



Learning Community Accounts Pilots Case Study Report 5

Cardigan and South Ceredigion



Research

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Audience	The voluntary and community learning sector, providers of training and DCELLS programme delivery, funding and planning departments.
Overview	The evaluation of the Community Learning Account pilot has involved individual evaluations of each pilot and a collective evaluation of the overall approach. This report presents the individual 'case study' findings for one of the five pilot projects.
Action required	None
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Additional copies	This report is available online at http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/research-and-evaluation/124540/?lang=en
Related documents	Case Study Report 1: TDG Case Study Report 2: CwmNi Case Study Report 3: Fairyland (Neath) Case Study Report 4: Caia Park Partnership Limited Evaluation of the Learning Community Accounts Pilots

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1 Introduction to the Learning Community Account Pilots

In 2007 BMG Research was commissioned by The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Welsh Assembly Government to evaluate the Learning Community Accounts pilot projects. The LCA pilots ended in March 2008.

The purpose of Learning Community Accounts was to:

- transfer skill, knowledge and resources to communities to enable them to participate and design solutions to community learning needs by upskilling key individuals
- embed learning and skill development within community regeneration, by supporting communities, families and individuals to develop and engage in learning activity which is learner focused, flexible and accessible to all, and
- provide a mechanism that integrates communities in to the local planning process, and also supports and empowers them.

There were five pilot projects in total:

- Caia Park Partnership Ltd, Wrexham
- Cardigan and South Ceredigion Regeneration Forum
- CwmNi – Communities First, Treherbert, Rhondda Valley
- Fairlyland Communities First, Cwmafon, Neath
- Cymorth Cymru –Housing Associations (pan Wales) Known as Tai Dysgu a Gwaith, (TDG)

The first four of these were identified as primarily geographical communities, whilst Cymorth Cymru is a 'community of interest' focusing on homelessness.

Each LCA project has been written up individually as a 'case study'. Case studies are often described as a form of 'qualitative' or 'thick' descriptive research of an activity viewed in depth. This approach allows the provision of a comprehensive description of the project(s) being evaluated including the specific context and an exploration of the experiences of the people involved in it. In this context, therefore, they provide a detailed understanding of how

each LCA pilot works and what the experiences are of those who have been involved. There are five case study reports in total, each reporting on one of the LCA pilots. This report covers the Cardigan and Ceredigion pilot project.

An evaluation report has also been produced, which brings together and synthesises the information from each of the case studies to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the LCA pilots to date in meeting their objectives as well as identifying areas of good practice and 'lessons learnt' with regard to this approach to community based learning. This in turn will inform the future development of Learning Community Accounts, and community learning as a whole.

1.1 The evaluation

The research aims and objectives suggested that a mixed-method 'triangulation' approach is most appropriate. It was agreed therefore that the evaluation should comprise a combination of qualitative and quantitative work, as well as incorporating available monitoring and administrative data.

As each LCA pilot project was different, both in terms of its set-up and organisation as well as its delivery stage, the evaluation also adopted a case study approach. An evaluation framework was developed which was applied across all case studies (detailing, for example, the key research issues, proposed method and key stakeholder groups) with the acceptance that some projects would be able to provide greater access to an evidence base than others. It was recognised that the two pilots that are most advanced in their development (Caia Park and TDG) would provide the fullest evaluation evidence whilst the remaining three would need to concentrate more on start up and process evaluation rather than any assessment of impact.

The research approach was therefore as follows:

- Telephone discussions with some key WAG staff involved in the inception and development of the pilots (ongoing)
- Early familiarisation site visits to each pilot, including initial discussions with the manager. The visits were also used to identify possible learner respondents (where available) and

other stakeholder respondents and appropriate methodology to be employed.

- A review of key documentation including delivery plans, annual reports, monitoring data (including evidence gathered during familiarisation visits)
- In-depth discussions with operational and delivery staff (face-to-face where possible, supplemented with telephone interviews);
- In-depth discussions with learners (face-to-face), including the identification of potential individual case studies.

The Cardigan and South Ceredigion project has been lead by a LCA Co-ordinator and is delivered by a collective of Learning Champions from a range of organisations with the area. In-depth interviews were undertaken with the LCA Co-ordinator and Learning Champions from the following organisations:

- The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales;
- Cardigan County Council – Cardigan Castle Regeneration Project, and;
- Skillstart Training Provider.

