there is often a lack of understanding between poor communities and education service providers.

Way Forward

(see section 5 of the report)

Community empowerment, therefore, is the central objective of the support framework proposed here with a long-term view to influential networks of residents leading sustainable communities. The final section sets out

- Success criteria for a recognition framework
- A Learning Curve approach
- Principles for a recognition framework

¹ A finding endorsed by a parallel study for GOWM by University of Central England (October 2002), *Skills and Knowledge: the Development of Local Learning Plans*.

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- Proposals for a recognition framework and for improving support for residents
- A plan for implementation
- Next Steps: detailing the priorities for local and regional action

Context

Background

The active engagement of local residents is an indispensable condition for success in the government's neighbourhood renewal strategy. The Learning Curve² proposes a systematic approach to meeting the learning and development needs of residents and all the other main groups involved in regeneration. It puts forward a set of skills, knowledge and behaviours that will form the basis of local learning plans developed by New Deal for Communities and other regeneration initiatives, by local strategic partnerships and by government offices. Noting that existing arrangements are unsatisfactory, it proposes a learning programme for neighbourhood renewal (Action 8):

- The NRU proposes working with its regional and local partners to*
- develop occupational standards and vocational qualifications in neighbourhood renewal*
 - investigate ways of validating experience in neighbourhood renewal;*
 - accredit learning providers offering programmes in neighbourhood renewal;*
 - establish bursaries in neighbourhood renewal, targeted at residents, for programmes delivered through accredited learning providers; and*
 - develop current neighbourhood renewal training material into exemplary training packages*

The purpose of this project is to explore the implications of this commitment and spell out how it can be practically implemented. The project, which was commissioned by Government Office West Midlands on behalf of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, was carried out by NIACE, the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education during February and March 2003. A forum attended by those consulted in the course of the study took place on 1 April to consider the findings and to begin to draw conclusions. The study was carried out by Martin Yarnit. Focus groups were set up and facilitated by Dilbagh Dhani.

The central objective of the project has been to devise ways to recognise the achievements of residents, for as the Learning Curve notes:

There are no national occupational standards and associated vocational qualifications in neighbourhood renewal, nor means of validating the experience gained by residents. Not everyone will want a vocational qualification, but there is no provision for those who do. (p36)

At stake is the need to improve residents' employment prospects:

² Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002)

The learning framework will provide a means through which work done voluntarily by residents can be valued and accredited in a way that helps give access to the employment market.³

This may well mean tackling ‘the restrictions imposed by professional or qualification standards agencies. Pathways need to be established to provide opportunities to become ‘para professionals’, assisting professionals in their jobs as a way in to entering employment in local services. The engagement of teaching assistants in schools has been a good example of this approach. A second example is the Chartered Institute of Housing’s proposals to enable residents to validate experience in order to obtain professional status and employment in Registered Social Landlords’.

Discrimination is another employment issue that also needs to be addressed. It arose in several of our interviews and in the Focus Groups. At root, there is the class dimension that affects many of the people living in deprived communities, sometimes occurring as postcode discrimination. Overlaid onto this is race and gender discrimination.

Opportunities and Building Blocks

There has rarely been a better moment for such a project for several reasons:

- Finally, there is a long-term commitment by government to neighbourhood renewal, with unprecedentedly extended funding timescales of up to ten years
- There is a firm commitment in policy terms to putting residents at the heart of regeneration
- Funding for learning and development is commensurate with the scale of the task, from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the Deprived Communities Learning Fund and so on
- Employment prospects for residents with developed skills in regeneration are rosy – providing they can break through the glass ceiling.

Residents gaining jobs in regeneration projects are still too few, and those gaining senior management and strategic management posts fewer still. The glass ceiling that limits residents’ employment prospects will not be easily removed.

In fact, the task of strengthening resident engagement and capacity as well as improving their job prospects is likely to be greatly aided by a new approach

- The Learning Curve: this offers a systematic approach to training for a new industry, addressing the learning needs of all participants, drawing

³ The Learning Curve

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heavily on a growing understanding of what works (evidence-based practice)

- The Learning Curve's commitment to learning from residents' experience: this is a hard-headed and unromantic stance - *residents don't necessarily know best but they often know better*
- Local skills and knowledge plans: systematic planning to meet the development needs of all the parties to neighbourhood
- Forums and Networks: the sharing of know-how, the building of networks through organisations such as NIACE, RAWM, Embrace and Community First (H+W)

How the Project was Carried out

Stakeholders

The first step was to identify the stakeholders, those with a vital interest in the outcome of the project and with a contribution to make to it. Interviews were carried out with many of these, 18 in all, mainly face to face (see list in appendix). The purpose of interviews was to

- Elicit views on the proposed recognition framework
- Identify relevant developments

Audit

The purpose of the audit was to identify relevant developments, principally in the West Midlands, which should be taken into account in devising a recognition framework including new or existing qualifications, learning programmes and learning providers. The audit also identified relevant policy developments such as the LSC's work on recognising and recording achievement in non-accredited learning (henceforth RARPA).

Focus Groups

Focus Groups were run with two NDCs and one NMI. Varying numbers of residents and professionals took part. The purpose was to hear direct from residents and those working closely with them about the measures that would strengthen their capacity to contribute to neighbourhood renewal.

Project Development

The project principals⁴ met twice to discuss progress and to guide the development of proposals. They met once before the Forum (see below) and once again shortly afterwards. As usual, much of the discussion also took place by phone and email. There were also discussions with NRU staff on the direction of the project on a number of occasions.

Forum

⁴ Paul Cave (GOWM), Ann Selby and Cheryl Turner (NIACE), Martin Yarnit and Dilbagh Dhami.

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To gain the contribution of those consulted through interviews and focus groups, a Forum was held on 1 April at the Orange Studio, Birmingham, to feed back the key findings from the study and to promote debate about the way forward. Seventeen people took part including a number of residents, practitioners and representatives of GOWM, the LSC (Birmingham and Solihull) and the NRU. Participants expressed a strong desire to maintain a connection with the project and its outcomes. They have all had the opportunity to comment on a draft version of this report.

Recognition Framework

The purpose of this study is to develop a recognition framework for residents' involvement in regeneration.

What does this mean? Simply, it is a system for recognising or giving credit for personal and organisational development and achievement arising out of involvement in regeneration. Concretely, such a system would comprise a number of elements. The Learning Curve suggests what these should be in broad terms. The table below lists these elements together with our comments on their significance as a means of defining them more closely.

Recognition Framework: A Scoping Exercise

What the Learning Curve Proposes	Comment
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<i>Investigate ways of validating experience in neighbourhood renewal</i>	There needs to be a system for identifying, measuring and giving recognition to the achievements and development experienced by individual residents and groups of residents (<i>learning outcomes</i> in the jargon)
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<i>Develop occupational standards and vocational qualifications in neighbourhood renewal</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. These achievements need to be related to the skills, knowledge and behaviour framework set out in the Learning Curve which needs to be defined as occupational standards for neighbourhood renewal.2. Criteria need to be set for assessing residents' achievements against those standards.3. Vocational qualifications need to be established or developed from existing qualifications that will provide recognition for residents' achievements, that carry employer esteem, are properly regulated, fit with the emerging National Qualifications Framework, meet LSC funding criteria and open up pathways to employment.
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<i>Develop neighbourhood renewal</i>	<i>current renewal</i> Learning programmes leading to the qualifications above need to be developed and approved ...
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*training material into
exemplary training packages*

*Accredit learning providers
offering programmes in
neighbourhood renewal* ...and learning providers accredited to deliver them.

*Establish bursaries in
neighbourhood renewal,
targeted at residents, for
programmes delivered through
accredited learning providers* Support packages need to be targeted at residents to enable them to complete approved programmes.

