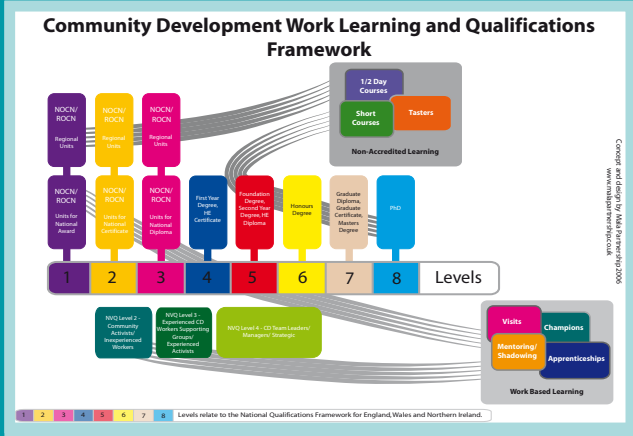




Developing the infrastructure for Community Development Learning and Qualifications in London



Research commissioned by:
London Work Force Development sub group of the London Regional Consortium for Change Up



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Section 1

Background

This project is a follow on piece of work designed to take forward the report produced in 2006 which mapped the range of community development work learning available in London.

The aim was to explore ways to increase the availability of community development work learning programmes, and to suggest future actions. The project aimed to examine whether community development training would be best delivered at a pan London level through a new centre or if there was the potential to develop existing sub regional and local training providers to add community development to their portfolios.

Funding was obtained from Workforce Development sub group of the London Regional Consortium for ChangeUp. A small working group convened to oversee this project with members from Scarman, LVSC, East London CVS Network, the Central London CVS Network and the Community Development regional network. The consultant was Val Harris, who was supported by Ali Rusbridge and others involved in the different strands of the research.

Section 2

Understanding Community Development

There are many ways to work in communities but they are not all based on community development, and not everyone is aware of what is really meant by community development and so a summary of what we mean is presented here as part of the context for this research.

Community development work has a long history in the UK, dating back to the social campaigners in the Victorian era (the 19th Century) and since then has evolved and adapted as it sought to survive in times of social change whilst retaining its principles and values. Governments have seen it as having different uses in implementing their policies, whether as part of withdrawing from colonies, tackling poverty, through to engaging its citizens in the workings of government and influencing local decision-makers.

Community development is about changing the situation of those who have least power and resources, through enabling them to analyse what their problems are and how they want to collectively tackle them.

Community development principles and values are based around

- Making changes
- Social and environmental justice
- Communities deciding on the issues
- People working together
- People having a greater say in decisions that affect their communities
- People learning from each other and from reflecting on previous activities

Community development work is primarily a process, a way of working that produces results. To undertake community development work (paid or unpaid) requires an understanding of the process, and lots of skills and knowledge.

The main areas of work and roles undertaken by community development reflect the circular process of community development

- Getting to know a community – of interest, identity, or location
- Finding out what they see as their needs and the issues that concern them
- Bringing people together to agree their aims and make their plans to realise them
- Encouraging people to work together effectively in a group and with other groups and communities
- Assisting groups to decide how best to organise themselves – through formal or informal systems and structures
- Supporting groups to get the necessary resources to run their group and activities
- Bringing people together to learn from each other and to evaluate their activities
- Learning from their own practice through critical reflection as part of their continuous professional development

Community development is essentially a bottom up approach, of supporting and empowering people to take action with others in their community. It is based on the belief that people can develop their skills and knowledge to make a difference which will benefit others in their community.

There are national occupational standards that set out what a community development worker (whether they are employed or an activist) should know and be able to do. The full set of standards can be found at www.lifelonglearninguk.org and you can find summary sheets at www.fcdl.org.uk

Section 3

Government policies relating to Community Empowerment and Engagement

The National Government has outlined working definitions for both community empowerment and community engagement within the joint Department for Communities and Local Government and Local Government Association's published Community Empowerment Action Plan.

Community empowerment is the giving of confidence, skills and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them.

Community engagement is the process whereby public bodies reach out to communities to create empowerment opportunities.

Community development supports communities to collectively identify their needs and decide how best to achieve their aims.

