

# **Practice Progress and Value**

**LEARNING COMMUNITIES: ASSESSING THE VALUE THEY ADD**

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## **FOREWORD BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

Learning is the key to prosperity and opportunity, both for individuals, families and communities and for our nation as a whole. That is why learning is at the heart of the Government's ambition. Our Green Paper, *The Learning Age*, has set out for consultation how learning needs to be shaped for the new millennium. How local communities respond and develop their learning resources will be a key factor in the success of the Learning Age.

The Learning City Network has been an innovative development. It uses learning to promote social cohesion and economic development. It develops partnerships to stimulate and respond to the demand for learning. Learning cities and communities are also helping to support our priorities for modernising local government, tackling social exclusion, regenerating urban areas and achieving best value. The rapid expansion of the Learning City Network shows that the approach is working and that it offers real potential. Learning cities and communities have a bright future in the Learning Age.

This guide contains practical information on how to develop the Learning City "approach". I commend it to all those who are working to sustain learning to achieve a learning society.

David Blunkett  
Secretary of State for Education and Employment

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

This guide has been developed for the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and the Learning City Network from a qualitative research and development project managed by Sue Cara of the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) and Professor Stewart Ranson of the School of Education, the University of Birmingham. Over a six month period, the project team used desk research, interviews with key people in learning cities and good practice case study analysis to arrive at this guide. A Steering Group representing the researchers, DfEE, the Learning City Network - together with representatives of the Local Government Management Board, TEC National Council, UNISON and the Local Government Association - has seen the project through to publication. DfEE and the Learning City Network wish to place on record their thanks to the individuals and organisations involved in the research leading to the production of this guide: their contributions in this groundbreaking work have been invaluable.

The concept of the learning city is relatively recent. It was promoted by an OECD/CERI study in 1992. This became a major influence on the development of the UK's Learning City Network. The Network has grown steadily since 1996 from a small core of supporters to around 20 affiliated "Cities". It is an important forum for debate on the potential of partnerships to link lifelong learning with regeneration and local economic development. The Network's research, development and dissemination activities are a significant contribution to widening participation in lifelong learning. Through the processes described in this guide, communities will be able to unlock the potential of their people in the learning age.

Many communities are already benefiting from applying "Learning City" practice. Others are considering how to become involved so that they might benefit. This guide brings together advice and guidance for practitioners who are already involved - or who wish to become involved. It is structured around three strands of development, which were identified in the research work, namely:

- ***Partnership***
- ***Participation***
- ***Performance.***

Following the guidance under each of these strands will enable practitioners to build on their present position - whatever that may be. Each strand is discussed under three levels of learning - from getting organised through to reflecting on what has been achieved and measuring the gains. The guide contains essential information for all the stages from pre-start through to consolidation and growth:

- it provides useful background on getting started and who to involve
- it highlights workable strategies and ideas - and notes possible pitfalls
- it enables learning from examples of effective practices
- examines ways of assessing progress and value
- it enables achievements to be compared and benchmarked.

## WHAT IS A LEARNING CITY?

The term "Learning City" is used for convenience throughout this guide. In practice a "Learning City" may be a city, town or community - regardless of its location or size. A Learning City addresses the learning needs of its locality through partnership. It uses the strengths of social and institutional relationships to bring about cultural shifts in perceptions of the value of learning. Learning Cities explicitly use learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, regeneration and economic development which involves all parts of the community.

Typically, a Learning City works to achieve proactive partnership which engages a range of interests:

- **Individuals, community organisations and trades unions** - so that individuals, and those who represent them, are involved in the development of skills and capacities throughout their lives. This level of public participation will promote social cohesion, inclusiveness, equity and opportunity, enabling all individuals to fulfil their potential
- **Providers of education and training at every level** - so that valuable local resources are promoted and used more effectively to create the demand for learning and satisfy that demand throughout the community. Responsive and imaginative learning provision continues to meet this spread of demand during periods of change
- **Employers in every size and sector of organisation** - so that the providers of jobs continue to be able to meet their objectives through the skills of their people. These objectives may relate to wealth creation and/or the provision of high quality services. Greater involvement in learning enables employers to influence their organisations' and communities' culture and to sustain and grow through necessary knowledge and skills which keep pace with change
- **Key agencies (e.g. local authorities, TECs, LECs, Chambers of Commerce, Business Links, development agencies, regional partners)** - so that local regeneration, economic development and workforce skills strategies take account of learning, are co-ordinated and representative of the components of the community and their aspirations for its future. In turn, local regeneration and development strategies may contribute to wider regional strategies with similar objectives.

The essence of partnerships which involve these players is that their collective efforts can achieve an impact which is more than the sum of the parts. This is not to diminish in any way the strength of partnerships which may already exist. Continuing to build on existing networks to develop further the interests of a community offers the potential to add value. In short, this guide has been developed to help practitioners involved in Learning Cities to build on what they do already and to evaluate and demonstrate its impact and value.

## THE LEARNING CITY

**A Learning City is one which strives to learn how to renew itself in a period of extraordinary global change. The rapid spread of new technologies presents considerable opportunities for countries and regions to benefit from the transfer of new knowledge and ideas across national boundaries. At the same time global shifts in capital flows and production are creating uncertainties and risk in managing national and local economies.**

In periods of such transition, learning becomes central to our future well-being. Only if learning is central can communities harness and develop their traditions and capacities to the challenge of regeneration in the learning age. The central value of learning for communities is that it secures understanding of the purposes, tasks and conditions for social and economic regeneration.