The longitudinal element of the evaluation (as proposed in the original tender) was reconsidered in light of the subsequent requirement by DCELLS to complete the evaluation by March 2008 and the recognition that there was therefore insufficient time to conduct follow-up work with pilot participants.

2 Project description

2.1 Project aim and objectives

Cardigan and South Ceredigion LCA project has aimed to implement a Learning Champion led partnership approach to developing and delivering learning activities that contribute to the regeneration of the Cardigan and South Ceredigion area. The main purpose of the LCA was to provide a mechanism that would enable the community to become more actively involved in learning about the past, present and future of their area resulting in the following desired outcomes which have underpinned the development and delivery of the project:

- Increased learning activity that contributes to community regeneration, widening participation, skills and employment;
- Opportunities to engage and up-skill socially excluded individuals and allow progression to employment;
- Develop a cohort of Learning Champions focussed on learning and a general increase in the capacity of individuals involved in community development, and;
- Ensure the availability of a collaborative and quality provision that meets the needs of communities and contributes to community regeneration.

2.2 Community context

The pilot project area covered a large geographic area covering the following six wards which have a total population of approximately 10,660¹:

- Cardigan – Mwldan
- Aberporth
- Cardigan – Rhyd-y-Fuwch
- Cardigan – Teifi
- Beulah
- Pen-parc

¹ 2001 Census of Population Office for National Statistics Crown Copyright.

Almost a third of adults (30.5%) aged 16-74 are without qualifications which is higher than the average for England and Wales². Additionally the Index of Multiple Deprivation reveals that Cardigan town is the most deprived ward in the area in terms of employment, health and education.

The area is also relatively remote and has a poor transport links in terms of both public and road networks. Additionally, outward migration of young people from the area to seek better paid employment and education opportunities is felt to contribute to skills shortages and limit economic development within the area.

The area is undergoing regeneration with the Cardigan and South Ceredigion Regeneration Plan being in place since 2002 which includes a wide range of interventions to support the physical and economic development of the area. This is based on four key regeneration themes:

- Business and training support;
- Infrastructure sites and premises;
- Connecting Cardigan, and;
- Image and facilities.

2.3 Project inception/set-up

Wavehill Consultancy which is based in Ceredigion, was commissioned by Ceredigion County Council's Economic Development Department to undertake the following series of activities in order to set up the LCA project:

- Identify Learning Champions and project sponsors to participate in Learning Community Action and in the preparation of the Learning Plan;
- To assess any learning or development needs of the individual Learning Champions/projects sponsors;
- Undertake a Learning Needs Analysis through a range of research activities;
- Develop a matrix for the assessment and identification of priority learning needs which will contribute to community regeneration;

² Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation Welsh Assembly Government Statistical Directorate 2005

- Preparation of a draft Learning Plan, and;
- Identify how learning will be delivered and the resources required.

Wavehill Consultants undertook depth interviews with key individuals involved in learning and regeneration in the Cardigan area and used these as a basis to encourage these individuals to become Learning Champions as part of the LCA project. This process secured the involvement of 11 Learning Champions. These Learning Champions then undertook training delivered by Wavehill to help them to consult with their communities and to undertake further learning needs research to assess the community's attitudes towards learning and regeneration using a survey developed by Learning Champions and Wavehill. A variety of learning needs were identified including:

- Parenting skills;
- IT training;
- Training for volunteers, and;
- Outdoor activities.

The research also found that more choice, information about provision and time would encourage many non-learners to undertake learning. Consultees also overwhelmingly reported that community learning was best delivered in informal settings.

Wavehill then worked with the Learning Champions to produce costed proposals arising from the needs identified which resulted in a series of Learning Proposals being developed which detailed individual activities and course structures. Each of the learning proposals had an identified Learning Champion who would lead the delivery and development of the learning. These Learning Proposals formed the basis for developing the Learning Plan.

A total of 27 Learning Proposals were submitted and a Proposal Assessment Matrix was developed to prioritise each of the Learning Proposals. The following five scored questions formed the basis of each Learning Proposal's assessment:

- Does it impact on economic activity and employment?
- Does it help to improve the employability and skills base of the area's residents?