So, to summarise, the elements of a recognition framework that need to be identified are:

1. A system for identifying, measuring and giving recognition to learning outcomes ie the achievements and development experienced by individual residents and groups of residents.
2. A set of occupational standards based on the skills, knowledge and behaviours framework, at a range of levels from entry or introductory to advanced, in line with the levels laid down in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).⁵ These should include an element of flexibility so that, as NIACE has argued, 'employers could ensure that a proportion of each qualification offered to its employees could be customised to meet their needs [whilst being]subject to the quality assurance arrangements of an awarding body; and ... related to national standards'.⁶
3. A set of criteria for assessing residents' achievements against those standards.
4. Vocational qualifications that are newly established or developed from existing qualifications that will provide recognition for residents' achievements, that carry employer esteem, are properly regulated, fit with the emerging National Qualifications Framework, meet LSC funding criteria and open up pathways to employment **but that are optional** (see Recognition and Qualifications below)⁷

⁵ For example, Paulo, the national training organisation, defines the levels for community development work thus: level 2 – people working within their community, paid or unpaid, in an assisting or supporting role; level 3 – for people with a fairly wide experience of community development work, working on their own initiative with responsibility for their own work and for providing guidance and support for others; level 4 – for people with several years' experience, who are developing a team, whose work focuses on advising or supporting others and who have responsibility for evaluation of policy development (Paulo (2003) *National Occupational Standards for Community Development Work*, p.9)

⁶ Response to QCA.

⁷ In England, only courses accredited by the QCA – the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority – can be funded by the LSC – the Learning and Skills Council.

5. Approved learning programmes which may be accredited, leading to the above qualifications for those who want them, or non-accredited but with parity of esteem with qualifications (see below: Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-accredited Learning).
6. Accredited learning providers who meet the quality standards of the Common Inspection Framework
7. Support packages including bursaries to enable individual residents and groups to qualify.

Internal Considerations

There are some vital considerations that need to be taken into account as we begin to design the recognition framework. (Others, arising from the fieldwork for this project, will be explored later.) The first are internal, raised by the Learning Curve.

Recognition and Qualifications

Recognition implies a broader purpose than a more conventional qualification framework. It implies that there are a number of ways in which achievements can be recognised such as by peer approval, through public acclaim, through incentives or honoraria as well as through paper qualifications. There may indeed be a recognition process of learning outcomes without any form of accreditation. (See below: Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-accredited Learning.)

Learning from Action and Informal Learning

The Learning Curve emphasises the importance of a variety of forms of learning that will meet the needs of participants, including learning from action and informal learning. It also reminds us of the findings of the Policy Action Team on Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal about the inadequacy of much formal provision.

Terms like learning programme and course are used in this study interchangeably to mean an experience giving rise to achievement, development and learning. These terms in some cases are used to refer to conventional programmes of study with qualifications and curricula.

Collective and Individual Achievement

A key difference with most other recognition frameworks is that this one will need to be able to take account of the achievements and development not just of individuals but also of groups of residents.

Passporting

The required recognition framework should unlock a number of doors including access to employment, because qualifications enjoy employer esteem, and funding because courses are accredited and providers approved. A central objective for the NRU is to

- *encourage public sector employers to make recruitment processes more flexible in order to provide pathways for residents to take up employment in neighbourhood services;*
- *working with Groundwork and other local regeneration partners to develop practical ways to provide residents with work experience and mentoring in the workplace, equipping them to obtain jobs with neighbourhood service providers.⁸*

One way of doing that is through a placement programme that will

enable participants to apply the learning to real experience of working in deprived communities. The benefit of this is the real experience gained and the opportunity to gain future employment within placement bodies.⁹

External Considerations

There are also a number of considerations that are posed by developments external to the Learning Curve and the NRU that are likely to impact on any arrangements made for residents.¹⁰ These are principally to do with the national debate about qualifications.

The QCA is currently trying to bring some order to an incoherent qualifications system that has grown piecemeal:

Qualifications admitted to the framework will fall within one of three categories - general, vocation-related/vocational and occupational, the occupational focus of qualifications increasing as one moves across the framework from general to occupational. Qualifications will also be assigned to one of six levels - Entry level, plus Levels 1-5 - the levels being distinguished by the degree of knowledge, skills and understanding, autonomy, analysis and creative thinking within the qualification.

⁸ The Learning Curve

⁹ The Learning Curve p.42

¹⁰ Is it worth pointing out that similar developments are taking place elsewhere in the UK. Scotland, in particular, is moving quickly to establish a framework for learning for regeneration. See for example Scottish Executive (2003) *Working and learning together to build stronger communities - Working draft guidance*, p.24

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Apart from the sheer quantity of qualifications, other key problems are the lack of public and employer understanding of the value of different types of qualifications and the traditionally lower standing for vocational qualifications.

The recently established Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) has a remit to improve the quality and take of vocational qualifications and to bring order to a highly confused picture. To add to the complications, SSDA industry bodies or Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are still being set up and currently sit alongside the previous National Training Organisations (NTOs).

Workforce Development

In the regeneration field, two NTOs have been working on a new qualification framework. Paulo is the NTO for community development, which is dominated by youth and community work and adult education. The Voluntary Sector NTO deals with a sector that includes paid employees as well as two types of unpaid work, volunteers and trustees. A key concern for the voluntary and community sector is the establishment of a qualifications system that enjoys employer esteem and support. This would parallel the long-established NJC qualifications in the youth and community field that do provide recognised pathways to employment and a career path.

Open College Network

A significant feature of the qualifications landscape is the development of a parallel system of accreditation through the Open College Network. OCN qualifications have grown up as a more user-friendly and flexible alternative to formal qualifications such as GCSEs and A levels, catering mainly for adults in community settings.

The strength of OCN – a principle worth incorporating in any recognition framework – is the direct link between activity and learning outcomes and the ability of learners and learning providers to collaborate closely on designing learning programmes and matching qualifications. A second important principle is peer-involvement in both the accreditation of learning programmes and the assessment of learners.

OCN qualifications are widely recognised by universities and colleges and provide access to degree and sub-degree courses. They have also been used extensively to accredit community development and neighbourhood renewal activity. The advantage of OCN qualifications is that they are readily created; the disadvantage is that there is a local patchwork that is not readily known of or recognised outside a limited area. The result is that similar qualifications and their accompanying learning programmes are being re-invented in different areas of the country, and that few of them provide a pathway to employment. Now the National Open College Network (NOCN) has announced an initiative in collaboration with colleges to streamline the system and to bring greater national recognition. Although it is too early to say what benefits this will bring, the initiative needs to be closely watched.

LSC and Non-Accredited Learning

Meanwhile, in a related part of the thicket, the LSC has been working with NIACE and LSDA to devise a method that could *'provide a reliable means of recognising and recording achievement in the absence of formal assessment linked to awards or qualifications in order to promote parity of esteem'*.¹¹

This would have two components:

- A system for recording learning outcomes
- A quality assurance system for ensuring the validity of the outcomes.

The method would have to

- reflect learners' needs
- combine initial assessment of learners' achievement with interim and final assessment of progress made
- meet the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework – the national inspection system for England run by ALI – the Adult Learning Inspectorate – and Ofsted

It is clear that, at best, this system *would* be more responsive to learners but there is a potential danger that the cost of achieving this could be a significant weight of record keeping for providers and learners alike. The result could be more flexible than accredited qualifications but perhaps as onerous if not more so than OCN accreditation. As NIACE notes in its response to the QCA:

*The lessons from the National Qualifications Framework to date are that current structures and procedures have over-emphasised rigour at the expense of responsiveness to need. In particular, NIACE would wish to see the development of far more responsive and flexible vocational qualifications targeted at adult learners.*¹²

However, there seems to be agreement that the main burden will fall on providers rather than learners to demonstrate the quality of outcomes. A major potential advantage would be to ease access to LSC funding.

The approach will be tested over the coming year in local trials. The earliest start for a national system is likely to be 2004-5.