*"A true learning (community) is one which develops by learning from its experiences and those of others. It is a place which understands itself and reflects upon that understanding .... Thus the key characteristic of the learning (community) is the ability to develop successfully in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment. Where (other cities) flounder by trying to repeat past success for too long, the learning (community) is creative in its understanding of its own situation and wider relationships developing new solutions to new problems."*

(Charles Landry and François Matarasso: Comedia, 1998)

### The Purposes of the Learning City

The Learning City has two principal and interconnected purposes:

- **to support lifelong learning**
- **to learn how to promote social and economic regeneration.**

#### *Lifelong Learning*

This means encouraging individuals, employers and organisations to involve themselves in learning throughout their lives. The changing nature of work requires people to adapt and upgrade their skills and knowledge throughout their lives if they are to survive in the labour market. Employment will be attracted to high skill communities. Successful cities and towns are also attractive places to live as well as providing employment opportunities. Learning needs to support and enrich the life of communities as a whole. The more people participate in formal and informal learning activities, the richer, more successful and attractive their community is likely to become.

#### *Regeneration: Learning About how the Community is Changing*

The Learning City is one which strives to understand how it is changing in order to be able to shape its future. It needs to learn about the context of change if it is to influence the types of change which create the knowledge society. Change may be taking place in areas such as population movements, growth as well as decline in the industrial and commercial base, and the impact of new technologies on communication systems. Communities which are in the process of regeneration need to learn, not merely to develop the skills of their citizens but to understand how the different parts of city life - social, cultural and political, as well as economic - can connect together more effectively to sustain the future well-being of the community.

## **The Tasks of the Learning City**

If learning is to be made attractive, communities have to learn to create new forms of partnership between sectors and ways of listening to, and involving the public. This introduces the first two strands of development which feature in this guide:

### ***1) Partnership***

A fragmented education and training sector with inadequate connections between sectors and competition between providers - particularly in the post-school phase - does not facilitate the participation needed for the learning age. An early phase of the Learning City work is to build the partnerships between sectors and institutions which encourage participation and progression in learning of all members of the community. Such partnerships:

- develop community-wide coalitions which bring together relevant partners from the public and private sectors
- co-ordinate approaches to the various kinds of learning offered within the community whether formal, informal or work-based
- make contacts across sectors and at all levels of education and employment
- use the media to promote achievement and stimulate the appetite for learning.

### ***2) Participation***

These partnerships need to become part of a broader public dialogue. Their purpose is to clarify the future of the community in an era of global change. Traditionally, public services have been delivered to their customers with too little consultation and involvement. Democracy has been distant from the communities which it was created to serve. Many cities and towns are now looking to find new ways of strengthening the important traditions of local democratic practice and understanding the contribution of participation to regeneration. Real learning communities will learn to engage citizens in new ways to involve them in how their communities will be governed and changed. This process demands citizens who have the skills to articulate their needs and aspirations. These are the same skills needed for work and leisure in a society which is in a state of change. The educational system has an important part to play in moving to such a culture of learning. But employers and other parts of the community with its democratic and cultural traditions also have a key role to play in renewing the quality and vitality of public life.

## **The Conditions for the Learning City**

If communities are to become learning cities they need to be creative. This introduces the third strand of development .

### ***3) Performance***

#### **Learning to think of new ways of learning:**

- developing variety and flexibility in the kinds of involvement people can have in the learning process
- recognising and valuing all kinds of learning within and for the advancement of the community.

Learning here is not only engagement in formal educational processes. It is the connecting of the many kinds of learning: in the workplace, the voluntary organisation and the family. It has the purpose of making the community a better place to live.

#### **Learning how to learn, reflecting on:**

- how the community has been learning about the changes it faces
- how much it has learned
- how much value has been added to the community.

This requires the learning city to place evaluation of *performance* at the centre of its work.

### ***Cities Facing the Future***

Cities show a variety of ways in which communities are using learning to regenerate themselves or to face the future. In Pittsburgh, USA the collapse of the steel industry has led to massive retraining programmes. In Kakegawa, Japan the involvement of citizens in the revitalisation of their city resulted in a new fast train which enabled the attraction of inward investment. In Britain, the towns and cities which are attracted to the ideas of the Learning City are involved in numerous projects to increase learning and to link regeneration to skills development:

- in ***Liverpool***, technology is used to link schools and community learners
- in ***Southampton***, targets are being set for IT training for the whole population
- in ***Swansea***, an IT network is being developed using European Funding
- ***Sheffield*** is developing a local network of learning centres, "Citinet", linking homes, schools, businesses and community centres: "the world at your fingertips"
- in ***Hull***, a city wide Single Regeneration Budget bid will focus on education and training across the community. This follows on the inclusion of learning as a key element in the City's economic development strategy
- in ***Glasgow***, the Glasgow Learning Alliance is promoting learning and taking part in projects to re-engage disaffected young people and a project to introduce employee development programmes in small businesses
- in ***Thetford***, partnership has led to the attraction of significant Single Regeneration Budget funding for the "On the Learning Curve" initiative. This has enabled an education worker to involve adults on the most disadvantaged estate in learning. Inward investment has provided the motivating prospect of jobs.

## TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

Many communities have seen the idea of the learning city as a vital opportunity to respond creatively to the forces of change which they have been facing. These include local government reorganisation as well as the deeper processes of social and economic restructuring. Commitment to the concept of learning provides a process of reflecting upon strategies to manage change.

How have Learning City initiatives been started? Looking at those places in the UK which call themselves "Learning Cities", the ways in which initiatives have begun have been almost as various as the places themselves. There are a number of key elements that seem necessary. These are shown below, with examples.

- **Key Individuals** - individuals seem to be important in two ways: (1) those who believe in the idea of the learning city and who start to persuade others to consider the idea and (2) those powerful individuals who can give an initiative credibility within the community by their support and patronage.

*Thetford* developed the idea of the "Learning Curve". They were convinced that the idea of the learning community would help to improve lifelong learning opportunities and develop skills levels in a town which was looking to attract inward investment.

