

**External evaluation of the
CLiP EQUAL project Action 2
2002-4**

by

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Summary-findings

Overall

CLiP generally realised its numerical objectives, and in this context was more successful than many comparable projects. Individual partners advanced their aims through the project and achieved valuable learning. However CLiP did not optimise the opportunities offered by EQUAL. The partnership did not develop a clear shared vision, and suffered from a lack of sponsorship and strategic direction. Partly for these reasons, many partners' projects experienced significant slippage.

Achievement of targets and outputs

Individual CLiP partners can point to significant project achievements. Relative to many comparable projects CLiP has performed well in delivering outputs and managing spending. Female beneficiaries exceeded revised targets by 50%, with a 60% shortfall in the number of male beneficiaries. Virtually all other CLiP outputs met or exceeded those set out in the bid. Most partners carried out most or all of the activities set out in their project proposals. A number of associate partners whose project proposals were accepted in the latter stages of the project's life were noticeably successful in reaching their targets. However, in many instances progress was slower than anticipated. As a result many partners spent more time in project development than planned and less time in the operational phase and internal evaluation.

Innovation and mainstreaming

A significant number of projects worked with ideas that were innovative in that they were new to the sub-region, organisation or target audience. At least two projects were unique, and at least two appear likely to have nation-wide applications. There were constraints on some partners' ability to fully develop their innovative ideas, e.g. individual organisation's limited resources, lack of strategic drive, lack of initial operational support from the centre, and organisational systems and processes incompatible with tight deadlines. Delayed project starts and end loading of project activity also limited the opportunity to test mainstreaming potential during the funded life of the project. However, at least eight partner projects will continue or have continued using other sources of funding. This is likely to be the case with a number of other projects also. Awareness of and commitment to Action 3 was limited, although all partners can point to significant learning that could usefully be more widely disseminated.

Empowerment and equality of opportunity

Most of the original partners embraced empowerment as a principle, and there were good examples of empowerment within individual projects, generally involving learners in making decisions about their own learning. However, in a number of instances target audiences were not involved in developing their learning to the extent they might have been. Later arrivals to the partnership generally embraced empowerment as a way of working more fully. A number of projects carried out specific action to redress inequality, for example:

- Supporting and reducing entry barriers to older learners
- Representing the interests and needs of learners with physical disabilities
- Reducing entry barriers for homeless and drug-dependent learners.

Good practice

Individuals and organisations learned from the experience of CLiP and there were examples of good practice in the delivery of LLN, both in managing development and delivery projects and in the products. Examples included:

- Empowerment models such as PhD* and ACET Priors Park*
- The multi-agency approach modelled by Priors Park*
- 'Accessible' enrolment forms developed by Artshape*
- Role of an advocate in moving learning up the agenda within Forest of Dean Housing*
- ACET LION learner support training*
- ACET 'Curriculum mapping' for volcom workers*
- Outward Bound training shared by tutors, volunteers and learners (Furniture Recycling Project)*
- Parentline Plus's web board to facilitate training design and development by a geographically diverse group, set up by Cambridge Training and Development*

However, there was no clear process for disseminating good practice during Action 2. Action 3 may be able to contribute to disseminating and embedding these and other lessons.

Attracting learners

Partners developed a number of approaches to attracting learners and reducing barriers to entry, for example:

- Parentline Plus: modularised and updated training programme at a variety of venues*
- GEAR: learning week for homeless*

Again, the lessons from examples such as these should be more widely disseminated

Development of pathways to learning

There were several good examples of projects that could enhance the opportunity for learners in Gloucestershire by adding to information and support available to learners, in particular

- ACET curriculum mapping*
- Cheltenham CVS Community Lifelong Learning Handbook*

They still have to be tested as policy and practice rather than as pilot activity, and will require further funding support in order to achieve this.

Building capacity in LLN and Community-based Learning

The Professional Development Unit made a slow start but now shows potential to provide significant support for Basic Skills tutors and teachers in Gloucestershire. The main constraints on delivery of Basic Skills that are emerging are matters for national policy rather than local action: ***in particular the shortage of qualified and/or competent tutors and of training for would-be tutors***. CLiP has clearly also raised the awareness of partners and individuals of the potential of Community-based Learning in Gloucestershire. More tangible activities which added to capacity included:

- Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Projects Network: training for staff and volunteers*
- Parentline Plus and ACET: training for learning advocates*

Transnational activity

Most of the individuals who participated found the transnational activity a valuable learning experience, and this aspect of the project generated considerable enthusiasm. The learning was mainly personal and there was limited opportunity to transfer knowledge to organisations or the partnership as a whole.

Overall impact

Individual partners can point to significant achievements that have advanced their own aims and provided valuable learning. CLiP has clearly raised consciousness amongst key players of the possibilities for, and issues faced by, CbL. The greatest benefits may have been intangible and attitudinal: alerting workers to the future possibilities.

Some small partnerships have been generated or sustained through CLiP, and more dialogue has also resulted. The bid vision of a more unified and organised approach to delivering Community-based Learning, involving the VCS, education and government and giving partners an influential voice, has not so far been realised, although there is active ongoing debate regarding this. Constraints included:

- In Gloucestershire, there are fewer social and economic inducements for partnership working relative to many other parts of the UK, and fewer precedents for it
- There was also less recognition of learning as a regeneration tool within the VCS
- Organisational change amongst the major partners meant that there was limited continuity between the conception, development and delivery of CLiP. This resulted also in there being no clear strategic steer, when the partnership as a whole was insufficiently developed or committed to reach informed, democratic decisions. There was therefore little sense of a shared vision for CLiP, and some partners' commitment was low.
- The EQUAL funding regime itself can impede effective partnership building
- A number of individual projects initially made slow progress due to recruitment and other resource allocation issues, particularly amongst public sector partners. CLiP Action 2 could not therefore progress to the stage of collating experience and reflecting and acting on it envisaged in the bid.

* These are representative examples only, not exhaustive lists. Most partners' projects contained elements of several evaluation themes.

Summary-recommendations

CLiP

1. CLiP Action 2 did not progress as far as originally envisaged in recording, collating, comparing and reflecting on partners' experiences. Partners should make the best possible use of Action 3 to build upon individual Action 2 successes, and also to disseminate the learning offered by all experiences, successful or otherwise. The possible benefits of Action 3 involvement should be clarified to those partners who have so far shown little interest in or commitment to it, and it should be viewed as a possible precursor to a longer term CbL partnership in Gloucestershire.'
2. CLiP has produced a number of examples of good or innovative practice, some of which are detailed in this report. In some cases these merit further investment in order to mainstream. In keeping with the ethos of EQUAL, models of good or innovative practice from CLiP should be identified, evaluated internally, documented and disseminated more widely, using Action 3 as a basis. This activity would be carried most effectively by a small task group rather than by individual partners acting alone.

Similar future partnerships and projects

3. In order to maximize the chances of success, partnerships should consider the following in developing their strategy and work plans:
 - How to reach agreement on the nature of the partnership and its ways of working
 - How to develop a shared sustainable vision, and a process for maintaining and developing it through sponsors and/or champions
 - How to ensure continuity amongst individual and organisational sponsors and make realistic assumptions about change
4. In order to achieve effective delivery, partnerships should consider the following in implementing their plans:
 - Critical assessment of project proposals should include:
 - ensuring that partners' individual projects contribute to overall partnership aims:
 - carrying out a risk assessment of partners' delivery and management systems and processes: and
 - considering how the outcomes will be evaluated and disseminated and/or mainstreamed
 - Monitoring individual projects' progress against clearly defined milestones, with the possibility of financial penalties where partners fail to achieve these.
 - It is unrealistic for partners to expect staff with an existing wide range of responsibilities to project manage large new innovative projects. Partners should try to ensure that future similar innovative projects are managed wherever possible by dedicated project managers and resource the projects accordingly.
 - Public sector partners in particular may need to consider how to overcome barriers to recruiting project staff rapidly, and all partners how to balance the