The Governments' Community Empowerment Action Plan takes forward a shared community empowerment agenda and sets out the steps being taken, working across government and in partnership with others, towards three key outcomes:

1. Greater participation, collective action and engagement in democracy
2. Changes in attitude towards community empowerment
3. Improved performance of public services and quality of life

Many of the national government policies require community engagement and empowerment – for example:

- Strong and prosperous communities - The Local Government White Paper, 2006.
- Public Service Agreement 21; Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities
- Action plan for Community Empowerment;
- Performance Framework for Local Authorities;
- Partnership working: Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements.
- Community planning
- Local government modernisation and transforming public services
- Strengthening Communities, Sustainable Communities, Social Capital
- Community involvement in health
- Role of Third Sector in social and economic regeneration; asset transfer
- District community development strategies
- Civic renewal and active citizenship
- Community and social cohesion

The recent announcements about the importance the Key Indicator 4 about people feeling that they can influence local government shows the governments determination to ensure that Local Authorities and other public bodies are influenced by local people in a way that meets community needs more effectively.

Community development has an essential role to play in ensuring that communities and community groups are able to contribute to these agendas. (see Firm Foundations Home Office 2004; Community Development Challenge Report DCLG 2007, An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success, DCLG, 2007).

Community development is a cross sector profession, and includes practitioners employed by the Third Sector (including Registered Social Landlords as well as voluntary and community groups) and by public bodies (including Locals Authorities and PCTs) to support community groups. It includes residents active in their local community.

Section 4

Details of the Research

4.1 Commissioned work with different stakeholders

The working group commissioned three pieces of research to determine the need for different kinds of community development work training and qualifications:

- a. Development Workers in Local Infrastructure organisations – undertaken by STAN through its members
- b. Active community members – undertaken by Scarman using their Can Do programme members
- c. Community development workers – undertaken through the Community Development regional forum, CDX and FCDL members.

The surveys of Development Workers and Community Development Workers were designed to be complementary and were conducted primarily through email contacts. The research by Scarman involved a group discussion and drew upon existing reports.

a. STAN is the Second Tier Advisors network, a project run by London Voluntary Service Council designed to support advisors and development workers in second tier voluntary organisations. STAN provides networking opportunities, information, learning sessions and conferences for 224 full members and 94 friends – a total of 318 individuals from 196 organisations. Full members of the network are those that spend most of their time working with voluntary and community groups. Whilst some STAN members are (by their own definition) community development workers, the majority are development workers.

Development workers are not the same as community development workers; they are often employed by 2nd tier voluntary organisations (like Councils for Voluntary Service) providing support to the voluntary and community sectors. Many provide organisational and governance advice for new and existing groups, and some also have specialisms, for example in fundraising, social enterprise, or in working with particular client groups. Routes into development work are varied, and few formal qualifications for the work exist. However, in recent years a competency framework (see www.skild.org.uk) has been developed and is being used by an increasing number of organisations.

Although there are difference between development work and community development work, STAN has found that many development workers are themselves confused about what they are; some may already be using a community development work approach, others have indicated that they would like to. The research on Mainstreaming Diversity, produced for ChangeUp indicates that many smaller community groups would like them to do so.¹

CVS's have a role in working with the smaller community groups and their workers have training needs in developing the skills and knowledge to be able to use a community development approach when relevant as this would make them more effective as workers.

b. Active community members were involved through the activities undertaken by the Scarman Trust; they ran a consultation session with Can Doers, analysed the feedback from the learning logs of an OCN accredited Community Work Skills course, and completed a needs analysis conducted for Can Doers who received a Community Champions award in 2007. The individuals supported by the Scarman Trust London region and who received a Community Champions award are known as Can Doers.