This initiative should be set alongside the debate opened up by the LSC on the funding of adult learning. In an attempt to redefine priorities in adult learning, the LSC poses the need for a reform of the adult curriculum, mooting the possibility of a new unitised qualification at level 2 comprising 'a

¹¹ Learning and Skills Council (2003) 'LSC Position Paper on Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-accredited Learning', Quality and Standards Directorate, January

¹² From NIACE website:
<http://www.niace.org.uk/Organisation/advocacy/vocational/InitialSoundings.htm>
(31.3.03)

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broad skill set 'combined with 'scope for learners and employers to assemble training programmes... [that] ...best meet their needs'.¹³

Quality and Community Development

Quality is important from several points of view:

- For learners - To ensure that they get the best
- For providers – ALI approval is essential for LSC funding
- For employers – They know what the qualification represents
- For government - To ensure that public funds are supporting worthwhile provision.

Until recently, quality has tended to be defined in terms of the subject –based curriculum and individual learners. But how can quality be defined for community development or neighbourhood renewal purposes? ALI, the Adult Learning Inspectorate, has begun to address these questions. Not surprisingly, they report a certain timidity in defining success criteria in ways appropriate to specific contexts, such as regeneration.¹⁴ They offer the suggestion that whereas the success criteria – and therefore the quality parameters – for a conventional course might be in terms of the percentage gaining a qualification, in community development settings that could read instead as the degree of completion of a group learning plan.

Taken together with the LSC's policy on non-accredited learning, the new thinking in ALI could provide an important underpinning for the recognition of group learning in neighbourhood renewal.

Regional Skills and Knowledge Plans

Government Offices are charged with producing Skills and Knowledge Plans for Neighbourhood Renewal that build on those produced locally by Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

The West Midlands plan emphasises:

- support for LSPs, NDCs and Neighbourhood Management pilots
- the development of a Regional Centre of Excellence for Regeneration
- the development of complementary regeneration and community networks involving the voluntary and community sector
- the development of the skills and knowledge of civil servants
- the use of Neighbourhood Renewal Advisers
- the development of an on-line knowledge and good practice system

LSPs are expected to produce a local Skills and Knowledge programme to support regeneration. In practice, many have delegated this task to their 'local learning arm', the Learning Partnership eg in Wolverhampton. Learning Partnerships are well placed to carry out this role given their links with

¹³ *Funding Adult Learning: Technical Document* (2003), paragraph 60.

¹⁴ ALI Presentation, 'Leading and Managing for Quality', 3/8 April 2003 by Janet Swinney and Fred Brown.

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education providers, voluntary and community sector organisations and the Learning and Skills Council. The LSC strategic priorities include

*“playing an active role in building the capacity of people living in deprived neighbourhoods and to promote equality and social inclusion” and to “take a holistic view of how their contribution fits within the National Strategy for Neighbourhood renewal”*¹⁵

Learning Partnerships – again Wolverhampton is an example – have taken on the job of managing the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund (NLDCF) on behalf of their local Learning and Skills Council.

So, GOWM, LSPs, the LSC and Learning Partnerships are all stakeholders in the development of a recognition framework for regeneration, as is Advantage West Midlands, through its Regeneration Zone programme and the Regional Centre for Excellence.

¹⁵ Commitment letter by Secretary of State for Education and Employment to the Learning and Skills Councils, 9 November 2000

Findings

This section sets out the findings from the audit of current developments and from focus groups.

Audit of Current Developments

The audit revealed an exciting series of initiatives and policy developments promoted by the NRU, the LSC and other agencies as well as by the voluntary and community sector. These can be grouped under three headings:

- Neighbourhood Renewal Initiatives
- Deprived Communities Learning Fund (LSC)
- Learning Programmes and Qualifications

The overall picture is of flourishing developments, many of them offering effective solutions to regeneration problems, but weakened by lack of coherence and connection. In other words, too much is being done in isolation.

Neighbourhood Renewal Initiatives

Pathways to employment are strongly emphasised in the Learning Curve which describes developments with employers and learning providers in three fields: education, housing and health:

Pathways need to be established to provide opportunities to become ‘para professionals’, assisting professionals in their jobs as a way in to entering employment in local services. The engagement of teaching assistants in schools has been a good example of this approach. A second example is the Chartered Institute of Housing’s proposals to enable residents to validate experience in order to obtain professional status and employment in Registered Social Landlords.

A third example is the National Health Service “Skills Escalator” that seeks to attract a wider range of people to work within the NHS by offering a variety of step-on and step-off points. Traditional entry points such as registered professional staff are complemented by other entry routes such as cadet schemes and role conversion, attracting people in other careers who are seeking new challenges and drawing people back into the labour market. This offers the dual benefit of growing the NHS workforce whilst also tackling problems of longer-term unemployment and social exclusion, which have such a high correlation with poor health. It will enable people to start or further develop careers in the NHS, as young people starting out, in mid- or later-life or as a second career. Age, background and existing academic attainment will no longer be barriers to those with the potential and will to progress their careers. It will also enable the NHS to have a workforce that is more

*representative of local communities and to demonstrate the benefits of working in the NHS.*¹⁶

A number of initiatives along these lines are underway involving the Institute of Housing and Groundwork. In addition, resident consultancy as an approach is being piloted in a number of locations, including two in the West Midlands.

Deprived Communities Learning Fund (LSC)

This new stream of funding is designed to strengthen community capacity and quality of learning programmes in NRF areas. Much of the funding is going to develop the capacity of the voluntary and community sector. This builds on the funding of Community Empowerment Networks such as Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire and on regional umbrella bodies such as RAWM and Birmingham and Solihull LSC have developed a strategic and mainly infrastructural approach to the use of the Fund. Alongside it they have provided uplift funding (25% higher than the normal tariff) to enable providers such as colleges to meet community needs. Beneficiaries include young Pakistani and Irish people who are following a course as learning champions at Fircroft College. This is a rare case of a programme for residents that equates with the Learning Curve.

Learning Programmes and Qualifications

Existing learning programmes and qualifications are mainly focused on the development needs of the voluntary and community sector programmes for the sector rather than residents. However, there is a growing number of new university-based programmes, such as Staffordshire University's Community Practice Programme Awards and Graduate Certificates, that focus on individual development needs but these tend to be at level 3 and above, beyond the *immediate* reach of many residents.

Open College Network qualifications are the most widely available adult accreditation in the region and taken up by many residents.¹⁷ Some had collected an impressive sheaf of OCN certificates. Their advantages are that they are a way of combining competency and knowledge, are locally developed, are usually recognised by colleges and universities as an alternative to A levels and GCSEs, and involve an element of peer-assessment. OCN's main disadvantage is the lack of currency with employers.

Although NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) are clearly linked to national industry standards, are recognised by many employers and provide an element of recognition of prior learning and experience, there was little sign that they were being used by residents to accredit regeneration activity. This may reflect a separation between the voluntary and community sector that seems to use a wide range of accredited and non-accredited systems, and the

¹⁶ pp.44-45

¹⁷ See proposal 3 in the final section of this report on utilising existing NOCN units.

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regeneration sector that is more familiar with sector specific qualifications such as Institute of Housing or the City and Guilds Adult Teaching Certificate.

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Apparently useful qualifications such as the Community Volunteer Award offered by ASDAN that attracts LSC funding or the NVQ in community development were rarely mentioned in relation to resident development. One exception is Telford and Wrekin Council that is using the ASDAN Certificate with a volunteering course for

- Classroom assistants
- Learning mentors (with Shropshire LSC funding support/learning
- Brokers ie intermediaries between communities and mainstream services

On the other hand, there is a growing number of learning and development programmes that use a combination of bespoke and tailored qualifications, usually OCN. These include

- Apprenticeship programmes
- Resident consultancy
- Learning advocate/champion/ambassador training programmes
- Community research projects.

(see table below)

One example of programmes using a combination approach is the Coventry-based Adept scheme: residents can achieve an OCN qualification at level 3 and/or they can gain CATS (Credit Transfer System) credits towards a Coventry University qualification.

Finally, the Foyer Federation provides a model for the development of non-accredited learning that deserves much wider exposure. Through its Evidencing Change programme with the LSC, it is pioneering methods of recording achievement and personal change using individual learning plans, mentor support and skills for life including peer mediation skills. Quality assurance for this approach is provided by local colleges eg Ludlow College.

These do not add up to a coherent pattern of provision but they surely form the basis of one.