- **Key Institutions** - the adoption of the idea of the learning community by a particular institution, and the leadership and support provided by that institution, is crucial to building the initiative in its early stages. Although partnerships may develop, the groundwork has to be undertaken and resourced. TECs, universities and local authorities have all played this role.

In *Southampton*, the idea of the Learning City is part of the strategy of the new unitary authority. Although other partners are involved, the authority takes the lead on this issue with the Executive Director of Education taking a lead role.

- **A Core Group** - the idea has to capture the enthusiasm of influential people and be taken on by a specific institution. Then time has to be devoted to drafting papers, convening meetings, networking with potential contacts and sponsors. An embryonic organisation will need to be created. This will include an advisory or steering group composed of key organisations in the city or town. Membership of such an advisory or steering group will involve willingness to commit time, and possibly other resources, to enable the fledgling initiative to get off the ground.

The initial core group for the *Norwich* initiative was small. It comprised the City Council, College, University, TEC and Adult Education Service.

The starting point in *Sheffield* was a series of public seminars. The outputs of these resulted in a project with the University of Sheffield and the City Council to promote and research the impact of family literacy.

- **Wider Interests** - The germ of an idea, even if a small number of influential people are drawn to it, will only really take hold if the wider community is persuaded of its validity and significance. The task of developing support from the wider community suggests the importance of seminars and conferences which can engender the necessary groundswell of enthusiasm. These events can be accompanied by consultation strategies to test the degrees of support for the idea of the learning city. A conference can be followed up by a feedback questionnaire to test opinions.

*Nottingham* held a large conference to ask the wider community for their views on the viability and usefulness of a Learning City initiative. They received widespread support and some suggestions from their conference.

- **Launch events** - sometimes overlapping with consultation conferences. Following a period of development work and consultation, the preparations may lead to a formal launch event with significant media coverage.

After twelve months of development work, **Hull** went public with the launch of their initiative at a conference with national speakers and an audience of over 400. This provided the impetus for the initiative and the launch of their learning plan.

- **Key Employers** - the involvement of employers develops and maintains a focus on workplace learning. It enables the local business community to participate in and influence plans to add to local regeneration efforts.

In **Durham City**, the Steering Group focused on learning issues which affect employers. Research yielded information about training needs and four areas in which to concentrate efforts were identified.

In **Darlington**, a conference to widen the concept to the whole community was attended by key employers who highlighted the ways in which they could become involved.

## **The Structure of the Guide**

The guidance which follows is designed to help local communities assess their own strategies for becoming a learning city and to evaluate the progress they are making. Two assumptions drawn from the research underlie this guide:

- that the learning city will be built more securely by making progress over time along three interconnected *strands of development*
- that the *processes of learning* are applied to these *strands of development*.

There is no common strategy for implementation, but identifying and developing the people who are crucial to the success of the venture is important. Each community will need to work through its own solutions to reflect local characteristics and purposes. Nevertheless, the experience and knowledge gained by the pioneering learning cities suggests guidelines for those who wish to develop these capacities within their own community.

## THE THREE STRANDS OF DEVELOPMENT

The route to a learning city needs to proceed along three distinct strands of development. These three strands relate to different but interrelated aspects of the learning city:

- 1) ***PARTNERSHIP - learning to build connections between sectors***  
This means setting up, developing and sustaining partnerships. This strand is relevant to those who are at the beginning of an initiative or where partnerships need to review their progress.
- 2) ***PARTICIPATION - learning to involve the public in the policy process***  
This means involving the wider community in learning and in contributing towards changes in their community. This strand is relevant for those working in initiatives which want to involve traditional non-participants in planning relevant education and training and those who want to develop means for communities to have a more active role and greater influence in regeneration and development.
- 3) ***PERFORMANCE - learning to evaluate progress***  
This means how communities measure progress against their own targets, against the progress others are making and looks at how an assessment of the value added by working for the creation of a learning city might be assessed. This strand is relevant to all those working in current initiatives, who wish to measure progress and justify the resources spent in partnership working. It is also for those who want to set up an evaluation framework early on in an initiative

Learning communities can choose to develop each of these strands at the same time or sequentially. There is no fixed pattern for their development. Along each strand the learning city will need to develop the practices to ensure the necessary development of strategic management:

- clarifying purposes, priorities and plans
- introducing the appropriate organisational processes
- identifying and developing people
- monitoring and evaluating performance
- using evaluation results to guide future actions.

### Processes of Learning

Learning cities need to place the principle of learning at the heart of their practice. They must become increasingly self-aware, discover and question the assumptions which underlie practices so as to improve them, and learn how to make this a matter of routine. There are three levels of learning:

- ***The first level of learning is about getting organised:*** charting purposes, clarifying roles and relationships between the partners, developing initial priorities and plans, determining budgets and setting targets for performance. This stage of learning is about learning to organise a system and to enable it to begin to work effectively.
- ***The second level of learning is about developing shared understanding*** between the partners, recognising that effective working will require more agreement about underlying values and purposes than it is reasonable to expect in the initial stage of getting organised. In these early stages of development, however, there may be problems of interaction and communication which reveal differences of values and interests that require more fundamental discussion if they are to be resolved.
- ***The third level of learning is about learning to learn.*** Communities experiencing change need a general predisposition to learn if they are to succeed. They need systematically to become creative at learning about how they have been learning; reflect on and analyse their previous styles of learning or failing to learn; clarify what enabled or blocked their learning so that they can take remedial action and

develop new strategies for learning. Learning cities learn to make this critical reflection a matter of routine practice.

Awareness of the cycles of learning encourages participants to explore continually the conditions of learning - why it is that individuals and groups are open to new ideas and new ways of thinking which keep them abreast of change. Learning in this way continually extends the cycle of learning.

The framework shown below maps the *three strands of development* and the *three levels of learning*. Those working within initiatives, or contemplating a start, will need to define where they are in this map of development. Often, initiatives are further on in one area than another and progress can be quite uneven. Local pressures and organisations mean that learning city initiatives are not uniform: this is part of their particular strength.