¹ Mainstreaming Diversity. Report to ChangeUp. Zahno Rao Associates 2006

This research revealed the wide-ranging individuals felt that they played; often they felt that they were carrying the whole burden themselves; not just organising the projects but also doing the donkey work the washing and clearing up. Because of the time intensive nature of the various community activities being undertaken, what the Can Doers mostly required was support and encouragement for their project. Participants felt they needed the relevant legal information to underpin their work. They thought that the learning about the context to local community development work might only be appropriate or of interest to some Can Doers. They did not differentiate between community development support and capacity building support. The impression was given that activists required a one-stop shop, with a range of support provided for capacity building and community development learning built in. The crucial element which cuts across both these areas was that they required a friendly and encouraging approach from the “professionals” they encountered.

c. Community development workers were invited to contribute to a web and email based survey about training needs in community development. In addition a day conference, funded through this project, was co-organised with the regional community development forum and CDX, at which the morning session was devoted to examining the training and learning needs of the different stakeholders involved with community development work. The work from this conference was presented back to another workshop that refined the priorities for community development learning for London.

Community development workers in London are employed in all sectors – within statutory bodies such as Local Authorities and PCT’s, in the voluntary sector such as Housing Associations, CVS’s, the large children’s organisations; within community groups; and within private sector agencies, collectives and individuals working independently.

The range of job titles recorded in the research is wide ranging, and from the descriptions of the roles they undertake several respondents were not involved in community development per se, some may be using a community development work approach to their job, others are obviously working with community groups but not in a community development role or using that approach. Community development work has had its own national occupational standards since the mid 1990’s and some people are very familiar with the key purpose and roles, whilst others are still using community development as a generic term to mean any way of working in communities.

Within London there is no equivalent community development body to STAN, although the number of active community development workers is higher than development workers within 2nd tier bodies. With the changes to the Scarman Trust since its merger with Novas there may be less support to community activists.

This research demonstrates the urgent need for greater support for community development learning across London.

Summary of the number of respondents

12 development workers responded to the STAN survey; 27 community development workers completed the community development survey and 10 participants from the Can Do programme were involved in the Scarman research.

A further 40 people attended the community development work conference and another 10 the follow up workshop, and all of their contributions have been included. Thus around 100 people contributed which gives us a workable sample to draw some conclusions from.

4.2 Other aspects to the research

Research was undertaken into different models of assessment and training centres around the country to gather information on the range of qualifications being offered, the issues they were facing, and the way they were organised.

Further research was undertaken within London to update the previous research into training providers and the range of awards on offer; this was undertaken through contacting awarding bodies and universities.

4.3 Supporting materials

As part of the work undertaken prior to the community development conference and workshop a number of briefing papers and summaries of the research were produced.

These include:

Summaries of community development work learning and qualifications wanted by the three main groups of people contacted during the research:

- Analysis of how and where the training and learning programmes should be delivered – at local, sub regional and pan London
- An outline strategy for community development work and learning for London
- Opportunities to work with training providers
- Summary of ideas generated for taking things forward and possible models paper

All of these papers have been collated into a briefing pack and are available on request and they will be hosted on LVSC's web site www.lvsc.org.uk

This pack includes:

- The report of the research into the situation of community development practitioners; this gives the details of the survey and its result from community development workers
- The summary of the research into development workers in second tier organisations; this gives the details of the survey undertaken by STAN and its result from development workers
- The summary of the research into active community members; this gives the details of the work by Scarman with community members
- The community development work conference report; which details the results of the mapping at the conference of what kinds of training and learning were needed by the different groups of community development practitioners
- Different models for moving forward; this pulls together all the ideas for what could happen in London to improve the current situation
- Community development training and learning – summary of what provision should be delivered and where; this collates peoples ideas about what should be delivered at a pan London level, at sub regional and borough level
- Activities at regional, sub regional and local levels; this pulls together peoples ideas about what needs to happen at the different levels to ensure that community development is effectively supported through learning
- The submission to the London Regional ChangeUp Plan 2008
- The Community Development Work Learning and Qualifications Framework
- Summary of interviews with key providers in the London area; this collates some of the opportunities raised through this research for practical actions that could be taken. The submission to the London Regional Change Up Plan 2008
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Section 5

Key Findings of the Research

5.1 Employment of community development workers

- There is an increasing number of people undertaking the range of community development work key roles in response to the governments policy agenda around community empowerment and engagement.
- There is a wide range of job titles in use, and not all those with the label of community development are actually using community development approaches but are intervening in communities in other ways.
- The nature of the employers of community development work is changing with many now being employed by social housing and health bodies, as well as local authorities and a wide range of voluntary and community groups.
- There are increasing numbers of independent community development workers and trainers.
- Community development practitioners are now employed in all sectors – private, voluntary, community and statutory.