Stepping Stones to Employment? Apprenticeship and Other Regeneration Models

RegenSchool

Started in Sheffield, Apprentice works alongside now being considered experienced practitioner on a project as a model in other of their own choice. regions (eg Staffordshire LSC, University and other partners)

¹⁸ See the listing in *A Credit to Your Organisation*, Community First (2003), pp.32-34.

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Resident Consultancy	Pilot funded by DfES in six areas including Castle Vale HAT and Balsall Heath Forum, both in the West Midlands	Through these consultancies, residents offer advice and other consultancy services to other organisations in neighbourhood renewal. The Government is working with a number of residents' consultancies, to evaluate the various approaches being tried out in local communities. (Learning Curve p9) ¹⁹
Community Leadership Pilots	Cicero, Fircroft and other organisations	Emerged from Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal Report to provide leadership training in deprived communities. Wide range of activities and approaches as evaluation shows. ²⁰ Fircroft course involves 15 young people in collaboration with British Pakistani Youth Forum on 10 week programme with OCN accreditation through learner diaries.
Adept	Founded in Coventry and now being developed in Stoke on Trent and Brighton	Stoke model based on ILM with participants paid £12000 for 15 months with OCN accreditation to level 3
Cicero	Founded in Sheffield and trialled at Fircroft College. Cicero groups exist throughout UK at 10 locations including Belfast and South Wales	Unemployed people – high proportion of them disabled and/or BME following conventional course linked to regeneration issues with a focus on the EU. Course includes study visit to Brussels.
PATH	Long established scheme for training BME people as housing professionals	Expensive – participants are employed as local authority trainees – but with impressive success rate.
Community Learning Assistants	Burngreave NDC	ILM programme that trains local unemployed people as community learning assistants – basic skills or IAG specialisms. Week split between qualification programme in FE college and learning on the job.
Regeneration Apprentices/Trainees	Similar schemes in Derwent (Derby) and Coventry NDC	Similar to above but in generic development role
WEA Shropshire voluntary advisers	Similar schemes throughout WEA	Unpaid role in developing learning programmes under supervision of paid staff, working towards teaching certificate (City and Guilds 7307 ²¹) – opportunities for residents to become involved in managing education programmes
Women's Research Training	Based at Birmingham CVS	Practical programme with no tests or exams to help women improve their community research techniques But OCN accreditation at up to level 3.

¹⁹ Taylor, M. and others (2002) *Exploring the Field of Residents' Consultancy*, for DfES and NRU

²⁰ NIACE (2003) *Community Leadership Training Pilots: Interim Findings*

²¹ A time-honoured route for volunteers to employment

Mainstream Service Telford
Brokers

Childcare and other expenses can be met.

local people as bridge between mainstream service providers and local communities – currently volunteers but could lead to employment.

Positive assessments of several of these suggest that they should be more widely adopted as models for development, perhaps linked with the Modern Apprenticeship, a move many employers in the community development field would support.²²

An Assessment

Although the Learning Curve and related initiatives are already promoting a more vigorous and coherent response to residents' development needs, the overall picture is still patchy four years into the New Deal programme.

Interviews with practitioners and desk research revealed several problems:

- Haphazard pattern of provision, accreditation systems and progression routes for residents involved with regeneration
- Lack of targeting: Fircroft College was unusual in its level of differentiating regeneration needs, appointing development workers for rural areas and for Asian women, and for working closely with young people. The Foyer Federation provided several examples of enterprising work with marginalized young people.
- Whilst there is a general lack of focus on people development in regeneration, it is particularly stark in the case of BME communities which make up a disproportionate percentage of all people living in NRF areas²³
- No systematic identification of basic skill needs amongst active residents even though the evidence suggests that the level in deprived neighbourhoods must be high
- Surprisingly little use of ICT for resident learning, networking or simply for keeping people informed
- Over-dependence on OCN qualifications and rarely above level 2
- Restricted access to management, leadership and advanced programmes reflecting weak links between regeneration projects and further and higher education

Focus Groups

Despite the diversity of local communities, there was a surprising degree of convergence in the views expressed to us by residents and regeneration

²² See the survey carried out by Paulo: *Modern Apprenticeships in the Community-Based Learning and Development Sector – Survey of Employer Attitudes* Current age limits would need to be relaxed.

²³ See the data and analysis in the recent Cabinet Office report, *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market*(<http://www.strategy.gov.uk/2003/ethnic/report/report.pdf>)

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professionals. Indeed, they expressed a strongly held conviction that the overall purpose of a support framework should be resident empowerment. We detected an anxiety that references to skills and knowledge will lead to attempts by mainstream education and training providers to re-market formal learning programmes that have failed in the past. As the Policy Action Team reports demonstrated, there is often a lack of understanding between poor communities and education service providers. The Learning Curve is conscious of the limitations of some formal education programmes and argues for a change of approach coupled with a re-evaluation of learning by doing and learning by observing.²⁴

The Focus Groups suggested a number of big challenges:

- Identifying resident and professional worker learning needs
- Matching local residents to proper employment related training and development opportunities, and then provide intensive support to ensure success
- Shifting traditional delivery channels from supply to demand based approaches
- Developing new delivery channels – web-based, peer group based, locality based

More specifically, their views can be summed up under three main headings:

- Information – what's happening, how can we get involved²⁵
- Communication – how can we communicate directly with other people in similar positions about what they are doing and what works
- Recognition and support - how can we be supported as we become more involved, how can we find out how we can move forward, how can we get recognition for the work we've done and the skills we've acquired and how can we use this to move onto further and higher education as well as to employment in regeneration and related fields. A voluntary worker on a Birmingham estate has made a name for his work developing girls under-14 football. He has local recognition but there is no way that he can translate that into a formal qualification or a passport to employment.

Information is a basic requirement if residents are to make informed decisions about how they want to get involved. It encompasses an A-Z of local services and regeneration projects as well as a menu of volunteering opportunities. The next stage in the ladder of engagement is about communication, with other residents and with professionals, learning about what works, and how to take projects forward. Residents had a lot to say about recognition and support.

In every Focus Group, we were left in no doubt that information and communication were the basics for engagement. But once engaged, residents had clear views about their entitlement to proper support and recognition for

²⁴ See section on How people learn in chapter 3.

²⁵ A finding endorsed by a parallel study for GOWM by University of Central England (October 2002), *Skills and Knowledge: the Development of Local Learning Plans*.

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their contribution and achievements. As one participant in Newcastle told us, 'We are dedicated volunteers. We should be getting more attention from local organisations'. There was some bitterness about the lack of financial recognition for their hard work and the assumption that they would be content to continue as unpaid volunteers: 'They want resident expertise, but are not willing to pay for it'.

They raised difficult issues too about how to prevent burn-out, because people were over-used, and drop out because of loss of momentum and direction. They drew attention to the lack of financial rewards for their work, and to assumptions that limited their development, especially if they were women and non-white.

On the other hand, the Focus Groups provided a wealth of ideas about how learning programmes should be constructed and their content that have been incorporated into the final section of this report. (See some of this in the Appendix.) Some of the points are set out in the box below. A crucial point that we heard several times was about matching programmes to people rather than the other way around and drawing out the learning dimension of people's experience of regeneration.

More surprisingly, perhaps, we also learned about the importance that some residents and those who work with them attach to analytical and strategic skills – what one Forum participant referred to as 'graduateness'. A NDC Board Chair (who described herself proudly as a 'local working class girl') had enrolled for a part-time degree course so that she could draw out of her experience the thinking skills she observed in the professionals she worked alongside.

Towards a Learning Programme for Residents

-points from the Focus Groups

- Individual support and learning plans (mentors, IT equipment, advice and guidance)
- Internet access for all households and broadband (cost £3m)
- Training for local people on understanding public services, and on how to deal with bureaucracy
- More visits to see how it's done where it works
- Training in communication skills, confidence building, team building for residents
- IT skills / basic skills
- Signposting advisers
- Cyber café type learning centre in shopping area for open use on a drop in basis
- Good practice resources and practical tool kits on the internet for Members of NDC boards to access whenever and in a useful format with really useful stuff
- Creche facilities
- Subsidised transport or bring training – FE and HE - onto the estate

- Introduce similar approach to Connections – regular, personal contact for adults

The Focus Groups and the Forum underlined the value of talking to residents in depth about how a recognition framework should be constructed. There was praise for learning and support programmes that had been constructed from the bottom up, probably using labour intensive methods.