**A Framework Map for the Learning City**

		PRACTICES	LEVELS OF LEARNING		
			1 Getting Organised (Building)	2 Towards Shared Understanding (Dialogue)	3 Cycles of Learning (Reflection)
STRANDS	PARTNERSHIP	PURPOSE PEOPLE PLANS PROCESSES PERFORMANCE			
	PARTICIPATION	PURPOSE PEOPLE PLANS PROCESSES PERFORMANCE			
	PERFORMANCE	PURPOSE PEOPLE PLANS PROCESSES PERFORMANCE			

*The checklists which now follow in this guide will help with the task of mapping the current position. The examples given are offered for the purposes of illustration and guidance. They are not shown as definitive solutions of practice at each stage of development of the learning city.*

## **STRAND ONE: PARTNERSHIP**

### **Learning to Collaborate Across Organisational Boundaries**

In most communities, individual institutions will be pursuing their organisational goals in isolation. A college, for example, will be recruiting for and publicising provision. The university will have a policy which relates to the local community as well as a national and international mission. The leisure services department of the local authority will be pursuing their own agenda for increasing use of facilities. Local employers will be developing their own training strategies. Commonly, little attention is given to where roles overlap, and within the public sector, if there is an issue it is usually related to competition.

#### ***The purposes of partnership:***

Regeneration and a culture of lifelong learning cannot be accomplished by any one authority alone

All organisations have a unique contribution to make, but they must work together to produce added value to individual activities

The need for partnership and the learning involved in its development are a key element in the infrastructure of a learning community

#### ***What does partnership offer?***

- "We must recognise from the outset that the partnership is a mechanism for change"
- "A consequence of partnership is the maximising of influence"
- "The benefits of a partnership are being able to build a way of working for the future, something which will last longer than the life of a project. Equally, the partnership would have the common good at the core rather than a particular sectoral interest"

	<b>LEVEL 1</b> <b>Getting Organised</b> <b>(Building)</b>	<b>LEVEL 2</b> <b>Towards Shared Understanding</b> <b>(Dialogue)</b>	<b>LEVEL 3</b> <b>Cycles of Learning</b> <b>(Reflection)</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<p><i>Co-ordination</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> mission statement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> launch</li> </ul>	<p><i>Joint Organisation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> shared vision (understanding and agreement)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> common agenda</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> trust</li> </ul>	<p><i>Joint Evaluation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> annual conference</li> </ul>
<b>PEOPLE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> organisational leaders/decision makers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> consultants/catalysts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> practitioners/enablers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> joint professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> users</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> external enablers and evaluators</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> researchers</li> </ul>
<b>PLANS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> priorities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> pump-priming resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> committing time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> strategic planning system</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> participative planning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> budgets dedicated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> routine audit</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> information systems</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> feedback and review loops</li> </ul>
<b>PROCESSES of organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> seminars</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> steering group</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> co-ordinator</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> networking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> clear roles and responsibilities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> clear lines of communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> conference</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> forums</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inter-organisation project teams</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> partnership constituted</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> joint decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> quality circles</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> citizen/user juries</li> </ul>
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> measures</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> databases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> routine evaluation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> accountability</li> </ul>

## **Level 1 - Getting Organised**

The partnership activity that exists relates to specific projects or funding streams. The first stage of building a Learning City Partnership involves the development of individual partnerships into a permanent and dynamic model which will represent the whole community and not be specific to the education and training sector. This requires a strategic vision and a bold approach. Cities which have embraced such ideas feel that education and training - "learning" - has become a key part of a whole community approach to development.

### ***Ideas for Action***

To start the partnership, try to locate individuals who have significant roles within their organisation but who will make the partnership a priority activity.

Have a clear idea about the initial scope of the initiative and the key players who must be involved.

Try to identify a core of people who are used to working in partnership and have been successful in partnership activity.

Make it clear that initial discussion may end in rejection of the idea of developing a joint initiative and that this is an acceptable option.

Make the issue of wider membership/consultation an early item for discussion.

If a leader or patron is sought, give thought to the advantages of local leadership and commitment and the alternative of outside, impartial expertise.

Consider joint action in some specific areas at an early stage.

### ***Pitfalls and Perils***

Those who feel they should be directly involved, but who are not, can be dangerous saboteurs. It may be better to involve difficult elements early on.

Avoid creating an education/training ghetto. Make some outside connections early on.

### ***Essential***

Identify someone who will carry the partnership forward, preferably a relatively neutral player.

### ***Assessing Progress in Stage One***

Have decisions been made as to the initial scope of the initiative?  
e.g. education and training only; across departments in local authority.

Has the partnership got the key players necessary for the initial stages of the initiative?  
e.g. local authority, TEC/LEC, providers from different sectors, employers.

Is there an identified co-ordinator?

Is there commitment at high level within the community?

How is such commitment demonstrated?

Has the partnership made a commitment to move on from open-ended discussion of the learning city as a possibility?

Who is missing and how will the partnership expand without becoming unwieldy?

### ***Facts and Figures***

At this stage there is a need to be aware of, and collect the facts and figures which demonstrate the need for such an initiative and the areas where improvement might be hoped for.

Employment/unemployment rates and details about the social structure of the community and skill levels may be useful.

Providers may give indications of enrolment patterns and levels of learning support needed.

The emerging partnership might also begin to assess what data is being collected locally and by which organisation.

### ***Examples in Action***

In ***Milton Keynes***, the Learning City is built on the success of Countec. This is a partnership of local government, the Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise, local employers and local providers. It has been successful in promoting the National Education and Training Targets and also work placements and Modern Apprenticeships.

In ***Southampton***, the initiative grew out of a partnership brought together to explore action in connection with the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning. The partnership was led by the City Council and developed with assistance from the European Lifelong Learning Initiative.