5.2 Understanding of community development work

- There is a lack of understanding at a strategic level of the value of community development and how it contributes to high-level government policy objectives at national, regional and local levels of government.
- The difference between Development Workers within second tier organisations and Community Development Workers is not well understood.
- Many managers and supervisors lack a working understanding of community development work and thus cannot provide the necessary professional support for their community development staff.
- Community development practitioners need an increasing array of skills to work with diverse and marginalised communities and in response to many new government policy initiatives.

5.3 Qualifications in community development

- The majority of people involved in community development have high level qualifications, but often in unrelated subjects.
- Most people involved in community development work do not have relevant qualifications or access to appropriate formal learning programmes.
- People did not know how to determine their training and qualification needs, as there is no agreed requirement for a qualification as exists in other spheres such as Youth Work and Social Work. There is no employer body that accepts that they have jurisdiction in this field.
- The community development learning and qualifications framework is not well recognised or understood by practitioners or employers.
- Few people felt that they needed a community development qualification to gain a post but that they did need access to learning whilst in post in order to be effective; particularly as many people come sideways into the profession from other disciplines.
- The recent changes in government funding for vocational training – through Train To Gain to skill up people to levels 2 and 3, was not relevant to most people who held higher level qualifications in other fields. The withdrawal of funding from 2nd degrees affects those with degrees in unrelated fields who wanted to gain community development qualifications to support them to be effective community development practitioners.

5.4 Awareness of, and access to, CDW learning opportunities

- People do not know what training and learning programmes exist and how to access them.
- There have been a number of changes since the last report into the community development training situation in London 2006 which shows an increase within the infrastructure for accredited programmes; there are now at least 2 NVQ assessment centres; 2 providers about to offer the level 4 City and Guilds higher diploma, and new centers offering the NOCN national awards..
- Although all of the elements within the national community development work learning and qualifications framework now exist within the London region, they are not all available within every sub region and access is patchy.
- There is interest in developing a regional accreditation of prior experience route to qualification by the WEA. A model for which is currently being developed with funding from the National Empowerment Partnership.
- There are many less opportunities for people to gain appropriate informal learning; some of the organisations who offered one day events and short courses on aspects of community development no longer have funding to do this as they have to focus more on their core business; other voluntary organisations have merged and are no longer offering such support. There are few mentoring opportunities or organised learning sets. Funding for such ways of learning has become increasingly restricted over the past few years with the move to Personal Community Development Learning as one aspect of Adult Education, which is expected to recoup its costs through increased charges.
- There is now a substantial mismatch between the kinds of learning that community development practitioners want and the opportunities that are available. Most respondents wanted access to informal learning at different levels to increase their understanding of new policy areas or to improve their practice through sharing ideas and experiences with others. Several wanted access to a mentor who would be able to offer support and guidance in their day-to-day work. Those who wanted to gain qualifications often wished to do so at a higher level – through taking degree or master level units which have now become very expensive through funding changes. Most wanted workbased programmes and there are few of these in London. There was less interest in lower level qualifications that currently attract government funding.
- The lack of access to relevant training and qualifications is creating a block to people being able to move between jobs in , and across, different sectors.

5.5 What is needed

For all community development practitioners to be able to access all the routes within the National Framework for Community Development Work Learning and Qualifications² and be able to choose the most appropriate and relevant for their professional development.

- The different needs of all community development practitioners need to be recognised and catered for.
- The needs of new practitioners are different from experienced workers.
- The requirements of practitioners working at a strategic and partnership level are different from those supporting front line groups.
- Managers need an understanding of the processes of community development but not all the operational skills.
- Other workers who need to engage with communities such as community support officers in the Police Force, require adapted programmes.