Conclusions

An audit of existing arrangements coupled with face to face discussions with residents and regeneration practitioners has revealed the patchiness of current support arrangements for residents and pinpointed the measures that need to be put in place.

There are three main defects with the current arrangements:

- not enough residents are being drawn into activity, so that those who are active sometimes face unsustainable pressures to take on responsibilities
- the development needs of individuals or groups are rarely approached systematically, with the result that they are less effective than they could be
- progression paths, career opportunities and qualification systems are all in their infancy thus limiting the options and potentials of many.

One consequence is the glass ceiling that seems to stand in the way of residents moving up the employment scale into the sorts of posts usually filled by graduates. In contrast, in education, where a great deal of thought has been given to tackling this problem, career paths are beginning to open up for parents who begin by helping out in the classroom, go on to get jobs as classroom assistants or community liaison workers and then qualify as teachers. Another consequence is the leaking of talent and experience as residents are burned up by hyper-activity, resign as board or trust members or simply fail to realise their potential.

Why is this a cause for concern? The long-term goal of neighbourhood renewal strategy is the creation of sustainable communities, with effective local leadership, capable of managing improved public services and generating new sources of wealth and employment. With many New Deal for Communities projects already into their fourth year, time is running out for the creation of active communities, locally led. Residents are a vital resource that merits careful husbandry.

Way Forward

This section sets out

- Success criteria for a recognition framework
- A Learning Curve approach
- Principles for a recognition framework
- Proposals for a recognition framework and for improving support for residents
- Implementation: local, regional and national priorities grouped
- Next Steps: detailing the priorities for local and regional action

The outcomes of this study have been significantly shaped by discussions with residents and the professionals who work alongside them. This has led us in three directions that were not predicted at the outset.

First, it has created the conditions for a continuing dialogue that we believe will help to ensure that the outcomes will meet residents' needs and that they will feel ownership and commitment as a result. If we believe in the value of self-directed learning, then this is clearly a vital result.

Second, it has led to an emphasis on the importance of peer-learning and – development. We outline below an approach – the concept of a community of practice – that embodies this emphasis.

Third, discussions with residents highlighted the inadequacy of existing support arrangements across the region. A high quality and continuing system for supporting residents' involvement is essential if their development is to be effective. That is why this study does not confine itself entirely to recognition frameworks. We touch briefly on the components of an accompanying support framework later in this section.

What We Are Trying to Achieve: Success Criteria

Before we consider the principles and proposals for a recognition framework it is as well to remind ourselves what we are trying to achieve and how to judge success in achieving it.

Our aim is to develop a framework for the West Midlands that

1. *Structures* resident involvement as activists, leaders, experts and emerging practitioners and helps to realise their potential
2. *Recognises* residents' achievements individually and collectively
3. Helps build a resident learning network
4. Provides a passport to further learning, community activity and employment
5. Offers a national model

How will we know that these objectives have been realised? There should be

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1. Growing number of residents involved in more and different forms of community activity eg music, radio
2. Growing numbers going onto further learning
3. Growing numbers moving into jobs in regeneration and mainstream services (plus private/social firms)
4. More effective learning and mentoring systems
5. A regional recognition framework, locally accessed and delivered, adopted nationally
6. Clear progression frameworks for learning and jobs
7. *And long-term: influential networks of residents leading sustainable communities*

Community empowerment, therefore, is the central objective of the recognition framework proposed here with a long-term view to influential networks of residents leading sustainable communities. This forms part of a strong value base, three other aspects of which should be mentioned here:

Respect and Cohesion - residents have stressed to us in focus groups and other encounters the importance of according respect to each other (regardless of obvious external differences such as skin colour, age and gender) and to enjoy the respect of professionals. This runs counter to the emphasis on deficiencies and problems that is used to justify the neighbourhood renewal strategy. It involves facing up honestly to difference and working through it together. Respect and cohesion is an outlook that should run throughout the support programme.

Ownership - if empowerment is the beginning and end of the process, then residents must be involved from the beginning in shaping the support framework.

Balancing individual and community benefit - the support programme is aimed at groups and individuals because groups are important in initiating activity and achieving impact, processes to which individuals are central. Some providers' experience is that groups learning together produces a more effective learning:

*Learning works best when a group come in from an organisation or when small community organisations can be grouped together. Links are more easily made between their experience and the learning.*²⁶

The Learning Curve Approach: A Community of Practice

*...one of the most important insights from our research is that knowledge that is actually implemented is much more to be acquired from learning by doing than from learning by reading, listening or even thinking.*²⁷

²⁶ Fiona Larden, Principal, Fircroft College, interview 3 March 2003

²⁷ *Knowing-doing Gap: How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action*
[Jeffrey Pfeffer](#), [Robert Sutton](#), Harvard Business School Press

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This statement could be from the Learning Curve. In fact, it is from two of the leading lights of the Learning by Doing school of management development. A key finding of their work is the importance of pooling and networking knowledge assets, an approach that is referred to as a community of practice. A consistent finding from our interviews with residents and practitioners – sometimes one and the same, of course – has been a preference for learning from each other and learning from practice.

A community of practice draws on the knowledge and skills of all its members to aid the learning of all and to improve professional effectiveness. Typically, and in this case, it draws on a variety of techniques to achieve its impact including:

- Networking for discussion, information and the exchange of effective practice
- Mentoring and coaching
- Self-assessment
- Self-directed learning
- Shadowing and work visits
- Learning sets

Research suggests that this approach works by

- Drawing on the self-motivation and self-interest of participants
- Transfer of skills and knowledge in conditions under which it can be made best use of e.g. learning on the job: to quote two key authorities:
- Encouraging a collective process of reflection leading to action.²⁸

There is an obvious connection here with neighbourhood renewal even though the thinking emerges from a very different habitat, of management development.

The key features of a community of learners programme would include:

1. Flexible response to individual need – there is no simple categorisation of the skills and experience of residents– taking account of the constraints faced by participants as well as the assets they bring to the programme
2. Individual support for each participant
3. Using the skills and knowledge of residents and their mentors and managers to drive the programme using peer review²⁹, learning sets, shadowing and mentoring on-line
4. A clear relationship with the newly established Community Network for New Deal Residents³⁰

²⁸ See: [*Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity \(Learning in Doing\)*](#) ~ Etienne Wenger, Cambridge University Press, 2000; *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*, Peter Senge, London: Random House Business Books, 1999

²⁹ Peer review has emerged as a powerful tool in improving and transmitting practice in local government. See: 'Peer Pressures', *Guardian Society*, 9 April 2003, p.11

³⁰ See *Regeneration and Renewal*, 4 April 2003

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5. Rooting learning in everyday practice in order to affect directly performance in line with the best practice in work-based learning (school and college-based teacher training; National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships, Middlesex University and LSDA leadership and management programmes)
6. Specialist inputs in key skills such as project management, and in key areas such as neighbourhood regeneration and Skills for Life
7. Accreditation as an option.

None of this contradicts the Learning Curve approach; on the contrary, it indicates how it might be implemented. It does however place a stronger emphasis on learner-driven and informal approaches that corroborate the view expressed in the Learning Curve of the importance of learning by doing and learning by observing and that formal learning needs to change in some important ways.³¹

Recognition Frameworks: Principles

So what kind of recognition framework are we looking for? Ideally, it should

- enable an improved understanding of effective practice by encouraging self-directed learning
- take account of individual and collective needs, interests and starting points – and avoid putting people through achievement hoops again
- take account of learning by doing and informal learning
- Be light touch and transparent, promoting involvement rather than putting people off, easily understood and operated
- recognise achievement and progress, and reward effort
- support achievement in accredited and non-accredited learning
- meet the quality standards of the Common Inspection Framework so that learning outcomes have public standing and learning programmes can be publicly funded
- enable residents to progress to further or higher education if they so desire, enable residents to move on to employment, especially in regeneration or related activity.