- advantages of contracting out project management against those of in house recruitment.
 - Support at senior management level and a clear strategic steer are important in the effective management of partnerships.
5. In order to fully achieve their outputs, similar projects should ensure that partners are able to carry out and committed to effective internal evaluation, and to disseminating the outcomes, as an integral part of project activity. Possible ways of achieving this include:
- Building in a dissemination strategy from the early stages of the project, and gaining partners' commitment by ensuring their involvement in planning and delivery
 - Allocating part of the budget specifically to internal evaluation, with payment on outcomes against pre agreed data collection methods and criteria
 - Greater emphasis on evaluation and dissemination methods at the sub-project approval stage including a clearer definition of hypotheses the project is intended to test
 - Additional centrally based support for partners who are not expert in this field
 - An interventionist and proactive approach to sub-project evaluation by the central project management team, at the risk of reducing ownership and organisational learning
6. Moving innovative ideas into the mainstream requires considerable additional and possibly specialised resources and expertise that may not be available, particularly within small organisations. Partnerships should consider how they can acquire the expertise and resources required to achieve effective dissemination and mainstreaming.
7. Partnerships should consider ways in the value of any transnational activity can be maximised, in particular how:
- transnational activity can contribute fully to project purpose:
 - all partners' views and experiences can be represented in transnational activity: and
 - outcomes from activity (including individual and organisational learning) can be most effectively disseminated within the partnership.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The CLiP project

1.1.1 Aim and objectives

The Development Partnership Agreement stated that:

'The Community Learning and Innovation Partnership (CLIP) will research, develop, trial and promote an adaptable human resource strategic model for community-based lifelong learning that promotes equality and removes barriers to access and progression in learning and in work for people facing discrimination and inequality.'

CLIP has the following objectives:

1. *To identify and map current good practice, issues and gaps in:*
 - 1.1. *the provision, take-up and progression through learning and employment within organisations involved with Community Based Learning (CbL), of people facing discrimination and inequality*
 - 1.2. *human resource development and employment issues within organisations involved in developing and delivering CbL*
2. *To develop, test and evaluate within communities, innovative means of:*
 - 2.1. *overcoming barriers to learning in order to attract and build confidence in learners from under-represented and disadvantaged groups, including developing their Basic, key and other skills*
 - 2.2. *delivering methods of learning that empower individuals, meet learner needs, develop local ownership and build capacity within organisations that are involved in the CbL Sector*
 - 2.3. *developing the human resource infrastructure relating to CbL activities*
3. *To develop and implement models of individual and organisational support that empower people facing discrimination and inequality*
4. *To develop and promote community-related pathways through learning and into employment, both paid and voluntary*
5. *To research, adapt and trial with transnational Partners, models of good practice in CbL and employment related to people facing discrimination and inequality*
6. *To disseminate Project results locally, nationally and transnationally, in order to mainstream key outcomes and influence policy and decision-making.'*

1.1.2 History-overview

The prime movers in the development of the CLiP concept were the lead partner, Gloucestershire County Council's Adult Continuing Education and Training Service (ACET) and Gloucestershire Learning and Skills Council. Both were active in Gloucestershire Learning Partnership (GLP), which provided a focus for initial activity. GLP became the steering group for the Development Partnership.

Action 1, the development phase, took place between November 2001 and May 2002. The project management of the development phase was contracted to external consultants. An Action 1 management team was set up, and one to one and consultation meetings resulted in the Development Partnership being expanded to 17.

CLiP Action 2 was scheduled to run from 15 May 2002 to 14 May 2004, but an extension to 31 August 2004 was agreed in February 2004. The project was funded through ESF Objective 3 EQUAL, Theme E (*Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market.*)

Other partners were drawn from the voluntary and community sector in Gloucestershire, apart from Cambridge Training and Development Ltd, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and Shoshin Ltd, who were organisations operating nationally with a particular interest in and knowledge of the issues that concerned CLiP. A number of associate partners also joined the project during 2003. In addition, several sub-projects were delivered by contractors with appropriate knowledge and experience, rather than by partners themselves.

The project management and operation was carried out by a full-time Senior Project Manager, and a full-time Project Administrator. Two jobsharing Project Development Officers were appointed in February 2003. The team was based at the ACET offices in Gloucester.

Action 2 is followed by Action 3: *thematic networking and dissemination of good practice.*

1.2 This report

1.2.1 The structure of this report closely follows that of the evaluation framework we used for reviews with partners and for our interim reports. The framework is based on CLiP's objectives (see above), which in turn encompass principles common to all EQUAL projects, in particular partnership, innovation, empowerment, transnationality, mainstreaming and equal opportunities. In addition to appraising CLiP against its own and EQUAL's purpose, we considered the key drivers for organisational success. We examined these under the following major headings, based on JK Galbraith's organisational model:

- Purpose
- Objectives
- Outputs
- Communication and decision making
- Resources
- People: rewards and motivation: training and development
- Systems and processes

1.2.2 Terminology and conventions

In this report:

- The term '*partner*' also describes associate partners, except where there is a need to distinguish the two categories

- The term 'sub project' is used to describe individual partners' projects
- The term '*project*' refers to the CLiP project
- The abbreviation 'VCS' is used for '*voluntary and community sector*'
- The abbreviation 'CbL' is used for '*community-based learning*'
- The abbreviation 'LLN' is used for '*Learning, Literacy and Numeracy*'

1.3 The Evaluation Process

External evaluation aimed to provide an overview of project progress and achievements rather than intervening in each individual project. The intention was that partners would remain responsible for individually evaluating their own projects. This was necessary given our limited resources, but we also hoped that individual partners would maintain ownership of their evaluation processes and develop their competence in evaluation in keeping with CLiP's aims and EQUAL's ethos.

The main stages of external evaluation were:

Initial (September 2002)

- Established roles and responsibilities and agreed evaluation criteria/methods. Project familiarisation.
- Agreed overarching evaluation criteria to be used in examining beneficiaries' and Partners' perceptions.
- Carried out risk/potential problem analysis.
- Presented an inception report to the management Group outlining potential issues and refining our original evaluation proposals.

Months 1-3

- Delivered three evaluation workshops for partners. Individuals within the Partnership had varied previous knowledge and experience of evaluation, and the workshops were intended to help them gain an understanding of the principles of evaluation and start to consider how they would evaluate their individual projects. They also helped partners familiarise themselves with CLiP aims and objectives.
- During the workshop we also mapped sub projects' objectives against the CLiP objectives: and
- clarified roles and relationships in evaluation.
- Developed an external evaluation framework for use throughout the project and agreed the external evaluation processes. Designed questionnaires and the partner review framework in detail.

Months 3-6

- Initial internal evaluation round: beneficiary and Partner feedback from questionnaires, review with Project stakeholders regarding effectiveness of methods and validity of overarching evaluation criteria.
- Modification of internal/external evaluation framework and processes in the light of the initial round.

Months 6-24

- Carried out periodic reviews with partners, generally by telephone. In reviews we used some quantitative measures, for example to assess views on key aspects of the partnership. We also obtained anecdotal material, some of which is included in this report, and data on unexpected/short-term issues.
- Made update reports to and conducted reviews with the Project Manager
- Carried out research into benchmarks
- Presented a total of 10 reports to the Management Group, four with detailed recommendations for action
- Examined numerical project outputs
- Analysed available beneficiary data
- Contributed to four Bi-annual reports
- Produced this Final Report

2 Quantitative Outputs

2.1 Overall

The main quantitative outputs recorded by partners (correct as of 28/10/04) were:

Bid output	Target	Achieved	%age
New/improved promotional methodologies	3	9	300
New empowerment/capacity building methodologies	3	14	466
New equal opportunity or positive action measures	7	5	71
New information and guidance services	3	7	233
New learning/training/materials and/or toolkits	10	9	90
New learning/training programmes and curricula	4	9	225
New qualifications	3	3	100
New quality assurance methodologies: standard setting: accrediting/auditing	3	4	133
New databases	2	4	200
New ITC multimedia applications	7	7	100
New networks created	5	8	160
New studies, policy and research reports	8	8	100
New jobs created	3	17.2	573
Jobs protected	0	5	-
New business support materials and approaches	2	5	250
New approaches to work/life balance	1	8	800
Beneficiaries – female (target originally 880)	440	679	153
Beneficiaries - male (target originally 700)	340	138	41

Although the Final Claim is still in preparation, CLiP appears also to have met its expenditure targets.

2.2 Comments

Most targets were met or exceeded, and CLiP delivered outputs to a greater extent than many comparable projects. The outputs represent considerable activity by individual partners, particularly bearing in mind the difficulties some encountered in implementing their plans.