In ***Derby***, an initial seminar was held. There was a free discussion about whether the concept of the Learning City was useful and whether there was an interest in pursuing such an idea. Enough interest was generated to make further action a priority. This had the support of commitment from key civic figures and local industry, and the help of an external leader.

## **Level 2 - Towards Shared Understanding**

When a partnership has been drawn together, work must focus on the shared vision and priorities for the learning city. This will differ from, but inevitably connect with the individual mission of partners relating to the development of learning within their own organisation. The purpose of the learning city must be to add value to individual initiatives so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. If this is not felt to be the case then those involved will quickly lose interest and revert to pursuing their own institutional agendas.

The idea and advantages of the learning city may mean very different things to different partners. A local authority might be interested in school standards. For a university, the possibility of recruiting local undergraduates or attracting research might be a stronger incentive. For some, the idea will specifically include the idea of widening participation in learning throughout the population. For others, the focus may be more on high level skills for those within the workforce. For many, the idea will be confined to the education sector.

All these issues need to be explored over time. In the meantime it may be that action needs to take place to demonstrate the advantages of partnership working. Although most partnerships work through their values and intentions, this often happens alongside a practical programme of activity.

### ***Ideas for Action***

All partners might be supplied with initial reading on the idea of the Learning City which can give a common starting point.

Coming up with a sensible and meaningful mission or vision statement for the initiative begins a process of exploring what the different priorities are for partners.

Action to try to extend the initiative to a wider community for consultation can lead to the group having to clarify their own ideas about:

- what is actually involved
- what they are intending to achieve
- how they will involve other prospective partners.

In working through shared vision it is important that it is a locally appropriate set of aims and priorities which is being sought. It should not just be a re-iteration of nationally expressed policy. It may be important to some partnerships that activity to improve social cohesion should be more important than, for example, increasing skills at level 4 and vice versa.

Action planning and concrete events can help to keep a positive common focus when difficult decisions are being made about priorities and values.

Exploring the parts of partners' mission statements and strategic plans which contribute towards a common vision can demonstrate areas for early joint action.

Agreement about common areas for action which are appropriate and clear about where "normal" competition must be allowed enables institutions to feel able to function appropriately in relation to their funding and markets while still committing to joint action.

It is important that the shaping of the initiative is a joint process and not one dominated by one or two powerful interests. The neutral player/co-ordinator role is crucial here.

### ***Pitfalls and Perils***

Becoming bogged down in lengthy discussions about aims to the exclusion of action. Seek to relate discussion of values and purposes to some concrete practical actions to begin to justify meetings at an early stage.

Hoping for too much too soon. It is unlikely that all parts of all organisations will be able to sign up to work jointly. Acceptance of imperfect co-operation on all fronts is necessary. However it is important that this doesn't happen in initiatives or projects which have been chosen for joint action.

Going through this process at a time when institutions in the locality are in a particularly intense period of change.

### ***Essential***

This stage relates not just to the development of an idea of shared values, but also involves moving toward planning and identifying action and strategy. The effectiveness of this will be judged against such values.

### ***Assessing Progress in Level Two***

Has the initiative got a mission/vision statement which embraces the values and intentions of the partnership?

Have partners aligned parts or all of their own mission statements behind those of the learning city?

Have discussions taken place about priorities for action for the initiative which demonstrate shared commitment to specific areas/principles?

Have the agreed values of the group reached a stage where they can be shared with a wider community? Has the partnership shared its vision with others, through a conference, seminar or similar event?

Are those involved sufficiently committed to place their own resources at the service of the joint initiative? Have budgets been made available for joint working?

Is there an action plan or strategic plan for the partnership?

Has the sharing of values, ideas and plans involved those outside the education and training sector?

Are members of the partnership able to allocate responsibility for specifics to specific partners? Is mutual trust developing?

Is the partnership developing a sense of how it might evaluate success?

### ***Facts and Figures***

Action plans should show the need for baseline data. They should include ideas on where such data is to be obtained: how, from whom and by when.

All setting of targets should include discussion about the availability and appropriateness of supporting data.

Where specific partners are responsible for delivery in specific areas, their capabilities and limitations must be understood by all partners.

### **Examples in Action**

**Hull** has a vision of becoming a new, successful maritime city. CityVision Ltd is the public/private partnership charged with taking this ambition forward. It sets out its tasks as being:

- preparation and delivery of the City Regeneration Strategy
- managing the SRB Challenge Fund Programmes
- co-ordinating partnerships bids for additional funds from appropriate sources.

When CityVision drew up its economic development strategy, it formed four task groups in four key activity areas: economy; people and communities; essence and fabric; lifetime learning. Initially the lifetime plan was in the hands of an education forum, but Hull City Learning offered to take it on and was given the task of improving on a first draft of a learning plan. Hull City Learning is a forum involving partners from the universities, TEC, CityVision itself, FE College, City Council, private sector, media and the voluntary sector. The result of the efforts of the group was "The Learning Chapter". This provides a comprehensive vision of how the partners wish to see lifelong learning develop within the city. It has formed the backdrop for a large city-wide bid for SRB Round 4. It is a framework within which individuals and institutions can locate their activities. The document has been widely distributed and consulted upon throughout the city.

The priorities of "The Learning Chapter" are built into the overall priorities of CityVision Ltd. Thus one of the four strategic aims of the City Regeneration Strategy is "to increase the levels of learning aspiration and achievement and to match skills to employers' needs". One of the key measures of progress in this area is the development of the City Learning Initiative. Another is the capacity-building which has taken place in an estates project where City Learning had key involvement.

The key regeneration strategies which City Learning group has been addressing have been enhancing skill levels, improving the learning infrastructure, raising achievements and staying-on rates, and pursuing lifelong learning.