- To what extent will it help to improve the physical regeneration of the area?
- What is the potential for community involvement and widening participation in regeneration activity?
- How does it improve perceptions of the area?

The top five Learning Proposals are detailed below to provide an overview of the range and scope of the submitted Proposals:

- A programme of one-day short taster courses to develop the skills base of local builders and contractors in traditional building techniques in: the repair of sash-windows; working with lime; working with roof timbers in old buildings and stonemasonry;
- How to start and develop your own business as a young person;
- Community events at the Wildlife Centre;
- Sage accounting, and;
- Welding and restoration techniques based on a practical restoration of the ironwork gates at the local secondary school.

2.4 Organisational structure

Although a collective of Learning Champions had been identified during this development phase, no overall organisation or individual was in place to take the activities forward. This led to a number of delays and problems in getting the LCA project up and running.

It was originally anticipated that the LCA project would be accommodated within the Economic Development Department at Ceredigion County Council. However, there was no capacity within this team to co-ordinate the LCA project's activities. Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations (CAVO) was then approached to co-ordinate the project, but again the lack of funding available through LCA to support staffing costs hindered this process. Eventually, Ceredigion County Council's Community Education Department agreed to host the project with DCELLS agreeing to fund a lead Learning Champion to coordinate and develop the Learning Plan.

3 Current activities

3.1 Staffing

The design, development and delivery of Cardigan and South Ceredigion LCA activities are led by individual Learning Champions, who are located in a diverse range of organisations within the area. Organisations include:

- Workers' Education Association;
- Jigso, The Cardigan Family Centre;
- Welsh Wildlife Trust;
- Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations (CAVO);
- Area 43 Youth Drop In;
- Cardigan Castle , and;
- Skillstart Training Provider.

The lead Learning Champion oversees the management of the LCA pilot and leads the co-ordination and development of the other Learning Champions.

All Learning Champions are in place and are at various stages of implementing their Learning Proposal. For example the school gates renovation project has just started delivering workshop based training for participants, whilst the Wildlife Centre completed a series of family learning events during the half-term break during autumn 2007. Other activities, such as Cardigan Castle Volunteers' customer service training, and a basic skills assessment training programme for Learning Champions are set to commence in early 2008.

3.2 Learners

Cardigan and South Ceredigion LCA's learning activities are currently underway, and there appears to have been good progress in gaining good levels of participation in some activities. For example, Cardigan Wildlife Centre has delivered nine learning activities based on family learning, for example building bird boxes, seed propagation and guided autumn walks, which have involved 286 participants. Additionally, an informal, non-accredited craft-

based workshop with 15 participants based around the physical environment of the Cardigan area, has been delivered by Jigso. This has introduced users to informal learning and they can be signposted to accredited learning and participation in further community art events and projects.

Table 1 outlines the LCA outputs including learner participation up to March 2008.

Table 1: Cardigan and South Ceredigion LCA outputs August to November 2007

August –November 2007	Actual	Target
Learning Champions identified	10	10
No. of learners participating in learning opportunities	481	500
No. of Individual Learning Agreements drawn up	470	500
No. of modules identified in ILP achieved	0	0
No. of qualifications/credits gained	22	0
No. of individuals gaining quals/credits	22	30 (Original target was 300)

Learners participating in project activities have a diverse profile. For example, many of the learners who participated in the Wildlife Centre’s recent programme of activities were parents, whereas learners who have just embarked on the restoration programme of a local schools’ iron gates are Year 13 students. It is anticipated that many of the Cardigan Castle Volunteers will have a high proportion of participants who are aged over 50.

As yet, there is no overall profile of learners participating in LCA programmes available. However it is anticipated that this will be quite diverse and will reflect the geographical area’s population,

since the learning proposals have identified a wide range of activities and target groups.

3.3 Learner engagement and referral

A number of processes were in place to promote LCA activities to potential learners. Activities were open to all individuals aged over 16 within the geographical area so a range of engagement approaches are being used to involve potential learners.

Individual Learning Champions were mainly responsible for promoting and publicising the activities outlined in individual Learning Proposals. They also linked with key organisations that can refer learners to them.