Proposals

Our definition of a recognition framework is a system for identifying, measuring and giving recognition to learning outcomes ie the achievements and development experienced by individual residents and groups of residents. The recognition framework should cater for the resident roles mentioned in the Learning Curve - community leaders, experts and emerging practitioners plus initial engagement as a volunteer.

The framework proposed here combines national and regional elements for status and coherence with local delivery for flexibility and responsiveness. To

³¹ See the section, How do people learn, in Chapter 3.

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enable residents break through the glass ceiling, there must also be a stress on quality and public standing of qualifications, bearing in mind the high order skills and knowledge required for community leadership roles.³²

The key elements are set out below. In each case, the proposal defines

- *What* needs to be done
- *Why* it is needed
- *How* it should be carried out
- *Who*, or rather which agency, should take the lead
- *Where*: an element that needs to be carried out at local, sub-regional, regional or national level
- *How much*: assessment of cost implications - £ = thousands; ££ = tens of thousands; £££ = in excess of £50000; ££££ = £100,000 or more

What	1 Occupational Standards A set of occupational standards based on the skills, knowledge and behaviours framework, at a range of levels from entry or introductory to advanced, in line with the levels laid down in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). ³³
Why	Residents, practitioners, regeneration agencies, funding bodies and employers all need to sign up to the occupational standards for what is effectively a new industrial sector. Everyone will then know what is required to do a variety of jobs at a range of levels.
How	Defining occupational standards is a specialist task that will require time and resources to complete and will need to be carried out in stages with key roles or clusters of activities prioritised for early development. There will be a set of standards for the specialised fields of activity of neighbourhood renewal such as worklessness/employment and health. There will also need to be standards for generic or cross-cutting activities such as project

³²

Community Leaders, according to the Learning Curve, will require the following skills

- Strategic skills to establish the vision and priorities
- Organisational performance management
- Probity and stewardship of resources
- Listening
- Negotiation
- Consensus building, mediation
- Conflict resolution and management
- Communication

³³ For example, Paulo, the national training organisation, defines the levels for community development work thus: level 2 – people working within their community, paid or unpaid, in an assisting or supporting role; level 3 – for people with a fairly wide experience of community development work, working on their own initiative with responsibility for their own work and for providing guidance and support for others; level 4 – for people with several years' experience, who are developing a team, whose work focuses on advising or supporting others and who have responsibility for evaluation of policy development (Paulo (2003) *National Occupational Standards for Community Development Work*, p.9)

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	management and appraisal.
Who	NTOs or SSCs for relevant fields with a lead NTO to coordinate
Where	National
How much	££££

What	2 Assessment Criteria A set of criteria for assessing residents' achievements against those standards for specific learning programmes
Why	Residents will need to know what is expected of them to achieve a given standard. Assessment criteria should form the basis for individual development programmes (IDP – see below)
How	Assessment criteria will need to be derived from approved learning programmes (see below)
Who	Accredited learning providers
Where	Local or sub-regional
How much	£

What	3 Vocational Qualifications Vocational qualifications that are newly established or developed from existing qualifications that will provide recognition for residents' and practitioners achievements, that carry employer esteem, are properly regulated, fit with the emerging National Qualifications Framework, meet LSC funding criteria and open up pathways to employment and management grades but that are optional . ³⁴ Plus progression maps for sub-sectors such as health and housing.
Why	Simplify current mess and avoid the introduction of new, weak qualifications. Progression maps enable residents to grasp the full range of

³⁴ It is worth quoting part of NIACE's response to the QCA about the NQF: 'The key messages that need to be communicated about vocational qualifications are that they are accessible, relevant to both current and potential future employment, different from school-based qualifications, and are capable of being achieved through a variety of different methods that can be fitted in and around the other commitments of adult learners.'

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	possibilities and how they can take advantage of them
How	<p>Unitised and modular to promote achievement and progress and to enable residents and practitioners generally to gain recognition for their achievements on a step by step basis.</p> <p>Combining competency-based assessment (how well tasks are performed) and knowledge-based assessment (testing understanding and analytical skills).</p> <p>Able to take account of prior learning and experience</p> <p>Capacity for updating to meet new needs.³⁵</p> <p>Mapped against progression routes for sub-sectors of regeneration eg education³⁶</p> <p>A useful first step would be to search the database of existing NOCN units to identify those that are relevant to Learning Curve elements, to identify gaps against the Learning Curve, with a view to gaining QCA approval for an NOCN neighbourhood renewal learning and skills package.</p>
Who	Initiative led by NTO or SSC in collaboration NTOs/SSCs for the regeneration sector
Where	National
How much	££££ or more over a three to five year period

What	4 Non-accredited Pathway
Why	Vocational qualifications are not sought by all residents. Some prefer a simple statement that they have completed a programme or achieved a learning outcome. Non-accredited pathways may also be the appropriate way forward for group learning.
How	The trials of the non-accredited learning pathways (RARPA) should include neighbourhood renewal settings with a view to establishing a format that could be used nationally.
Who	LSDA/NIACE on behalf of the LSC nationally
Where	Pilots across England
How much	££ initially

³⁵ As NIACE suggests, 'one way of enhancing the final quality of the qualifications offered to learners would be to create a more open and shared process of development of individual qualifications, in which all interested parties were involved. This could be managed primarily through a web-based facility, parts of which could be password protected, which would allow a wide range of interest groups to contribute to qualifications development...Such a facility could play an important ongoing role in the continuous updating and improvement of qualifications in response to changing demands'. (Response to QCA.

³⁶ See classroom assistants and other paraprofessionals map drawn by Stoke on Trent LEA as a model.

What	5 Approved Learning Programmes Approved learning programmes that may be accredited, leading to the above qualifications for those who want them, or non-accredited but with parity of esteem with qualifications
Why	Learning programmes should be locally determined so that they reflect local needs even if they contain core or common modules and rest on the community of practice approach
How	Agreed and evolving list established for each region by GO and LSCs in collaboration with NRU and voluntary and community sector, drawing on existing programmes (wherever they may be) and with new programmes funded to fill identified gaps.
Who	GO to take lead; NRU to establish evolving national list to avoid duplication
Where	Regions
How much	Depends on cost of plugging gaps but at least ££

What	6 Accredited Learning Providers Accredited learning providers who meet the quality standards of the Common Inspection Framework
Why	Important to build capacity and quality of a number of providers in each region – some operating nationally – and promote collaboration between providers.
How	As above + regional programme of quality improvement
Who	As above with LSCs supporting regional quality improvement programmes
Where	Regions
How much	££

What	7 Regional Regeneration Support Framework Collaboration between providers, key agencies and voluntary and community sector to provide strategic lead for development of recognition framework and to drive quality improvement
Why	Pool resources of voluntary, community and statutory sectors to develop a quality assured framework for the region rather than expecting hard pressed regeneration projects to go it alone and to ensure that effective practice is shared more broadly across the region
How	Set up clearing house with light touch coordination and funding for improvement programmes linked to or within Regional Centre of Excellence (possibly a Centre for Vocational Excellence in the further education sector)
Who	An LSC in each region
Where	Regions
How much	££

What	8 Individual Development Programme (IDP) IDP comprises a record of achievement with a programme of activities drawn up with and assessed with a mentor expressing the personal preferences of a resident or group of residents
Why	Self-directed learners need a route map that enables them to make progress. The IDP will map progress and set bearings for new achievements. IDPs will also form a key element of the emerging RRPANL approach
How	Every resident who becomes involved in regeneration activity should be allocated a mentor (see below) who will help to devise the IDP. Residents should be able to draw up joint IDPs that reflect individual and joint needs eg arising from a shared project.
Who	Regeneration agencies as part of Skills and Knowledge Plans
Where	Local
How much	£