On the additional value that the partnership has given, members would point to the position of learning at the heart of CityVision's strategies and to the enhanced valuing of learning shown by the very large SRB4 bid being made on learning, youth and disability. The partnership between providers enables a more powerful, less sectoral voice to be heard - the inclusion of learning elements in city centre regeneration activities is evidence of this. Although many communities are conscious of the need to increase skills, few have articulated this so clearly through their economic development and regeneration planning as in Hull.

In **Derby**, the key players in the sponsoring body agreed that no deputies could attend meetings. It was also agreed that members would align the relevant parts of their organisation's strategic plans as far as possible with the targets and goals of the City of Learning.

In **Sheffield**, an early meeting of the partners to discuss access and entitlement in learning led to the creation of the Multilingual City initiative. This promotes the ideal of bilingualism and trilingualism (since many Sheffielders already speak two languages). One of the initiative's successes is the spread of language teaching to primary and nursery schools and their involvement in international exchanges.

In **York**, a wide variety of interests led by the Local Authority and the TEC have drawn up eight key objectives to take the concept of the learning city forward, a series of key questions to address in relation to the city's achievements in promoting a learning culture and some identified priorities. To share thinking with schools, a briefing note was sent to all schools in the city asking for comments on what schools thought should constitute a learning city, how schools could contribute to the objectives, and what questions they might wish to address in connection with the identified priorities.

### **Level 3 - Cycles of Learning**

A mature partnership is one which has formed and decided on its values and strategic plan for action. It has to ensure that it is in a position to improve continuously. It has to learn about itself and take every opportunity for learning. It has to improve as a partnership as well as improving in its activities. Its ability to do so depends on the systems of feedback and review which it has developed to evaluate its effectiveness. Such systems must ideally not only look at actions taken. They must also look at potential, i.e. what is not done but could have been done.

The partnership initiatives in Learning Cities in Britain are quite new. Not many have reached a stage where there is a complex mass of activity to reflect upon. Most are confined to the education sector. However, even within these constraints there are some places where evaluative structures are being put into place, and more where individual projects are being evaluated.

#### ***Ideas for Action***

Some of the practices used for consultation may become cyclical. Annual conferences, rather than a launch conference can fulfil a number of uses which might include reviewing progress, resetting agendas, considering new necessities and offering feedback opportunities to the wider constituency of the initiative.

The partners themselves will wish to evaluate within their own institutions, and with their own client groups, the value of the initiative and the added value it is seen to give to the institution's own performance.

Action plans should be monitored for their success and their effectiveness. Is the partnership working and using its resources effectively? Such evaluation should be built in to the planning cycle to make the next planning round more effective.

Means to involve users and target groups - surveys, forums, citizens' juries - serve a double purpose of evaluation and initiating discussion.

Where specific targets have been identified, both progress against them and their continuing relevance can be checked.

Partners should evaluate with their wider constituency whether the partnership itself is still adequate and appropriate for the work in hand, and whether the leadership still works. There is sometimes a need for change over time.

#### ***Pitfalls and Perils***

Not building in a process that reviews the continuing form and usefulness of the partnership itself. Not having some reference to the outside may lead to the partnership becoming self-referential, and not growing and changing as the initiative develops.

Not completing the loop is a common problem with evaluation. Systems must lead to change and development and be planned to coincide with new planning cycles for maximum effectiveness.

#### ***Essential***

Evaluation, particularly of such large and complex initiatives is not easy to deal with. It is vital that all partners are comfortable with admitting that initiatives have not worked. Celebrating success is easier, but the vital learning which comes from approaches which fail will be lost. The learning city must allow for new ways of working. It must evaluate the efficacy of its methods thoroughly and not replicate the practice which does not pay off.

### ***Assessing Progress in Level Three***

Has the initiative got identified evaluation strategies for each of its joint projects?

Has the initiative an action plan with targets?

In assessing the outcome of the action plan, is attention given to the resources needed to achieve outputs, as well as outputs achieved?

Are there systems to check the perceived effectiveness of the partnership - within constituent organisations - with outside organisations?

Has the partnership changed its membership or structure. Has it reviewed the necessity of doing so since the initiative began?

When improvements need to be made, how are they fed into the action planning cycle? Is evaluation continuing so that this can happen in time for the next planning round?

Is it clear who is responsible for evaluation? Is it shared between the partners so they can learn from and about each other?

### ***Facts and Figures***

In order to have an appropriate and **SMART\*** action plan, data will need to have been collected or the source identified. [\* **S**pecific; **M**easurable; **A**ttainable; **R**ealistic; **T**ime-related].

Facts on participation and achievement in publicly-funded education in and post-school should be available as a baseline.

### ***Examples in Action***

In **Norwich**, the eighteen months of the initiative saw a period of intense activity for the Learning City Group. This included a large consultative conference, plans for a learning festival and a learning shop, and the development of a first action plan flowing from consultation within the city. Some things had worked well: others like an event for city leaders had had to be postponed. It was decided that time was needed to evaluate progress and how the partnership positioned itself for its next phase. An away day was held to give time for this to happen. As a result of this, new members were sought for the partnership and priorities for its development were decided.

In **Liverpool**, shared activities which are usually "core to individual institutions" are being undertaken by the Learning City Partners. These include joint staff development - collectively looking at issues such as higher education fees and widening participation - as well as sharing core training activities such as financial management training. Joint marketing is a feature, promoting "Learning in Liverpool" rather than their own institutions' courses.

**Nottingham** launched the idea of the Learning City with a large consultative conference. Feedback included an endorsement of the idea of the Learning City and its key objectives. But there was criticism that the steering group was not sufficiently representative of voluntary groups, employers and ethnic minorities. These criticisms were taken on board following further consultation. The steering group for the Learning City was changed from a group mainly representing learning providers to a structure with a small board of directors. They were appointed according to specified criteria, with a broad forum for open access and three working groups to carry forward the identified themes of literacy, marketing and information.