Output figures should however be treated with caution: outputs are not rigorously defined and partners are not asked to make a judgement on their scale, significance or quality. Outputs only add value if they fulfil the purpose of EQUAL and are converted into permanent benefits: for example if they provide models for future good practice in Community-based Learning for partners and others.

The beneficiary outputs provide a more objective measure. Female beneficiary outputs exceeded targets by 50%, with a 60% shortfall in the number of male beneficiaries. However, these targets were revised, and were approximately 50% of the original targets. In a number of instances, partners experienced considerable slippage in their project plans. In January 2004, at least five partners with a total of eight individual projects considered these to be significantly behind schedule (i.e. major targets two or more months behind previous - often revised - projections). We reported at that time that 18 individual projects were essentially on schedule (in a number of cases according to revised schedules) or completed. In the period January-August 2004 a great deal of ground was recovered in terms of outputs, but overall beneficiary outputs remained lower than the revised target. This reflected a shorter than anticipated period in the delivery phase for many projects. (Although beneficiary targets were in any case lower than would be the case with purely 'delivery' projects.)

There were a number of probable reasons for the initial slow progress. Some related directly to the fact that partners were engaging in work that involved exploring and designing new approaches and systems. Partners pointed out that these activities could easily fall behind schedule, or even fail altogether, as so many unknowns were involved. For example, the target audience sometimes proved more difficult to reach than anticipated, and suitable project staff or volunteers were sometimes not available. This was an inevitable result of trying to be innovative, as opposed to adopting tried and tested ideas, and is entirely in the spirit of CLiP and EQUAL.

A combination of organisational and management factors also influenced sub-project progress:

- Some project managers were not sufficiently experienced in managing innovative projects.
- Some partners experienced difficulty with lengthy recruitment and selection processes needed to obtain staff.
- Some partners had difficulties gaining co-operation from, or co-ordinating activity with, other individuals and groups affecting delivery.
- For all partners, CLiP was only one of a number of priorities. Nominally responsible individuals within partner organisations generally had a range of other responsibilities. CLiP was frequently an 'add on' activity rather than one that was factored in to a manageable workload. This could mean that CLiP activity did not always progress as rapidly as possible. Some CLiP activity was subcontracted or delegated. The effect of this was that some sub-projects were delivered by project

managers with little direct knowledge of, or commitment to, CLiP. We noted for example that when one partner, Gloucestershire Libraries and Information Service, appointed a dedicated project worker for its three projects, this had an immediate positive effect on the progress of the projects.

Some partners made good use of the extension of CLiP to August 2004, either to ensure that they delivered increased outputs or to deliver new projects. The relatively short extension enabled CLiP to offer better value for money in terms of expenditure against outputs. Some partners were unable to benefit from the extension to the project as they were already committed to an end date of May 2004 or before, and to a corresponding budget.

The Management Team rightly maintained a policy of involving additional associate partners, and encouraging existing partners to extend their activities. The Project Development Officers appointed in February 2003 played a helpful role in facilitating this process. This flexible and pragmatic approach identified some projects that were able to deliver outcomes in a relatively short time, maximising outputs and benefits to the target audience.

2.3 Conclusions

Most partners carried out the majority of actions in their project proposals. However, in many instances progress was slower than anticipated.

As a result many partners spent a disproportionate period of time in project development and this limited the time available during the project lifetime for operations and reflecting on results. This meant that many of the innovative ideas explored by CLiP were not developed to the extent envisaged in the original bid. Partly for this reason, also, most partners did not give internal evaluation and formulation of lessons for the future the time and priority they needed. Where partners have been able to draw conclusions, these are based on less operational experience than anticipated. In consequence, the fund of data available for Action 3 is less than it could have been.

For similar reasons, beneficiary outputs from most sub-projects were lower than planned, and beneficiary targets were revised in consequence. A number of associate partners whose project proposals were accepted in the latter stages of Action 2 were however noticeably successful in reaching their targets. Generally they appeared not to suffer greatly from the implementation problems outlined in 2.2.

2.4 Recommendations

In order to achieve effective delivery, partnerships should consider the following in implementing their plans:

- Critical assessment of project proposals should include:
 - carrying out a risk assessment of partners' delivery and management systems and processes: and
 - considering how the outcomes will be evaluated and disseminated and/or mainstreamed

- Monitoring individual projects' progress against clearly defined milestones, with the possibility of financial penalties where partners fail to achieve these.
- It is unrealistic for partners to expect staff with an existing wide range of responsibilities to project manage large new innovative projects. Partners should try to ensure that future similar innovative projects are managed wherever possible by dedicated project managers and resource the projects accordingly. Not doing so is potentially a recipe for failure or for poor cost-effectiveness.
- Public sector partners in particular may need to consider how to overcome barriers to recruiting project staff rapidly, and all partners how to balance the advantages of contracting out project management against those of in house recruitment.

3 The Development Partnership

3.1 Overview

Development Partnerships are the delivery mechanism for EQUAL: partnership is itself one of the five core principles driving them. (The other principles are equality of opportunity, empowerment, innovation and transnationality.) Most regeneration initiatives now rely heavily on the partnership approach: government and NGOs support and encourage it, and there are strong arguments in favour of it. In principle, if partnerships achieve synergy, the results are significantly greater than the sum of individuals' partners' efforts. Some of the enablers of partnership, for example effective dialogue and communication, are desirable outcomes in their own right.

3.2 Findings

The CLiP vision was of a more unified and uniform approach to community based learning, through co-operation between the voluntary and community and adult education sectors and national and local government. The bid itself stressed partnership working, including the creation of common interest thematic sub groups. In our periodic reviews, we asked partners for their perceptions of the development of the partnership: whether CLiP was an effective partnership, or was moving towards becoming one. In January 2004 these perceptions were:

'I think that.....'	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Un-decided
there is a feeling of involvement	18%	53%	0%	0%	29%
there is mutual trust	6%	53%	0%	0%	41%
we are kept informed	12%	53%	0%	0%	35%
we co-operate, e.g. in decision making and other activity	6%	59%	0%	0%	35%
there is mutual support and sharing of ideas	6%	35%	24%	0%	35%
everyone gets more out than they put in	0%	29%	12%	0%	59%
one person/organisation is trusted to act on behalf of others	0%	24%	12%	0%	64%

The high '*undecided*' figure comprised largely a number of associate partners who could not reasonably be expected to have a clear view due to their short period of involvement. Subcontractors and the associate partners who joined CLiP in 2003 were less involved in the Partnership than the original partners, even though they were playing an important

role in CLiP. Previous surveys reflected a similar generally positive balance of opinion amongst those with a definite view, but with lower 'undecided' figures.

When we asked partners in April 2004 about their views on CLiP's importance, their responses were:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Un-decided
CLiP is Important in my view	43%	21%	12%	0%	21%
My organisation sees CLiP as important	36%	36%	0%	0%	29%
CLiP's purpose matches, supports or complements my organisation's	57%	12%	7%	0%	21%

There were some highly favourable comments about the Partnership, but in practice most partners' main relationship was with the central project team, rather than with other partners. This was true especially for associate partners joining CLiP in the later stages of the project.

After their appointment in February 2003, the Project Development Officers acted as a valuable channel for communication and spreading good practice.

Although there were no examples of large scale partnership working, there were examples of small scale co-operation or talks about co-operation, generally between two individual partners.

3.3 Recommendation

In order to maximize the chances of success, partnerships should consider the following in developing their strategy and work plans:

- How to reach agreement on the nature of the partnership and its ways of working
- How to develop a shared sustainable vision, and a process for maintaining and developing it through sponsors and/or champions
- How to ensure continuity amongst individual and organisational sponsors and make realistic assumptions about change

3.4 Purpose and direction

3.4.1 Purpose

When we asked partners about their aims for the partnership in December 2002, their responses were:

<i>What do partners hope to get from the partnership? (Opinions summarised and categorised)</i>	<i>%age</i>
<i>Opportunity to innovate and experiment</i>	33
<i>Added funding and other resources</i>	47
<i>Networking and sharing good practice</i>	60
<i>Development of partner's personnel</i>	20
<i>Develop partner's organisation- resources, markets, products, services etc</i>	47
<i>Develop capacity in Gloucestershire generally</i>	20
<i>Advance the interests of CbL in Gloucestershire/beyond</i>	33
<i>Other</i>	20

Most partners initially saw CLiP first and foremost as a means of forwarding their own objectives, although these were generally broadly related to the aims of CLiP. This view did not change greatly during the lifetime of the project.