What	9 Support Packages Support packages including bursaries to enable individual residents and groups to qualify.
Why	Findings from this project point to the need for a comprehensive support package to enable residents to realise their capacity and to overcome barriers to progress To quote the Learning Curve: <i>One of the important lessons for neighbourhood renewal is how to sustain the involvement of residents. Local Strategic Partnerships and others need to develop mentoring and support mechanisms for those people joining a partnership board, for example through high quality training in relevant skills and a training allowance.</i>
How	1 Local guide for residents about local services, regeneration programmes and opportunities for becoming involved so that they can make informed choices. 2 Mentor programme to provide 1:1 support including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting advice on volunteering, employment and learning opportunities • Basic skills diagnosis and advice • Developing an individual (or group) development plan to provide direction and purpose • Advice on overcoming barriers to participation and progression eg referring to specialist financial advice

	<p>3 Resident Support Network Face to face and virtual network to provide mutual support and exchange of ideas and experience linked to national Community Network and community of practice approach.</p> <p>4 Incentives and Awards A range of incentives and awards to improve recruitment and retention of volunteers and to underpin both non-accredited and accredited learning programmes eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bursaries to enable residents to access a broad range of development opportunities including residentials, visits abroad and work shadowing • Honoraria • Opportunities to take part in exciting activities eg video making for young people • Awards ceremonies to mark achievements
Who	Regeneration agencies
Where	Local
How much	££

Implementation

Much of the programme proposed above will need to be developed nationally and over an extended timeframe of three to five years. This applies especially to the work on occupational standards and vocational qualifications. But there is no reason why the local, regional and shorter term work cannot be commenced quickly. So what are the priorities here? We would propose a four-prong approach. The indicative costs in each case are approximations.

One

Implement *local* action on Individual Development Plans and Support Packages so that resident potential is better realised from now on. Make this the top priority so that a real difference is experienced by residents.

Proposals 8 and 9

Cost ££ in total

Two

At the same time, set up the *regional* regeneration support framework to improve coherence and coordination and to begin to set regional priorities.

Proposal 7

Cost ££

Three

Then, initiate *regional* action on learning programmes, providers and assessment criteria.

Proposals 5, 6 and 2

Cost ££ or £££ in total

Four

Commission the long-term *national* developments with their long lead-in times - occupational standards, vocational qualifications and non-accredited pathway - as soon as possible.

Proposals 1, 3 and 4

Cost ££££ or more

Next Steps

This final section considers in more detail how the local and regional proposals set out above can be taken forward. There is a logic to going about it in this way that is completely consistent with a resident-centred approach. It makes sense to begin to put in place the local and regional elements of the recognition framework that can then help to shape the implementation of the national part of the framework.

Regional Regeneration Support Framework To Improve Coherence And Coordination And To Begin To Set Regional Priorities

Proposal 7

Although it is still early days for the development of skills and knowledge plans, and there are some excellent examples of collaboration in the region, the overall picture is of unconnected initiatives, of agencies, providers and projects working in isolation. This not to argue that the time for experimenting is past but to pose the need for a framework towards which everyone can begin to work. In particular, there is a need for a quality framework for accredited and non-accredited learning. Sooner or later, all regeneration learning programmes will need to meet the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework as well as the Learning Curve, and it makes sense to set out with that perspective rather than to try to bundle it in through the back door later on.

What is required is a package of actions:

- Quality circles
- Quality improvement workshops
- Centre of Excellence.

Quality Circles

A tried and tested approach in industrial production management and in vocational educational, quality circles bring a team and collaborative approach to peer-assessment aimed at benchmarking practice against comparators and using comparative analysis to identify scope for improvement. Quality circles work best when they are close to the point of action and this suggests that they should be organised locally. Quality circles are formed by grouping

together participants from one or more projects to create a viable group. How big is viable? It varies but a useful scale is from eight to fourteen, which is big enough to cope with absences and small enough for candour and individual participation.

Quality Improvement Workshops

Workshops are designed to provide inputs to the quality circle process that cannot easily be self-supplied. Two examples of this are the use of a facilitator to work with residents on self-assessment criteria or to work through the requirements of the CIF.

Centre of Excellence

Not a lot has been made public about regenWM, the Regional Centre of Excellence.

Based in Birmingham and with 'spokes' around the region, regenWM will be launched in April to encourage regeneration groups and sectors to work together and support the region's urban and rural renaissance.

The centre will act as the regional portal for sharing good practice in regeneration, stimulating innovation and brokering new relationships.

The office will be complemented by a virtual, web-based platform and a helpline facility.

Advantage West Midlands Press Release, 11 March 03

The case for a centre of excellence is that it provides leadership in developing excellence and a sharp focus on the business in hand – that is, regeneration. In fact, we are here paraphrasing David Blunkett's Foreword to *Centres of Vocational excellence: Heralding a New Era for Further Education* (DfEE, 2001). This is to make the point that it is worth considering a further education or residential college base for a Centre for Regional Excellence – or, rather, that element of it that deals with skills and knowledge planning and practice.

Regional Action On Learning Programmes, Providers And Assessment Criteria.

This report has drawn attention to the patchwork of regeneration-related learning provision for residents in the region, a finding that is in line with others. A previous study has pointed to the paucity of skills and knowledge programmes for residents in the West Midlands as has the Learning Curve for the national situation.³⁷ At the same time, there is plenty of guidance about what is needed:

- From the Learning Curve about the main components (see Appendix)

³⁷ *Skills and Knowledge: the Development of Local Learning Plans* (2002)

Realising the Potential

- From residents and others, as related in this report, with a resident-focused approach to delivery.

Although a detailed programme structure cannot be attempted here because of time constraints, we can lay out here some of the elements of such a programme as the basis for further definition.

In doing this, we are conscious of the LSC's tentative steps toward reforming the adult curriculum and the need to ensure convergence with the policy process now underway. This moots a new unitised qualification at level 2 comprising 'a broad skill set ' combined with 'scope for learners and employers to assemble training programmes... [that] ...best meet their needs'.³⁸ More radically, it considers the possibility of channelling funding direct to learners.³⁹

We can now consider the structure of a skills and knowledge programme for residents along several dimensions:

Accreditation systems and levels:

- A range of accreditation systems including OCN, NVQ and HE
- A non-accredited option
- A range of levels of attainment from entry level through to postgraduate

Skills and knowledge areas

- Core information (see Focus Group analysis in Appendix) what is happening in the local area, opportunities for getting involved, how to influence service providers
- Specialist knowledge areas: health, education, crime, environment, housing, employment/worklessness
- Generic areas such as prioritisation⁴⁰, project management and appraisal; management; community development; fund raising)
- ICT skills
- Communication skills
- Skills for Life provision (literacy and numeracy)⁴¹

Format or method of delivery

- Learning by doing: Apprenticeship and similar programmes perhaps linked to Modern Apprenticeships
- Residential courses
- Classroom learning
- A range from one off or short courses through to year long certificated courses

³⁸ *Funding Adult Learning: Technical Document* (2003), paragraph 60.

³⁹ Previous document, paragraph 71.

⁴⁰ Emphasised by UCE study, p.18

⁴¹ Not frequently mentioned by focus group participants but surely a major consideration in areas of deprivation.

Plugging the Gap: A Way Forward

It is difficult to formulate a comprehensive and coherent offer in any part of the region that would meet the broad Learning Curve requirements or the needs identified by residents and others interviewed for this study. Attempts to define those needs are still at a very early stage. Wolverhampton has recently appointed to a post to audit the learning needs of those involved in neighbourhood management pilots but this was a rare case. Apprenticeships such as RegenSchool and Adept and the courses developed by Fircroft College and Staffordshire University were amongst the few resident-focused programmes that we identified in the region. Capacity building programmes for groups of residents are rare. Apart from Fircroft, there are a number of programmes for voluntary and community sector organisations in subjects such as chairing meetings, fund-raising and seeking charitable status but these do not equate with the Learning Curve framework.