² Created in 2004 from the Roots and Routes conference; available from www.fcdl.org.uk and within the briefing pack of material generated by this project

- Community activists need access to quality training which will build their confidence and encourage them to develop the skills to move into life long learning, which will enable them to gain employment in diverse fields as well as continuing with their community activities.
- Development workers and community development workers listed similar areas of learning that they were interested in based on the national occupational standards key roles for community development work and the competency framework for development workers. It would be possible to develop new workshop material which would bring the two groups together to explore a community development approach to supporting community groups and to increase understanding of each others roles and how to work together.
- Many experienced community development workers wanted access to workshops to update their skills and knowledge in new policy areas, and opportunities for higher-level qualifications gained through a work based route (refer to the lists of topics in the survey reports).
- There was agreement about the infrastructure to support community development work learning that should be developed and co-ordinated at a the pan-London level, with some people wanting to see the higher level qualifications delivered at this level. There was less agreement about what should be delivered at sub regional or local level, but generally local level training was perceived as more appropriate for community activists and volunteers. Courses which covered several boroughs might give the necessary numbers to make them viable.
- The topics that would interest people who work with community development workers, as activists, volunteers, colleagues and managers, are listed in the various reports. They can be summarised as relating to:
 - Policy development and implementation; keeping up to date with policy
 - Research and evaluation
 - Lobbying, campaigning and influencing skills
 - Community cohesion; equality and diversity; working with difference
 - Effective participation and engagement
 - Networking
 - Skills development in working with groups
 - Community buildings and asset transfer
 - Sustainability and funding
 - Organisational development; project management
 - Management and supervision.

For managers and colleagues there was a plea that they understood what community development work was, its values, principles and practices; and gave recognition to the complex range of skills and knowledge needed to work within diverse communities.

- The research has confirmed that it would be difficult to establish a new training delivery and assessment centre for London, primarily because there are few resources available for new organisations, and the requirements of funders and awarding bodies require a high level of administrative systems to be developed. However the research has shown that there are several options for building on what exists and organisations keen to get involved.
- A strategic approach is required to meet the identified needs; a strategic document needs preparing which would highlight the value of community development work and learning to government policies and which would be aimed at key decision-making bodies in London.
- A co-ordinating role is required to bring together training providers across the sectors to promote what is available and how to access it and to take actions to develop the infrastructure to cover identified gaps. Issues of resource constraints need to be collated and raised with the relevant government bodies and alliances formed with other national and regional bodies concerned with similar issues.

Section 6

Resulting Actions

The process of this piece of work has led to a number of opportunities opening up:

- i. The regional empowerment consortium funded a small piece of work, undertaken by the national Federation for Community Development Learning FCDL, to gather data on community development work programmes, which will eventually be hosted on the London Civic Forum's new website as a searchable database. The returns submitted so far highlight the importance of health bodies in providing community development training for residents.
- ii. A small group of people have come together to develop a regional community development network for London, supported by CDX, who are planning a few workshops and networking events for the coming year.
- iii. The London Region Open College Network is willing to host a meeting of all centres delivering regional or national OCN units / awards, and their external verifiers to promote these qualifications and to share good practice.
- iv. The universities who offer community development courses endorsed by the England Standards Board (London Metropolitan University and Westminster University) are willing to run open sessions to explain what is covered on their programmes and how individual modules can be taken as part of as persons continuous professional development.
- v. There are two assessment centres in London which are, or have offered, community development work NVQs. They have trained assessors and verifiers and could potentially take on more candidates if there is funding to support them through the process.
- vi. There are a number of agencies with a specialist remit who are interest in developing some joint programmes around community development work – for example London Planning Aid.
- vii. There are opportunities to work through the London based Information Advice and Guidance Centre (IAG) to provide programmes for the training of trainers in community development.
- viii. A statement about the need for community development to be an integral part of the Regional ChangeUp plan was produced and sent in for inclusion within the plan. (see appendix 1)
- ix. Discussions have been initiated with the national community development bodies of FCDL and CDX in relation to the support they can offer to take forward the ideas generated by this research.

Section 7

Recommendations

The research indicated that there were a number of key steps that are needed to be taken to develop the routes with the CDW learning and qualifications framework and to make them accessible across all of London:

1) The development of a community development work and learning strategy for London, which outlines the activities required at a regional, sub regional and borough level. This would be an aspirational statement, which would:

- Explain what CDW is
- Outline how CDW it is different from capacity building for organisations
- Outline the skills are required to work in the complex arena of communities
- Raise the profile of community development work by demonstrating the relevance of CDW to many regional and borough policies.