However, a majority of partners were interested in the opportunity for networking, and wanted the partnership to encourage networking, exchanging ideas and sharing problems. In practice, though, most partners could only devote limited time to CLiP. Management Group meetings (see 3.5.2) were used to some extent as an opportunity to exchange information about partners' activities, and on one occasion specifically to encourage exchange of good practice.

Other partners had a vision of CLiP as a basis for a long term partnership providing an influential voice for partners, and provide mutual support in order to advance CbL in Gloucestershire. However, this was not a vision that the majority of partners appeared to share.

3.4.2 Direction

- Some partners wanted to avoid bureaucracy and getting bogged down in meetings and systems to the detriment of the end results
- Some wanted more central direction and decision making to help drive CLiP forward at a faster pace. There is an expectation from some partners that the 'centre' should be responsible for driving the project forward.
- However, partners also wanted to be involved. This conflicted with the need for the partnership sometimes to act rapidly and decisively.
- Where opinions were expressed, partners felt that the Management Team were helpful and approachable, and committed to keeping partners informed.

3.4.3 Conclusions

For some CLiP partners, the potential advantages of partnership did not outweigh the commitment required to participate in 'partnership activity'. This is a reflection on the varied demands on their time resources and commitment rather than on the quality or nature of the partnership. For these partners, changes in the way the partnership was conducted would not have altered the situation significantly.

Those with a view of the partnership as potentially supporting networking and good practice exchange were disappointed. However, networking and partnership working in themselves are not advantageous. They must provide or have the potential to provide benefits, for example in bringing together groups with complementary competences or resources, providing benefits of scale, helping exchange ideas and knowledge, or meeting individuals' social and motivational needs. To some partners, maintaining good relationships seemed in itself very important, but politeness can prevent people being open and confronting issues, and impede action.

For those partners with a vision of a true partnership developing an integrated and sustainable model of CbL, CLiP did not achieve this aim.

However, the Partnership was unlikely to achieve its stated aims and objectives, given the general environment in Gloucestershire at the time of the bid. This is resulted from:

- Those partners and stakeholders most aware of the possibilities not being involved in delivery, leading to a lack of continuity and a failure to communicate the vision.
- Optimistic and arguably inappropriate aims and objectives. Other sub regions have taken seven years to move towards achieving similar aims. Our initial survey showed most individual partners to be most interested in achieving organisational rather than county-wide aims.
- The legacy of Action 1. With hindsight, there was insufficient real agreement on aims at this stage. The bid was driven as much by the desire to secure funding as the intention to deliver the aims. Partners lacked the time to understand the implications of what was being said on their behalf. The stakeholders were in cleft stick, as they did not have resources to support and deliver Action 1 in-house, a resource constraint that carried through to the early stages of Action 2.

As a benchmark, Joseph Rowntree Trust research (*Urban regeneration through partnership: a study in nine urban regions in England, Scotland and Wales*: Carley, Chapman, Hastings, Kirk and Young, 1999) indicates a number of relevant success factors within regeneration partnerships:

- Leadership: political and executive leadership is critical to the partnership
- Vision and consensus building: prospective partners develop a shared agenda
- Nurturing partnership: the partnership needs to be developed consciously, and 'sold' to the uncommitted.

Another benchmark is a nationally based EQUAL partnership, characterised by:

- leadership by a determined group who wanted to influence national agendas:
- in developing aims and strategy, the starting point was dissemination and mainstreaming: and
- a conscious policy of involving different partners in strategy, delivery and mainstreaming, but with agreement on common interests.

By comparison, CLiP did not have decisive leadership at a strategic level, and operated in a style that was too democratic given the time constraints and the need to pull a

disparate group of individual partners together and build a vision. The partnership was not at the state of maturity where it could easily make democratic decisions.

3.4.4 Recommendations

In order to maximize the chances of success, partnerships should consider the following in developing their strategy and work plans:

- How to reach agreement on the nature of the partnership and its ways of working
- How to develop a shared sustainable vision, and a process for maintaining and developing it through sponsors and/or champions
- How to ensure continuity amongst individual and organisational sponsors and make realistic assumptions about change

In order to achieve effective delivery, partnerships should consider the following in implementing their plans:

- Critical assessment of project proposals should include ensuring that partners' individual projects contribute to overall partnership aims

3.5 *Communication & decision making*

3.5.1 Overall

Throughout Action 2 partners were highly positive about their level of communication with the Project Team. They saw the Team as being very willing to keep them informed and support them. There were some early criticisms of the – inevitably - large quantity of communication from the centre adversely affecting the quality of communication. Communication was generally by email, supported by telephone. The Senior Project Manager also visited partners periodically. Once appointed, the Partnership Development Officers provided more face to face communication. Apart from providing practical expertise and support, they supported networking by facilitating information exchange between partners.

3.5.2 Meetings and other face-to-face activity

The Partnership held Management Group meetings initially monthly and then approximately bi-monthly during the lifetime of the project. Meetings generated more interest in the early days of project, when relationships were being built, and there was perhaps perceived completion for funds. By July 2004, Management Group meetings were clearly not seen as a focus for activity by partners. A number of projects were completed, whilst other partners were preoccupied with delivery, and were showing little interest in or awareness of Action 3, which could have been a major topic for meetings.

Views about Management Group included:

- Meetings themselves were very well run in terms of timekeeping, focus, etc.
- Some partners felt that detailed information giving could have been done in other ways, for example by email or over the web board. (Although these communication media were unpopular with other partners).

- Meetings were not as much needed for decision making after the initial setup period. However, when decisions needed to be taken, this could be a drawn-out process.
- After the initial setup phase, partners tended not to attend unless issues important to them were being discussed.
- There was a fairly strong view that meetings could have been used more for comparing experiences and sharing problems. Several partners felt that sharing problems in particular was potentially valuable, although there was some feeling also that some partners could be unwilling to admit to having problems. There was some

Later meetings in particular tended to focus on information giving and consultation rather than decision making. Day-to-day decision making was in the hands of the Project Team. Most partners were insufficiently informed on these issues to be able to make these decisions, and nor should they have been involved in this. However, strategic issues were discussed infrequently.

The partners had other opportunities to meet. Examples included:

- the workshops run by Shoshin as part of their project using psychometrics in the voluntary and community sector:
- workshops run to train partners in ESF processes:
- the evaluation workshops: and
- a *'Making the Most of the Media'* training day designed to help partners with their dissemination activity.

Partners tended to find these events useful for networking and information exchange, even though this was not their main purpose. An *'Innovation Exchange'* event was planned for January 2004. This specifically aimed to encourage exchange of good practice and could have helped partners prepare for Action 3. However, it was cancelled due to apparent lack of support, although some partners had seen this as a potentially useful partnership activity.

3.5.3 Use of ICT

An internal Communications Group operated from June 2002 to May 2003: it carried out a survey of partners' ICT capability and produced a CLiP Communications Policy. The partnership was geographically fairly widespread, and could potentially have benefited from using ICT extensively in its communication and decision making. With this in mind, Cambridge Training and Development (CTAD) developed a CLiP web board for use by partners in exchanging information and views. CTAD also provided training and support in its use and developed the CLiP website.

In practice, the web board was not used to a significant degree by most partners, and attempts to encourage its use by posting reports, minutes and agendas on the board did not change the situation.

Opinions were sharply divided regarding the value of the web board. Some partners avoided using it, but others liked the idea. Some partners said that they were unable to access the board because of firewalls and other Local Area Network security measures. Newer associate partners were in some cases unaware of the web board.

It is worth noting also that Shoshin considered using videoconferencing for distance mentoring as part of its project. However, 'housekeeping' issues such as background noise and the lack of privacy in participants' workplaces prevented this, rather than opposition to the medium itself.

A NIACE action research project *E-communications & Community Organisations* survey on the use of information technology amongst partners came to some relevant conclusions:

- Most organisations and individuals had the capacity and capability to use email and telephony.
- However, the ability to use more complex and integrated forms of e-communication was far more limited.
- Most importantly, human factors dictated the effectiveness of e-communication. For example, both telephones and email were immediate means of making contact, but '*a number of responses suggested that a three-day delay in checking phone messages of emails was considered a norm*'. There were indications that email dominated some individuals' work, and could be seen as intrusive. It could also be seen as an impersonal method of communication.