Wolverhampton may provide the model for a broader regional look at gaps and how to fill them. Certainly, establishing in detailed terms what is required would be a significant step forward and should now take place in a number of locations across the region as local skills and knowledge plans are drawn up by LSPs. This would provide the basis for a regional commissioning document that would invite learning providers to propose their contribution to a new resident learning and development programme and, eventually, to propose the assessment criteria that would be set alongside that programme.

Local Action On Individual Development Plans And Support Packages

Proposals 8 and 9

In the meantime, there is a lot to be said for pressing on with the creation of IDPs and support packages at a local level, either through LSPs or learning partnerships acting on their behalf, or through individual projects such as New Deal for Communities. There is room here for a regional initiative to commission and fund both a trial IDP and resident support programme as set out above.

So, to summarise, we would recommend regional action to develop the resident recognition framework and to improve and assure quality by:

- 4. Creating a regional regeneration support framework through resident-focused**
 - a. Quality circles**
 - b. Quality improvement workshops**
 - c. Centre of Excellence.**
- 5. Publishing a regional commissioning document that would invite learning providers to propose their contribution to a new regional resident learning and development programme and, eventually, to propose the assessment criteria that would be set alongside that programme.**

6. **Commissioning and funding a trial Individual Learning Plan and resident support programme for a regeneration project or projects.**

Appendices

Summary of the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework (Learning Curve)

Building the Knowledge Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the knowledge base 	Recognising and understanding what works in housing and the built environment, education, worklessness, crime and health
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge 	Analysing problems, creating opportunities, designing solutions from the knowledge base
Developing Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational skills 	Project appraisal and management, finance and budgeting, mainstreaming resources, monitoring and evaluation, risk assessment and management, research.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal skills 	Community engagement, leadership, management of people, valuing diversity, communicating, conflict resolution, partnership working, communication
Changing Behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial behaviours 	Problem solving, spotting opportunities, taking calculated risks, a can do philosophy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective behaviours 	Evaluating effectiveness, exploring reasons for success, learning from failure

Focus Group Outcomes: Supporting resident participation in neighbourhood renewal and regeneration

Introduction

This paper draws together some of the key findings and observations from the 3 Focus Groups convened in Kings Norton, Birmingham; Greet's Green, West Bromwich, and Knutton in Newcastle Under Lyme.

The material is grouped around 3 core themes: Information, Communication and Learning

Resident information needs to support participation

From the Focus Groups it is fairly clear that residents have a range of information needs ranging from basic to high level information at different points in time

Basic information

This is perhaps the most straightforward to understand and for agencies to respond to quickly, it includes:

- What's On news and information
- Details of Who's Who in the regeneration/renewal area and in the agencies beyond
- Basic information about how the system works
- Details of who the key players are and how to contact them

Intermediate information

Regeneration is an evolving industry intricately connected with the core businesses of a range of mainstream agencies and organisations. Local people are keen to understand this landscape and to make sense of the rich tapestry that these agencies and organisations weave in their name.

Intermediate information goes beyond the basic information and includes:

- Mapping and analysis – what does the available data tell us
- Interpretation & explanation – translating complexity into simplicity/plain language
- Terminology & technical stuff – what do the buzzwords and phrases mean

Advanced information

Realising the Potential

Not everyone wants this type of information.

It consists of the range of 'graduate ness' that the professionals use and display, and the kind of information residents need to overcome the 'Catch 22' situations they find themselves in.

Fundamentally it is about seeing through the Noise.

Advanced information includes:

- Making the modernisation agenda happen for residents
- Securing genuine capacity building and sustainability for self, peers and community
- Access to 'Connexions' type advisors who can work with adults to help navigate pathways to escape the Benefits trap for good
- Knowledge, information and contacts that enable people to see and take up new opportunities and possibilities
- Mentors who can support individuals learning on the 'regeneration job', and provide valuable signposting and guidance

Improving communication to support participation and effective engagement

People want good quality, accurate information in real time and in a range of formats.

They don't appreciate glossy PR that presents historic and out of date information.

Communication channels must therefore include

- Excellent One-Stop Shops and Community Cafes
- Regularly updated Websites and LAN (local area network) based Intranets
- Newsletters that hit the right notes and include current & future based information
- Investigative and informative local media – press, television, radio
- Energetic local Community Radio
- Regular use of word of mouth, and local grapevines to get the news about
- Events, socials and get togethers to create the sense of community
- Functioning and supported community networks and partnerships

Meeting learning needs and supporting recognition

People don't want 'Mickey Mouse' certificates or degrees. They genuinely want their experience, knowledge and skills to be recognised and to carry value in the economic market place

Baseline analyses are unlikely to be sophisticated enough to identify the real learning needs of residents, and traditional learning provision is unlikely to reach many residents.

Most importantly professionals may need to update their assumptions about residents, especially those based on deficit models. To build on the assets of residents and local people, learning providers must provide what residents need and actually want.

The real challenge is to:

- Identifying resident and professional worker learning needs
- Match local residents to proper employment related training and development opportunities, and then provide intensive support to ensure success
- Shift traditional delivery channels from supply to demand based approaches
- Develop new delivery channels – web-based, peer group based, locality based
- Offer lots of 'taster' courses so that residents can sample the products before buying

Conclusion

If we can build on the strengths and assets of local people and communities and utilise ICT to the fullest, we can make a significant contribution to supporting residents to be effective in regeneration and renewal

Dilbagh Dhani
Positive Action Network

26th March 2003

Interview Schedule

1	Rob Burkitt Foyer Federation	Local work	28.3.03
2	Simon Cottingham Daniel Morris RAWM	RAWM	28.2.03
3	Fiona Larden	Fircroft	3.3.03
4	Roger Smith Adept	Adept	3.3.03
5	David Moore Stoke on Trent LEA	Stoke College in the Community	4.3.03
6	Wendy Tonge Telford and Wrekin Council	Telford	4.3.03
7	Sue Challis WEA Shropshire	People's Centre	4.3.03
8	Ray Walker B+S LSC	NLDCF	5.3.03 (AS)
9	Rod Sheppard Wolverhampton LP	Work with Neighbourhood Manager Pilots on S+K Plan	10.3.03
10	Paul Olver Herefordshire LP	Local Access Centres	11.3.03
11	Jim Brady Worcestershire LP	Local Programmes	13.3.03
12	Gail Walters BCVS	Community Research	19.3.03
13	Chris Horton B+S LSC	Use of NLDCF	19.3.03
14	Paul Cave, Ann Selby, Cheryl Turner, Dilbagh Dhami	Review	19.3.03
15	Patsy Staple and Millicent Simm Coventry NDC	Working for New Deal	25.3.03
16	Owen McFarlane EMBRACE	Views on proposals	25.3.03
17	Denise Taylor Adept	Stoke programme	28.3.03
18	Pete Caldwell WEA West Mercia	Views on proposals	31.3.03

Acronyms Deciphered

ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
CIF	Common Inspection Framework
Embrace	Umbrella body for black and ethnic minority voluntary and community sector in the West Midlands
IAG	Information Advice and Guidance
IDP	Individual Development Programme
ILM	Intermediate Labour Market (stepping stones to employment initiative)
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NMI	Neighbourhood Management Initiative
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NRU	Neighbourhood Renewal; Unit
NTO	National Training Organisation
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
OCN	Open College Network
Paulo	The national training organisation for community development and education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RAWM	Regional Action West Midlands – voluntary and community sector umbrella organisation
RRPANL	Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning – LSC policy project carried out by NIACE and LSDA
SKP	Skills and Knowledge Plan
SSC	Sector Skills Councils (replace NTOs)
SSDA	Sector Skills Development Agency
TLA	Three letter acronym – the bane of our lives
WEA	Workers' Educational Association

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⁴² Paulo is the National Training Organisation (NTO) for the Community Education, Development and Youth Work Sector.

Websites

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<http://www.strategy.gov.uk/2003/ethnic/report/report.pdf>

National Open College Network

<http://www.nocn.org.uk>

ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee:
The Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives (HC 76 –1)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmodpm/76/76.pdf>

Paulo – NTO for Community Development

www.paulo.org.uk

Resident Consultancy

<http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/rconsultancy.asp>