It would be one way to engage with the key London players who could influence policy and resources.

2) To provide information on what opportunities currently exist and how to access them through:

- Continuing to develop the training directory with the London Civic Forum
- Working with the awarding bodies such as NOCN, City and Guilds and the Universities to publicise what they can offer.
- Developing guidance material to help people decide what their learning and qualification needs are and how best to meet them.

3) To bring together a pan London forum, which would begin to co-ordinate and develop learning opportunities for community development practitioners, including mentoring and informal learning workshops, action learning sets, and tasters as well as the more formal learning programmes.

4) To explore opportunities for training activists at a local level, utilising existing resources and trainers. To improve the publicity of such opportunities.

5) To improve the quality of existing provision of learning and qualification programmes by:

- Encouraging providers to apply for endorsement from the England Standards Board for community development work training and qualifications.
- Widely distributing information about the new guidance packs for employers and training providers created through work for the National Empowerment Partnership (these will be hosted on FCDL and ESB web sites).
- Working with awarding bodies to bring together their external verifiers and programme leaders to share good practice.

6) To support the London Community Development Forum as the regional community development network who could run workshops on policy developments, and link into the national network of community development networks.

7) To bring together the worlds of development workers and community development work practitioners:

- To explore differences and similarities in their roles and responsibilities.
- To provide joint training programmes on shared areas of interest.

8) To develop a route to qualification based on the accreditation of experience scheme, within London.

9) To work with others to develop training and support for managers of community development practitioners.

10) To engage with employers, particularly registered social landlords and health bodies along with Local Authorities and the VCS around the CDW learning agenda.

Section 8

Concluding Comments

Members of the existing steering group have undertaken to make contact with a number of London based and national community development work organisations to ascertain the level of support they can give to these action points and their contribution to this action plan.

The Workforce Development sub group has offered to continue to convene meetings of the original steering groups and to invite others to join the group during the next few months whilst options for resources are explored.

Appendix 1

An idea for a way forward

A possible model for taking this work forward was prepared by the steering group for inclusion in The London Infrastructure Development Plan, by the London Work Force Development sub group of the London Regional Consortium for ChangeUp.

An extract is included here to give a flavour of the resources needed to coordinate the support required for learning for effective community development practice.

The submission outlined what was needed in London to support community development:

- The development of a Community Development Strategy for London which would include a Community Development Learning Strategy
- The resourcing and development of the pan-London Community Development Forum
- The development of a steering Group concerned with community development learning with a remit to expand the delivery of learning and qualifications across London, working with awarding bodies, educational institutions and training providers
- The development and maintenance of links with the national bodies concerned with community development
- Partnership working to develop new ways to support different ways of skilling up the existing community development workforce, through mentoring, accreditation of experience, policy workshops, working with employers

The resources required:

In order to successfully deliver the above, there is a need for a small team:

- Community Development Policy Officer: this post would take forward the strategy work around developing a pan-London Strategy, and promoting an understanding of community development work at regional level, and supporting those who have a sub-regional or borough remit. For example they could work with regional public and 3rd sector agencies including GOL, the Mayors Office, the London Development Agency, London Civic Forum, and the London sub-regional CVS Networks amongst others.
- Community Development Learning Officer: This post would have responsibility for taking forward the community development learning work, for example by taking advantage of the opportunities to work with awarding bodies such as NOCN, and providers of qualifications such as Universities who offer the full range of community development degrees and NVQ assessment centres, to expand opportunities for people in London to have access to appropriate community development training. They could bring together a consortium of training providers to promote existing opportunities and to develop new provision in boroughs where there is currently gaps. They could undertake strategic work with funders to release resources to support learning within the VCS. They could develop and publicise the training directory currently being out together by the current project and FCDL with funding from the London Community Empowerment Consortium. They could co-ordinate training for trainers of community development work courses.
- Admin post: this post would be responsible for providing administrative support to the two officers, and work with them to deliver a series of events organised at regional, sub regional and borough level to demonstrate the value of community development work and to provide people with the skills/ knowledge to engage communities in these key policy areas that affect them.
- Resources to support events and activities to take forward these agendas in partnership with others

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