3.5.4 Conclusions

Monthly meetings for management purposes were unnecessary after the initial setup phase. Meetings could have been used more for strategic decision making, but as the partnership effectively concentrated mainly on delivery there was little need for this.

Meetings could have focussed on partnership building, partners presenting key findings and issues from their own projects, and broader networking activity. However, although this idea was discussed and to some extent implemented, meetings did not concentrate on this. Other opportunities for information exchange and networking were limited. Most partners were in reality preoccupied with other priorities and could not invest the time needed to make this type of activity worthwhile. For networking to be successful, CLiP could usefully have considered opening meetings to a wider audience. For example, associate members and contractors were not invited to meetings.

Deep rooted resistance to using web boards and email or more sophisticated forms of ICT is unlikely to be overcome in the short term. Coercive approaches to overcoming resistance are unlikely to be successful. The ultimate success of ICT in a partnership such as CLiP depends on partners becoming sufficiently enthusiastic and convinced of its benefits to use it. Enthusiasm about the partnership itself is a critical factor here: if partners saw a real use for these media, and saw little practical alternative to using them, they would be adopted more widely. It is hard to see how a large partnership covering a wide geographical area can realistically communicate, exchange ideas and reach decisions regularly without using ICT.

The web site did not appear to have a great impact during Action 2. Some partners questioned its value, for example its purpose and target audience, and the limited appeal of the content. However:

- A web site is now a 'given' for any project such as this
- Its value is likely to be in signposting - particularly for interested organisations - rather than in promoting learning opportunities to individuals
- Its impact is likely to be greater during Action 3

3.6 *Other partnership issues*

3.6.1 Resources

Lack of strategic direction during Action 2 resulted in project management tending to concentrate on the procedural rather than directional aspects of management. The claims and reporting processes required by ESF occupied a great deal of the Senior Project Manager's time, and disputed claims and Significant Change processes added to the workload.

The Partnership Development Officers (PDOs) were recruited relatively late in the day and had therefore to create a role for themselves. They could have played a particularly valuable role at the setup stage, and have facilitated a more rapid start to sub-projects. It was noticeable that new associate partners in particular found the PDOs useful, whilst one existing partner felt that the PDOs had arrived too late to make a major difference to them.

Virtually all partners were highly positive in their comments on the role of the PDOs. The Partnership was fortunate in securing two people with their level of expertise and knowledge, and they took a proactive role in supporting and advising partners. There were examples of the PDOs facilitating development of the partnership by encouraging networking, and offering a variety of helpful advice and support in moving projects forward. They played a more significant role in the partnership than could have reasonably been expected.

ACET's Personal Power Pack was an existing potentially valuable tool for evaluation in tracking the progress of learners. The bid stated that the Pack would be used, but although ACET offered training in its use only one partner took up the offer and no partners used the Pack. The main reason for this is - again - that CLiP did not develop in the way and at the pace envisaged, and evaluation was not therefore as high a priority as it should have been. Many partners did not have resources to use it effectively: i.e. staff time for training and development and to carry out detailed one-to-one reviews with beneficiaries.

3.6.2 Systems and processes

Several individual partners were not initially au fait with ESF procedures. The project provided training in ESF procedures although this was delivered before most projects got under way. Had they been in post, the PDOs could have provided valuable support here in the early stages of the project. However, once individual projects were under way, partners appeared to have few difficulties with meeting requirements: the main problem was meeting deadlines for returns.

A number of partners were working in co-operation with ACET and therefore using ACET enrolment forms. These were criticised by some partners as being long, complicated and generally daunting, especially for people within the CLiP target audience. This issue was recognised in the ACET Artshape project, which designed an accessible form for adults with learning difficulties. The form is now in use.

We have commented previously on individual partners' recruitment and selection processes affecting the progress of sub-projects.

3.6.3 Conclusions

The appointment of the Partnership Development Officers had a significant positive effect on the Partnership's ability to deliver outcomes, and also helped develop the Partnership itself to some extent.

The Project Team concentrated on administration, when in different circumstances its efforts might have been more firmly directed towards developing the partnership. As partners were often not well resourced to meet EQUAL's administrative requirements and in some cases inexperienced, the Project Team tended to fill the gap. Time had to be spent on reworking and progress chasing, and also on reprofiling as a result of reduced outputs. As we have already noted CLiP lacked a clear strategic steer and it was not the role of the Senior Project Manager to provide this. Organisational constraints meant that the Project Manager and the team did not always receive the level of senior manager support they needed.

3.6.4 Recommendations

Any future similar project based on partnership should be adequately staffed from the start to support both the administration and development of the partnership. The need is greatest in the early stages of development.

Involvement at senior management level and a clear strategic steer are important in supporting the effective management of partnerships.

4 Innovation, testing, mainstreaming and dissemination

4.1 Overview

Innovation is one of the five core principles driving Development Partnerships. We asked partners about the extent to which they were innovating, the issues surrounding innovation and mainstreaming and their plans for the future during periodic reviews, and also carried out a survey on innovation and mainstreaming in December 2003-January 2004.

4.2 Findings

Projects varied in their degree of innovativeness, with a small number only being highly innovative. 27% of Partners surveyed thought their projects were *'totally new'*. However, even the *'totally new'* advances mainly built on previous models and represented more structured, organised or large scale approaches. This is in keeping with the commercial sector experience: most innovations are relatively modest: in reality they are improvements rather than innovations. The other 73% of innovations were *'new to the organisation, sector, target audience or geographical area'*. Only 33% of projects made direct use of ICT.

Partners were reasonably confident of the value of their innovative activities. 32% of respondents thought their projects would be or were *'Fully successful'*, 32% *'Partly successful'* and 36% were *'Not yet sure'*. 64% thought their innovations would be useful to others, and 59% would probably continue to use their ideas themselves.

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The greatest enthusiasm for exploiting ideas commercially or promoting them widely came from the nationally based and private sector partners: this was not important to the Gloucestershire based partners.

Partners and contractors were asked in April 2004 about their future plans, and these were:

Of all projects (total 22 surveyed):	No.	%age
Clear plans for dissemination activity	4	18
Some plans for dissemination	8	36
Of which, plans to engage in Action 3	5	23
Of which, we have definite plans to use the ideas we are developing after August 2004	7	32
No plans for dissemination	10	45

Most partners felt that innovation was an important aspect of their work, and to their organisations. However:

- Innovations were often driven by individuals, whose preference for innovation did not always fit well with the style of the organisations they represented. A number of partners described organisational barriers such as inertia, bureaucracy and lack of shared values or understanding as barriers to innovation
- A number of partners specifically mentioned the complexity of ESF funding as a barrier to innovation.
- Even incremental changes to existing practice placed a strain on the limited physical and time resources of some partners. This was a contributing factor in the difficulty they experienced in keeping their projects on schedule. As one partner commented: *'Nothing is as simple as it seems to implement.'*?
- Innovation in the voluntary and community sector tends to be driven by available funding, but it can be more worthwhile to pursue new innovative approaches than to refine and promote the old ones. Funding encourages innovations but does not encourage their further development to the same extent, and this is unrealistic. The relatively short term nature of EU funding also tends to discourage further development of initially promising ideas.

At the completion of Action 2 awareness of, and commitment to, Action 3 was limited, although all partners can point to significant learning that could usefully be more widely disseminated. For most sub-projects, the end loading of activity meant that testing and evaluation was limited, and that material for dissemination was limited. A project manager for Action 3 was appointed in September 2004. Some partners whose projects were wound up before the revised end date did however show an interest in Action 3, and could have benefited from an earlier start to Action 3.

However, the partnership undertook some dissemination-related activity during Action 2. We refer elsewhere to transnational activity. In addition the Project Team organised a *'Making the Most of the Media'* training day designed to help partners with their dissemination activity, and exchange study visits with two other EQUAL projects.