A range of publicity materials have been produced by individual Learning Champions to publicise the activities that they are leading, for example some have distributed leaflets in local schools to parents whilst other activities have been advertised in the local press. Some Learning Champions were collecting monitoring data to assess which methods have been the most effective, but an overview of this data is currently unavailable. However, at this stage most publicity and referral activities appear to have been successful in gaining individual's participation.

3.4 Learning activities

Activities that have taken place included a series of intergenerational activities based at the Wildlife Centre which were delivered over the autumn half term break. Activities included art and craft sessions, practical sessions observing and learning about river life, and interactive sessions based on Welsh Fairy Tales.

A 12 week structured programme of activities has been developed for young people participating in the school gates restoration activity, whereby they will undertake foundation training sessions with a local training provider to learn about welding and metal work. These activities are initially based in an engineering workshop where a series of accredited activities have been brought together, and once the learners have achieved these they will be able to work on restoring a local school's ornamental gates. Currently most learners are Year 12 students who are undertaking the studies in their own time outside of school. There are also plans to introduce a small group of learners who are currently working with the Youth

Offending Team. This activity has been brought together through forming a partnership approach between the training provider who has led on the design and development of the programme and the local school.

The main bulk of learning activities were only just getting underway at the time of the evaluation, however momentum was gathering with more activities being scheduled for delivery in the early 2008. These included a series of activities working with volunteers who help with the maintenance and running of Cardigan Castle. Cardigan Castle is a site of significant historical interest in the local area and beyond. The Castle is currently being renovated after being bought by Ceredigion Council following years of neglect by previous owners. There is a lot of community interest in the castle, and the involvement of local people in the redevelopment of the castle is felt to be vital ensuring that it can become a key focal point of community activities. The programme of LCA supported activities was fairly diverse including first aid courses for volunteers as well as customer service activities to help equip volunteers with effective communication skills when working with visitors to the castle. There are also grounds keeping courses planned to train volunteers in maintaining the castle grounds.

3.5 Delivery

A wide range of delivery methods was used in each of the Learning Proposals, with a strong emphasis on informal delivery methods and learning through doing. This is particularly true of the learning activities that are directly linked to regeneration activities such as the renovation of the school gates. This activity involves learners being trained in sheet metal fabrication techniques in a workshop for a number of sessions and then using these skills to renovate the school gates.

Intergenerational learning activities have also been a strong focus for the project with the Learning Champions based with the Wildlife Centre and Jigso having significant expertise in this area, for example delivering intergenerational learning programmes for a variety of organisations including universities and voluntary organisations.

The main area of additionality was through developing and delivering learning programmes that enable learners to actively

participate in regeneration activities in the Cardigan area that also help to develop their skills.

The project has been focused on delivering programmes that are specifically tailored to community based activities and needs, through using a variety of delivery partners to facilitate access to a broad group of learners. The project appeared to be achieving this as the Learning Proposals that were developed are bespoke solutions to developing the skills of a wide range of participants.

4 Partnerships with other organisations

4.1 Formal partnerships

Each of the Learning Champions was part of an established organisation; therefore the LCA project has made formal links with these organisations as part of the Learning Proposal contracting process. As detailed earlier there was a range of organisations involved in management and delivery of each Learning Proposal, including statutory, voluntary and private organisations. These are detailed in Section 2.1.

4.2 Informal links

Individual LCA Learning Champions were also linking with each other in some cases and additional organisations to enable referrals between activities and where possible for progression. For example the Wildlife Centre has links with Aberystwyth University and hoped that learners may progress onto some of its foundation life science courses.

5 Quality standards

A unified quality standard was not in place within this LCA, since a range of providers were involved and a range of courses were being planned or delivered. Courses that are provided by a college or training provider will have the necessary quality standards required to deliver accredited and certified programmes of activity. However there was no quality standards in place for informal and 'one off' courses that are being delivered through the LCA.

One area where this LCA project was very keen to gain an overall recognised standard in place was the assessment of learners' basic skills needs, since it was recognised that the LCA projects offered an ideal opportunity to help develop learners' basic skills. However, it was also noted that individual Learning Champions did not have experience in identifying whether learners had basic skills needs. Additionally, it was also strongly felt that 'up-front' testing would be off-putting to learners who have been attracted to individual project's subject matter and practical regeneration focus rather than formal learning. The LCA co-ordinator has therefore scheduled in an accredited training programme in basic skills assessment for Learning Champions. This had been hard to schedule in due to the eclectic mix of Learning Champions, but was eventually scheduled to run early in 2008.