## **STRAND TWO: PARTICIPATION**

### **Learning to Involve the Public in Public Policy**

The second strand of development seeks to radically improve the degree of vertical integration between policy makers and the public within the learning community.

Communities are increasingly diverse in their interests and cultures of living. Public policy needs to become more responsive to the differences within communities.

Only by enabling the different communities to take part in a dialogue to shape the forming of public policy and its implementation can their specific needs be accommodated and the differences be reconciled.

The learning community is willing to learn that regeneration will be more effective, and lifelong learning more secure, when policy makers have the confidence to involve the public more actively in the making and renewing of their own communities.

This active citizenship is the key to revitalising local democracy. The participation it presupposes is not intended to replace the procedures of representation but to enhance them. A number of learning communities are beginning to experiment with strategies for enhancing democratic practice by listening to the "voice" of the public. These include creating, for example, forums; deliberative opinion polls; citizens' panels/juries; community councils.

- "Effective local democratic participation was a condition for the success of this regeneration programme."
- "What is needed is an acknowledgement that this is going to be a long-term process, and that it will take probably three years to set up structures which established community groups will recognise and trust."
- "Intelligent structures for enabling community regeneration do not insist upon uniformity to help the bureaucracies, but are transparent, accessible to local citizens, helping them to communicate their needs and claims."

	<b>LEVEL 1</b> <b>Getting Organised</b> <b>(Building)</b>	<b>LEVEL 2</b> <b>Towards Shared Understanding</b> <b>(Dialogue)</b>	<b>LEVEL 3</b> <b>Cycles of Learning</b> <b>(Reflection)</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<i>Consultation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> public service orientation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> responsiveness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> listening</li> </ul>	<i>Participation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> public participation, deliberation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> voice</li> </ul>	<i>Citizen Evaluation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> culture of public accountability</li> </ul>
<b>PEOPLE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> representatives of community groups</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> cross-sector/council authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> wide involvement of citizens</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> local practitioners/enablers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> public</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> external consultants</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> researchers</li> </ul>
<b>PLANS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> consultation on local issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> devolved resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> community grants/ community chests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> local needs/priorities in strategic plans</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> community capacity building</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> dedicated resource for community decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> cycle of audit, review and reflection</li> </ul>
<b>PROCESSES of organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> area offices (one stop shops)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> decentralised management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> forums</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> empowering localities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> flexible organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> issues forums</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> citizen juries</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the transparent organisation</li> </ul>
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> criteria for local issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> measures of participation, number, scope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the accountable democracy</li> </ul>

## Level 1 - Getting Organised

Almost all learning cities are ambitious in their intention to consult with and respond to their citizens. This is particularly so because most seek to involve non-traditional participants in learning and they are anxious to develop strategies to do so. Those working in regeneration are conscious that schemes are only likely to be successful if they fit in with the ambitions and desires of the communities they set out to serve. There is a real desire to try to develop "bottom up" rather than "top down" models.

However in the development of learning cities, people can be approached and involved not only where they live but also where they work, shop and enjoy their leisure. This is sometimes forgotten, perhaps most often in approaches to employers who sometimes have an uncertain role in initiatives. In organising a strategy for participation, it is vital that all possible avenues are explored. These may include "top down" approaches in terms of awareness-raising.

Among learning cities, developing consultation mechanisms has been difficult and slow moving. This is not from lack of will but because of the complexity of the process.

***Recognise that the learning city will be made up of many communities. Learning communities are increasingly acknowledging this with the need to learn from them and involve them in decision making processes.***

### ***Ideas for Action***

Consultation procedures at the beginning of initiatives should involve representatives of agencies and projects which are working in areas where consultation processes are needed.

It is difficult for consultation to be effective if those being consulted are not aware of the options. Clear information about possible areas for action and awareness raising may need to precede consultation processes.

There are natural points for communities to gather - schools are one. Using the community's familiar institutions and networks is a good starting point. Some communities are, in fact, a series of smaller sub-communities which may have different aspirations. It may be necessary to have different strategies to meet the needs of, for example, different ethnic groupings within the population. Consultation on locally significant issues is more likely to arouse interest than an agenda set totally from outside.

***Focus Groups were developed as a form of qualitative market research. They have often been used to explore the background to customer views in a way that is not possible in opinion surveys. However they can be used to explore citizens' views and are particularly valuable in exploring the views of groups who are not normally heard in the working of the authority.***

(John Stewart 1996)

Time and trust are important in dealings with communities. Allow sufficient lead time and resources to enable trust to develop.

Communities can be galvanised by even small amounts of disposable income to use in community improvement.

### ***Pitfalls and Perils***

It is tempting to work through "Community Leaders". But it is vital that these are not self selected or representative of very particular interests within the community. It is important to recognise the contribution and views of the unclubbable members of communities.

Do not engage in consultation on issues where policy is already effectively decided and where it is confirmation and not consultation that is sought.

### ***Essential***

Concrete outcomes are vital to the viability of consultation processes. It is better not to consult than to consult about nothing.

### ***Assessing Progress at Level One***

Has the initiative got a clear focus for consultation and targets for which communities will be approached first?

Do those working within such communities, e.g. health visitors, social workers, teachers understand what is going on so that activity is not inadvertently sabotaged?

Were all sections of the chosen community targeted? If so, which sections were actually involved in consultation: men/women; young/old; some/all racial groups; settled inhabitants/newcomers?

Has consultation taken place within the selected community?

What methods were used? Which succeeded? Which seemed least useful?

Has a workable response been obtained and an action plan drawn up?

Have systems been set up which could be re-activated for future consultation?

Were issues raised which were unexpected and which changed plans?