4.3 Conclusions

4.3.1 From the data currently available, work piloted by at least nine partner projects will continue and be developed, using other sources of funding. These are:

Partner/project	Activity	Dissemination messages & mainstreaming potential*	
Parentline Plus	National rollout of new training programme for parents piloted in Gloucestershire under CLiP	Issues in reaching hard-to-reach learners: use of learning advocates: partnership working	1
PhD	Continuation of forum for learners with physical disabilities originally part funded by CLiP, including PhD website	Implementing an empowerment process: technical	3
Furniture Recycling Project	Outward Bound training piloted under CLiP now funded by Gloucestershire LSC	Empowerment benefits of joint training for staff, volunteers and trainees	1
Forest of Dean Housing	Local computer access points for residents through housing associations, building on CLiP project for residents in sheltered housing	Implementation: accessing hard to reach learners in rural areas: organisational role of champions and dedicated resources in HR	1
ACET-Artshape	'Accessible' enrolment forms for learners with learning difficulties developed under CLiP now being used in Gloucestershire	Implementation: overcoming barriers to learning: empowerment: the product itself	3
ACET-LION	New community learning champion training will be offered again in Gloucestershire	Implementation: attracting learners: partnership	2
Gloucestershire Professional Development Unit	Development unit for LLN tutors has funding for another year	Implementation	1
Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Projects Network	EQUAL II funding for a project piloting ways of empowering local communities to design their own learning-builds on work to enhance the skills and knowledge of GNPN staff and volunteers. Funding also gained for further development for support workers.	Implementation: empowering local communities: benefits of systems and QA in delivering CbL	1
Gloucestershire Library and Information Service	Kiosk project: after pilot schemes a kiosk has been installed in Brockweir and Hewelsfield Village Shop, providing library information and services primarily through IT.	Implementation: accessing hard-to-reach learners	1

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In addition:

MAIDeN	CLiP-funded 'Partnership dating agency' and partnership development toolkit was not wholly successful. Database of web-accessible community information and website on which they were based is successful and will be used within Gloucestershire and nationally	Technical and implementation issues: other organisations interested in the model	3
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4.3.2 A number of other CLiP projects will continue if funding can be secured:

Partner/project	Activity	Dissemination messages & mainstreaming potential	
Parentline Plus	Pilot programme of outreach work and training aimed at hard to reach learners that will inform Parentline Plus in accessing hard-to-reach learners	Implementation: working with women returners and substance abusers: partnership	2
Gloucestershire Library and Information Service	Learner Support - learning opportunities in Libraries for hard-to-reach audiences using new approaches and working with other learning providers: development will continue.	Implementation issues: accessing hard-to-reach learners	1
GEAR	Learning in a one-stop shop for the vulnerably housed and socially excluded: GEAR anticipates this work continuing	Accessing hard-to-reach learners: overcoming barriers to learning: partnership	1
Cheltenham CVS	Development of a user-friendly Community Lifelong Learning Handbook for use by learners and support workers: development will continue if funding available	Accessing hard-to-reach learners: overcoming barriers to learning: implementation	1
Linking Communities	Accredited training for black/ethnic minority VCS committee members: will continue if funding available	Empowering local communities: partnership: implementation	2

4.3.3 The following projects have potential to be developed further but further development is required and/or plans are at present uncertain:

Partner/project	Activity	Dissemination messages & mainstreaming potential	
Cambridge Training and Development Ltd	Parentline Plus web board as a medium for design and development of training in a nation-wide CbL organisation	Implementation: technical	2

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ACET Priors Park Project	Multi-agency and empowering approach to providing CbL	Implementation: empowerment: partnership and integration in delivering CbL	2
Shoshin Ltd	Using psychometrics to analyse and develop the strengths of VCS workers	Use and value of psychometrics in VCS environment: potential for team working, recruitment.	2
ACET Curriculum mapping	Mapping learning options for CbL workers in Gloucestershire. Work completed: still to be implemented and evaluated	Implementation: pathways to learning: overcoming barriers to learning	2

4.3.4 The following are unlikely to be developed further in their present form, but offer valuable dissemination messages:

Partner/project	Activity	Dissemination messages & mainstreaming potential	
ACET OCN Tutoring Older Learners	Pilot OCN accredited course for those supporting older learners	Implementation: partnership issues: issues regarding the 'fit' of older learners in the current LLN agenda	1
Gloucestershire Library and Information Service	'Work experience' for learners support workers in libraries	Implementation: partnership issues	2
Barton Tredworth & Eastgate Community Trust	Training for Life Coaches to work with young black men	Implementation: accessing hard-to-reach learners	2
Cambridge Training and Development Ltd	Library & Information Service Using Your Library CD-ROM	Implementation: technical	2
Royal Forest of Dean College	Training for care workers in using reminiscence in social care of the elderly	Implementation: accessing hard-to-reach learners: particular issues in the care industry: partnership issues	1
University of Gloucestershire	Survey to assess level of voluntary activity within the University and support and training needs	Implementation: recruiting volunteers	1
GL14	Feasibility study for a community enterprise	Implementation: partnership	1
Mainstreaming potential: 3 = 'product' with definite potential for use outside Gloucestershire 2 = 'product' principles have wider application 1 = good practice and lessons learnt can be disseminated			

In addition, NIACE conducted 'pure' action research into e-communication in the VCS, intended to contribute to dissemination and Action 3 activity.

The transition to mainstreaming is difficult: the reality is that many innovations, though potentially useful, are not widely adopted, usually because sufficient resources are not

available to bring them to a wider market. The resources needed include specific expertise in managing the mainstreaming process, which smaller organisations do not possess.

There were constraints on partners' ability to fully develop their innovative ideas, e.g. individual organisation's limited resources, lack of strategic drive, organisational systems working against deadlines. Furthermore, slow starts and end loading of project activity did not create the opportunity to test mainstreaming potential during the funded life of the project.

In common with most innovative projects, significant lessons have been learnt, and a number of sub-projects have developed ideas that have a wider market (not necessarily commercial). The key issue is whether partners as a group want to capitalise on the experience of CLiP, and whether they have the incentive to do so.

4.4 Recommendations

Moving innovative ideas into the mainstream requires considerable additional and possibly specialised resources and expertise that may not be available, particularly within small organisations. Future partnerships should consider how they can acquire the expertise and resources required to achieve effective dissemination and mainstreaming.

Future similar activities should also plan in dissemination and mainstreaming at the initial planning stages, if only in a broad brush fashion.

CLiP has produced a number of examples of good or innovative practice, some of which are detailed here. In some cases these merit further investment in order to mainstream. In keeping with the ethos of EQUAL, models of good or innovative practice from CLiP should be identified, fully evaluated internally, documented and disseminated more widely, using Action 3 as a basis. This activity would be carried most effectively by a small task group rather than by individual partners acting alone.

5 Good practice and issues in development & delivery of LLN and CbL in Gloucestershire

- CLiP undoubtedly produced examples of good practice in learning delivery processes and products, and we refer elsewhere (Section 4) to some possible examples. We also refer elsewhere to the major issues surrounding the identification and dissemination of good practice.
- During reviews, most partners commented that organisations and individuals had learnt from the CLiP experience. A great deal of learning occurred around the management of innovative learning projects.
- Whether this learning will be embedded within the CbL community in Gloucestershire remains to be seen. Certainly this did not occur to the extent anticipated during Action 2, for reasons explored elsewhere. There was no formal process for the identification and dissemination of good practice, where the bid envisaged group research activity and the formation of thematic groups within the Partnership that could have fulfilled this function.

6 Attracting committed learners

6.1 Overview

A crucial issue in LLN is that of attracting committed learners. The number of people in the UK identified as having a potential LLN need is far greater than the number signed up for learning, and the number of active learners is considerably smaller still. As we have noted elsewhere, a number of CLiP sub-projects had the potential to attract hard-to reach learners and/or to increase their consciousness of their need.

6.2 Findings

6.2.1 Emerging issues included:

- There was some debate on the issue of older learners: two of the three projects involving older learners were not specifically aimed at improving employability. However, programmes such as these can potentially have value in developing older people as learning advocates if correctly presented and positioned.
- There were indications that potential learners suffer from a real lack of clear information about learning opportunities. Activities such as the ACET's curriculum mapping and Cheltenham CVS's Lifelong Learning Handbook appeared not to be revolutionary but met an unfilled need.
- The clear and unsurprising message from most activity aimed at uncommitted and hard-to-reach learners was that the right location and the right people recruiting and supporting learners were critical success factors.