6 Identifying outcomes

There was some investigation being undertaken to see whether any further formalisation of outcomes could be undertaken but the main priority of the this LCA project has been to get projects up and running due to its greatly delayed start.

6.1 'Hard' outcomes

A total of 22 learners achieved qualifications or credits during the life time of the project.

6.2 'Soft' outcomes

The development of soft outcomes measures was still in progress as learning activities were being established. However, it was felt that evidencing participation will be a key soft outcome measure since many individuals have not traditionally participated in learning activities post 16. This was felt to be particularly true of individuals who had participated in intergenerational learning activities mainly being delivered by the Wildlife Centre. The contribution of learners to regeneration activities across the area was also felt to be a key outcome to the project.

6.3 Capturing progress/'distance travelled'

Very little evidence was being gathered to identify learner progress or distance travelled. There were tentative plans in place to gather this although it has been acknowledged that this may be problematic to undertake systematically due to the diverse nature of the learning activities being delivered through the programme. It was originally anticipated that there would be a lot more scope for capturing distance travelled by learners when the original bid was put together and there was more scope for learners to move between LCA supported activities and then progress onto further learning or employment outcomes. However, the short space of time that was available for the project to run has impeded the potential for the project to do this, and there was disappointment amongst some Learning Champions that the opportunity to track learner progress was greatly diminished.

It is also key to note that it was identified that gathering profiling data and information from some participants was viewed as an outcome in itself. This was because some activities, particularly those focusing on intergenerational learning, were seen as introducing learning by 'stealth' to some harder to reach groups. It was therefore felt to be inappropriate to request personal details and educational attainment too early in the engagement process, since this could be off-putting to learners and reduce the likelihood of them returning to participate in subsequent activities.

6.4 Exits/referrals elsewhere

The systematic referral of learners onto other learning and training opportunities beyond LCA funded activities was in its early stages at the time of the evaluation. Most referrals at this stage had been based on progressing learners onto other LCA supported activities. It was anticipated that referrals to appropriate opportunities would become more frequent once all programmes are up and running. However, the limited amount of time available for the delivery of the activities has restricted the opportunities for referrals to higher levels of learning which had originally been anticipated at the inception of the project.

7 Project funding issues

7.1 How is the funding used?

The money available has mainly been used to fund learning activities, as detailed in individual Learning Proposals.

Additionally funding was used to provide a co-ordinator to oversee the project activities and provide support for Learning Champions.

A small proportion of the funding was used for publicity activities.

The initial absence of a lead Learning Champion was a great barrier for the project, as there was no capacity in existing organisations to oversee the management and delivery of the project. The project would not have been able to progress without the provision of the lead Learning Champion role to facilitate the development and delivery of the Learning Plan.

7.2 Cost per learner

Cost per learner was estimated at £186, working with 500 learners.

8 Added Value of Learning Community Accounts / Learning and Work Projects

There appears to be very little overlap between LCA based activities and other learning based activities, since LCA activities have been designed and developed to tie in with regeneration activities within the local area.

The groundwork undertaken by the Learning Champions and Wavehill Consultancy provided a baseline of evidence identifying learning needs and regeneration activities that would form the basis of LCA funded activities.

The Learning Champions identified to lead the programme were all based within organisations which had the potential to offer learners additional opportunities to participate and progress in other learning programmes. Additionally, some of these organisations are well connected with other partners and could in theory progress participants to higher levels of learning, for example the Wildlife Centre's links with Aberystwyth University.

There was also potential for partnerships between individual Learning Champions and their respective organisations to facilitate learner referrals and joint working. However, this aspect of the project has still to gain momentum at the time of the evaluation.

The LCA has made some contribution to building the learning capacity of the local area through its provision of basic skills assessment training for Learning Champions.

As yet there are no unintended outcomes, but there were some anticipated positive 'spin offs' from the LCA programme. One particularly significant aspect is the LCA work being undertaken with the Cardigan Castle Volunteers being used as an evidence base to attract a Heritage Grant to develop the castle. The funding application needed to show strong evidence of the participation and development of community members.

9 Case studies

Learner case studies were not available at the time of the evaluation due to the delay in starting the project.