Other comments from partners/associate partners on attracting learners included:

- *'Branding a learning opportunity as learning seems to disengage the audience. Branding it as a community activity engages the audience, particularly when it is a collaborative event with other community based partners.'*
- One partner suggested that there was little enthusiasm for accreditation from beneficiaries.

6.2.2 We were able to examine the effect of CLiP learning activity on some learners.

Parentline Plus delivered much of the training delivered by CLiP, and carried out internal evaluation through an end of course questionnaire. We analysed data from the questionnaires for the period up to July 2003. Analysis of data on 186 respondents showed:

- The number of participants considering further learning increased from 71% to 94% after receiving training.
- The number **strongly** agreeing that they were thinking about further training rose from 28% to 54% after receiving training.
- Lone parents made up 26% of the group, suggesting that at least some disadvantaged groups are being reached.
- However, beneficiaries were predominantly white, and overwhelmingly female.
- All participants were working age, with 78.5% age 26-45.

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We also analysed data from the less detailed Parentline Plus end of course questionnaires used between September 2003 and April 2004 and aggregated these with results from the earlier survey. Analysis of data from 704 respondents completing evaluation questionnaires showed:

	Might do another course	Have already started another course	Have suggested courses to others
yes	574	98	359
no	63	525	270
Tot	637	623	629
% yes	90.11	15.73	57.07
% no	9.89	84.27	42.93
Tot	100.00	100.00	100.00

- 90% responding were considering other learning activity
- 16% responding said they had already engaged in further learning.
- 57% responding said they had recommended learning to others.

6.2.3 We also aggregated the opinions of beneficiaries from three projects with much smaller beneficiary numbers: the Library and Information Service Learner support and kiosk projects and the ACET/Artshape accessible forms project:

	Satisfied with the experience	More confident in specific activity learnt	More confident generally	Considering more learning	Have already done more learning	Have suggested learning to others
yes	19	19	14	11	8	11
no	1	1	6	3	12	9
Tot	20	20	20	14	20	20
% yes	95	95	70	79	40	55
% no	5	5	30	21	60	45
Tot	100	100	100	100	100	100

Both sets of data appear to confirm the thesis that most forms of learning-if they prove to be good experiences-will encourage individuals to engage in further learning. There is

also confirmation that satisfied learners are powerful advocates of learning: they tell others about the experience.

6.3 **Conclusions**

Most projects directly offering learning were doing so primarily to meet partners' own objectives. However, there were clearly examples of approaches that attracted new learners. In particular:

- GEAR
- Parentline Plus
- ACET Priors Park

Whether these new learners become committed learners will become apparent in future. However, the indications from the evidence available is that CLiP learning projects did provide motivation to learners to continue learning, and that these approaches merit being continued and developed.

7 **Development of pathways to employment & learning**

7.1 **Overview**

This CLiP objective complements that of *'Attracting committed learners'*: Once attracted, learners must be converted into committed long term learners and be positively encouraged to seek out further developmental learning opportunities, and ultimately employment. For many learners, the latter is a long-term prospect, depending on a steady progression through a series of increasingly challenging learning experiences. Providing for this progression is a noticeable weakness in much Community-based Learning in the UK. Information on available learning is not well documented, and rarely presented in a form easily accessible to learners. Frequently learners are provided with little incentive to progress: they tend to remain loyal to the organisation providing their training and are not positively encouraged to seek more stretching opportunities elsewhere. Many VCS organisations are not resourced to offer the support and advice needed.

7.2 **Findings**

The principal projects offering learning under this heading were:

- ACET curriculum mapping: work done and promotional leaflet produced: product will now be trialled and evaluated.
- Cheltenham CVS Community Lifelong Learning Handbook: also requires testing and further development

Other related activities included:

- Parentline Plus have acknowledged the importance of providing independent advice on further learning opportunities by starting to use IAG advisors to support learners on their programmes. This should encourage learners to consider learning outside the security of a known provider and ensure they receive unbiased advice.

- A number of projects were designed to encourage beneficiaries to take the first steps towards lifelong learning and employment, for example:
 - GEAR
 - Furniture Recycling Project
 - ACET Priors Park

A typical comment from one such partner was: *'The project is all about initial engagement. It is too early to discuss pathways. We need to consolidate re-engagement with good experiences before we move on to more structured learning.'* There was little evidence of progress into work by beneficiaries. However, this was not a priority for many CLiP projects, where the emphasis was on the early stages of attracting people to learning.

7.3 Conclusions

This was a primary focus of the EQUAL programme and a CLiP objective but there was limited achievement during Action 2.

8 Building capacity in LLN and CbL

8.1 Overview

This was an important aspect of CLiP: the aim was to build the capacity of the VCS to deliver learning across Gloucestershire as well as the capacity of individual partners.

8.2 Findings

The Professional Development Unit became fully operational and was active in delivering training and raising awareness amongst current and potential LLN teachers and organisations. It may take some time for its work to come to fruition, but the Unit should impact on provision across the county. However, some issues emerged:

- Critical shortage of Basic Skills teachers and support staff and training
- Competition for personnel
- Heavy dependence on FE/AE for delivery

Examples of capacity building by individual partners included:

- ACET LION training for community learning champions
- Forest of Dean Housing: CBT in rural communities
- Linking Communities committee member training
- Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Projects Network quality development and committee member and staff training
- ACET curriculum mapping (potential)
- Parentline Plus: use of learning advocates
- MAIDeN (potential)

By April 2004, however, some partners were conscious of the potential for building future networks.

8.3 Conclusions

Individual partners have clearly benefited from the capacity-building opportunity provided by CLiP. Given the pre-existing lack of 'partnership awareness', it is unsurprising that a more unified and integrated cross-count approach did not emerge.

There was arguably an opportunity for ACET Community Development Unit to target and support more VCS providers of training in developing capacity. However, some partners were not at a stage of development or resourced to benefit from this. For example, the offer of training in use of the 'soft skills' Personal Development Pack was only taken up by one partner, and the Pack was not used in CLiP.

9 Building personal capability in LLN and CbL

9.1 Findings

This was not a major focus of CLiP. However, reviews with partners indicated that their staff and volunteers had in a number of instances learned greatly from their involvement in CLiP, either in terms of developing practical expertise or in terms of understanding. This appeared to apply particularly to:

- Furniture Recycling Project tutors and volunteers
- ACET volunteer learner support workers
- Library and Information Service project staff
- ACET/Artshape accessible form project workers
- Parentline Plus: learning advocates
- ACET LION learner support workers
- Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Projects Network project committee workers and support workers

9.2 Conclusions

Our previous comments apply here too: had the strategic vision of CLiP been fully realised, achievements in this area could have been greater-and would have been more necessary. Recognising the fluidity of the voluntary and community sector labour market, it will be important to retain this learning. More detailed and effective internal evaluation could help ensure this. However, the greatest benefits in this area may have been intangible and attitudinal-alerting workers to the future possibilities.

10 Supporting learners and workers

The project tested a variety of approaches to supporting learners and workers, none highly original, but all adding to capacity and capability in the county. Examples included:

- ACET OCN in older learner support. Priorities in LLN have changed and market demand is not yet there. There are barriers to implementation as the care sector – potentially the major source of recruitment – is not committed. The need for staff to attain basic care qualifications also currently takes precedence. However, longer term this is an issue which is likely to move up the agenda again.
- Furniture Recycling Project found that staff benefited and were empowered by engaging in Outward Bound training alongside trainees.
- Parentline Plus used learning advocates to promote training
- ACET LION training was a new approach to learning advocacy in the community

We should note also the impact of the support provided by the Partnership Development Officers on sub-projects. Their use is a model for future good practice.

11 Equality and empowerment

Equality of opportunity and empowerment are two of the core principles of Development Partnerships.

Most of the original partners embraced empowerment as a principle. We found some good examples of empowerment in action, particularly amongst associate partners and contractors. For example:

- ACET/Artshape accessible forms project offered both an easy-to-use enrolment form for those with learning difficulties and used learners with disabilities to carry our design and development
- PhD forum for learners with physical disabilities trained members of the forum to deliver awareness training to learning providers: they are now an active pressure group engaged in furthering the interests of learners with physical disabilities
- The GEAR project raised the self esteem of learners who had previously been 'outside the system'
- The ACET Priors Park project involved residents heavily in a survey of learning needs and there was community involvement in the management of the project, resulting in some significant organisational and personal learning
- Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Projects Network and Linking Communities' committee member training was felt to have had a significant effect in empowering community representatives, some of whom were not high academic attainers
- Cheltenham CVS actively involved the target audience in the research and development of its Community Lifelong Learning Handbook

However, in a number of instances the potential for beneficiary involvement in design, research or training was not used as it might have been. Beneficiaries were not involved in Transnational activity.

Some partners are aware of equality of opportunity issues and are striving to tackle these. An example is Parentline Plus, who have been aware for some time that ethnic minorities and men are under represented amongst their learners. Although CLiP has not solved these problems, the experience has added to the fund of knowledge regarding this issue.

12 Transnational activity

12.1 Introduction

Transnationality is one of the five core principles driving Development Partnerships. Dissemination and mainstreaming should occur across countries, not simply on a regional or national basis, and there is great value for partners in benchmarking comparable activities in different environments. CLiP's transnational partners were Real Diversity, Sweden and DAWN, Ireland, both also EQUAL projects. Transnational activity focused on periodic meetings, conferences and study visits, including attendance at Employment Week, Brussels in April 2004. Two task groups were formed to produce a model diversity charter for organisations, and a CD-ROM containing diversity case studies drawn from the partners' experiences.

12.2 Findings

In our reviews with partners we considered the impact of transnational activity on partners and the partnership, but it was not part of our remit to evaluate the transnational activity itself.

Reviews indicated that the individuals who participated in transnational activity gained valuable personal learning from it. One partner involved in transnational activity considered CLiP *'the most productive partnership we have been involved in.'*

However, there was little formal dissemination of lessons within the partnership. Partners not directly involved did not appear to benefit significantly from transnational activity, or to be particularly aware of the outcomes. Organisational learning within partner organisations also appeared to be limited.

It is a measure of the value CLiP partners placed on the Transnational Partnership that they were concerned to maintain the Transnational Partnership against considerable difficulties created by financial constraints on the other partners. CLiP was the prime mover in ensuring that the Transnational Partnership continued in the face of these difficulties. For those involved, the Transnational Partnership was apparently more of a reality as a partnership than CLiP itself. About 50% of partners engaged in CLiP were involved in transnational activity.

12.3 Conclusions

Comparing outcomes against the original activities proposed in the bid, the pattern of other CLiP activity was repeated: the transnational activity did not extend to jointly developing and trialling models of good practice. However, the nature of the

Transnational Partnership appears to have encouraged more sharing of experience and reflection than occurred within CLiP Action 2.

12.4 Recommendations

Partnerships should consider ways in the value of any transnational activity can be maximised, in particular how:

- transnational activity can contribute fully to project purpose:
- all partners' views and experiences can be represented in transnational activity: and
- outcomes from activity (including individual and organisational learning) can be most effectively disseminated within the partnership.

13 CLiP's impact

13.1 Introduction

The bid stated that CLiP would: *'provide a much needed "step-change" in the availability, access to and co-ordination of community-based lifelong learning that promotes equality and diversity, and removes barriers to access and progression in learning and in work for people facing discrimination and inequality. ESF intervention, in synergy with other initiatives, will pilot new approaches and seek to deliver embedded and sustainable change.'*

13.2 Findings

Most partners did not appear to have signed up to the principles of *'step-change'*, *'co-ordination'* and *'embedded and sustainable change'* at the start of Action 2. Slower than anticipated project progress exacerbated this: partners did not have a large volume of data to compare and analyse within thematic and research groups for most of the project lifetime. In the absence of strong pressures or favourable environment to encourage partnership working, there was little incentive to work in partnership. The key issue is whether CLiP has changed partners' and stakeholders' perceptions. Comments on the project's impact included:

- *'We now have a budget of £140,000 to develop community initiatives to access learning.'*
- *'Enabled us to employ a person and improve the team skill mix but has not yet made a significant difference to Gloucestershire. It has....begun to raise interest in users.'*
- *'No real difference.'*
- *'Possible delivery models are emerging...importance of multi-agency working to re-engage hard to reach learners.'*
- *'It's made a difference to some partners'*
- *'The late start has significantly influenced the potential contribution that these projects could have made.'*

- *‘...the research process and exchange of information has increased the level of debate, but not yet action.’*
- *‘People’s reluctance to take on anything new is disappointing, though...individual partners are less reluctant’*
- *‘There is no doubt that the project has developed greater community participation and empowerment’*
- *I think we’re getting there’*
- *‘The process....has the potential for influencing the approach within Gloucestershire - IF the providers and voluntary sector really want to work as a single unit.’*
- *‘Could inform development of the Lifelong Learning Strategy’*

When we asked partners and associate partners how important it was that CLiP’s work continued after August 2004, they responded:

	Very	Fairly	Not at all
<i>It is important to me that the work of CLiP continues after August 2004</i>	46%	31%	23%
<i>It is important to my organisation that the work of CLiP continues after August 2004</i>	50%	17%	33%

A significant positive outcome was a Strategic Framework for Community Learning event in July 2004, when some members of the partnership and other stakeholders considered future possibilities and options. The conclusions from the day are likely to be taken forward by Gloucestershire Learning Partnership, the major forum for learning issues in the county.

13.3 Conclusions

Individual partners can point to significant achievements that have advanced their own aims and provided valuable learning. This in itself could be expected to have had some impact on CbL infrastructure, capacity and capability.

CLiP has clearly raised consciousness amongst some key players of the possibilities for, and issues faced by, CbL. The greatest benefits may have been intangible and attitudinal: alerting workers and stakeholders to the future possibilities.

Some small partnerships have been generated or sustained through CLiP, and more dialogue has also resulted. The bid vision of a more unified and organised approach to delivering Community-based Learning, involving the VCS, education and government and giving partners an influential voice, has not so far been realised, although there is active ongoing debate regarding this. Constraints included:

- In Gloucestershire, there are fewer social and economic inducements for partnership working relative to many other parts of the UK, and fewer precedents

- There was also less recognition within the VCS of learning as a regeneration tool that can also help achieve organisational objectives.
- Organisational change amongst the major partners meant that there was limited continuity between the conception, development and delivery of CLiP. This resulted also in there being no clear strategic steer, when the partnership as a whole was insufficiently developed or committed to reach informed, democratic decisions. There was therefore little sense of a shared vision for CLiP, and some partners' commitment was low.
- The EQUAL funding regime itself can impede effective partnership building
- A number of individual projects initially made slow progress due to recruitment and other resource allocation issues, particularly amongst public sector partners. CLiP Action 2 could not therefore progress to the stage of collating experience and reflecting and acting on it envisaged in the bid.

The environment in Gloucestershire is also unhelpful. Pockets of disadvantage tend to be disguised by overall prosperity and the demographics of the county: inequality is probably less prominent on the agenda than in many other counties and perceived need is not as great. This appears to be confirmed by research (Edwards, Goodwin, Pemberton and Woods, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 2000) into rural regeneration, which suggested that there was *'an uneven geography in which some areas become 'partnership rich' and others 'partnership poor'*.

The research also suggested that:

- *'The lead-in time for preparing bids is frequently too short to enable appropriate structures and sustainable relationships to be constructed.'*
- *'Time and resources were required to develop good working relations between partners and collaborative processes' and that*
- *'Under limited-life programmes, developing effective partnership working can consume a considerable proportion of available time. Realising the benefits of partnership projects may need longer than typical programmes allow.'*

Additional factors affecting partnership in Gloucestershire include:

- Geography can make communication difficult and accentuates social differences.
- Tendency for some communities to be inward looking
- Two-tier LA structure

These factors suggest that there is a definite barriers to building and maintaining a continuing CbL partnership, but also suggest some priority areas where solutions are required.

13.4 Recommendation

CLiP Action 2 did not progress as far as originally envisaged in recording, collating, comparing and reflecting on partners' experiences. Partners should make the best possible use of Action 3 to build upon individual Action 2 successes, and also to disseminate the learning offered by all experiences, successful or otherwise. The possible benefits of Action 3 involvement should be clarified to those partners who have

so far shown little interest in or commitment to it, and it should be viewed as a possible precursor to a longer term CbL partnership in Gloucestershire.