### ***Facts and Figures***

Community attitudes to learning and the provision of learning opportunities, together with community development and action are difficult to measure . The first priority might be to establish a baseline. Possible means of collecting data in this area might include:

- Attitude surveys - which might be measured against national norms in the National Adult Learning Survey
- Attendance at public meetings and events, e.g. PTA meetings
- Number of organisations meeting in the designated community
- Number of residents acting in local organisations and groups, e.g. as school governors.

### ***Examples in Action***

In **Derby** the Learning City has begun to raise awareness in communities about the power of learning. This uses a city-wide publicity campaign based on the slogan coined by Sir Christopher Ball, "Learning Pays". This has been used in local advertising to promote curiosity and raise interest. The idea is that there should be follow-up activity with media campaigns and leafleting to people's homes.

In **Newark**, the learning community initiative is led by the local college. Real efforts have been made to involve employers and local voluntary organisations in learning, and the identification of learning needs, through a computer link with the college. The college is developing bulletin boards within its web-site for particular interest groups. A survey of 2,000 households on attitudes towards learning and barriers has begun the process of a dialogue with the local community.

### ***A Model Community Charter***

#### **Citizens wish:**

- To be informed about city or town, how it takes decisions, its activities and its services;
- To be consulted about issues that affect them;
- To have their views listened to and respected;
- To be treated fairly and without discrimination;
- To participate in decision-making arrangements;
- To receive high quality services to known standards;
- To have complaints responded to promptly, fully, fairly.

In, John Stewart, "Further Innovation in Democratic Practice", The University of Birmingham, 1996

## **Level 2 - Towards Shared Understanding**

Consultation only begins the process of learning from the public. Having begun to unlock the doors to communication, the task is to listen to the voice of the communities, involving them in a dialogue about the needs of the learning community. There will be different understandings of those needs. The challenge is to reach some shared understanding and agreement about priorities. The task of professionals is to enable this process of involving the public in the community in which they are to live and work.

Learning needs to take place between communities and between professionals and the public if action and cultures are to be transformed. For those accustomed to relying on professional expertise to make decisions, the need to respond to the demands of communities can bring surprises. For those operating within communities there is the need to learn and recognise the constraints and competing priorities which affect the ability to achieve goals. Action planning may involve some change and compromise on both sides. Where funding is placed in the hands of communities, rather than experts, this may be an uncomfortable process.

### ***Ideas for Action***

Local needs and priorities should be the focus of dialogue but the limitations of meeting such needs should be examined. Local actors may have solutions not considered by "experts".

Communities should be involved in the drawing up of action plans and should be encouraged to identify SMART targets.

Communities should be consulted about how best to approach the individuals living within areas and consult them about plans.

Dedicating resources to the process of community consultation can enable better involvement. Making it possible for those with responsibilities to attend meetings (e.g. for carers by appropriate timing or paying allowances) is an example of how small sums can make a difference.

People do not always have to be consulted about what they want through the place where they live. Where more general issues are at stake, consultation can take place through the workplace or through places where people spend their leisure. In these situations informal discussion is, perhaps, more likely to occur.

Experts and professionals have a vital role in helping communities to make informed decisions. It is important that they are helped to communicate in jargon-free and accessible ways. They explain should situations and alternatives before advising or recommending particular courses of action.

### ***Strategies for Involving the Communities***

"Issue Forums" enhance the quality of public judgement. It is not that the public are not informed about an issue, but that they have not deliberated upon it. The issues can focus on matters of local concern - the environment, energy, jobs, education etc. The forums can be based on schools or colleges, libraries or other civic organisations. The forum can be led by a convenor or moderator, who makes sure that:

- Everyone is encouraged to participate;
- Everyone understands that this is not a debate;
- No one or two individuals dominate;
- The discussion will focus on choices;
- All the major choices or positions on the issue are considered;
- An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of alternatives is maintained;
- We listen to each other.

"Consensus-Building" is an approach developed by Environmental Resolve, an undertaking developed by the Environmental Council. Consensus-building uses what are in effect mediation groups. It challenges the adversarial approach embedded in the system of planning inquiries.

**"Consensus-building is different. It helps people with opposing views work together and seek solutions they can all support. This is an ambitious goal, but in many cases an achievable one. Consensus-building is designed to confront the issues rather than the people. People still disagree but it tries to avoid destructive conflict and inflexible positioning. It allows time for trust to build up between the participants so that they all feel part of a team seeking solutions together. The differences from other decision-making processes stem from the use of a mediator. Mediators have no connection with any of the interested parties and are accepted by all as independent. Their responsibility is to use their skills to help the participants to find agreement. Mediators do not judge the value of the different points of view or the evidence and do not decide which is the best solution. Reaching an agreement is the responsibility of the participants."** (Bains, 1995)

From, John Stewart, "Further Innovation in Democratic Practice", The University of Birmingham, 1996

### ***Pitfalls and Perils***

Having action plans which do not have specific and attainable goals or where all goals are long-term is to be avoided. Interest can be maintained and feelings of success generated by achievement of short-term objectives.

It is important that communities do not feel that they are being bludgeoned by agencies and projects. Those working in specific areas should try to have a coherent approach to initiatives rather than a plethora of different groups, projects and sets of workers.

### ***Essential***

A willingness to allow the voices of those within the community to be heard and acted upon and to give real decision-making to communities in at least some areas of activity.

### ***Measuring Progress at Level Two***

Have action plans been drawn up which reflect the expressed views of the communities concerned?

Have those involved in consultation been asked about the best means for informing and asking the opinion of others living within their community?

Have resources been put aside for funding the consultation process to give a voice to those who might normally be unable to take part?

Has sufficient trust been established for the community to decide on the use of resources?

Have systems been considered to review and evaluate activities on a regular basis?

Has there been a growth in grass roots organisations and voluntary associations?

### ***Facts and Figures***

Using baselines developed in Level One, it is possible to log changes in attitudes and, perhaps, participation in formal learning activities.

In terms of measuring community involvement, numbers of community-based organisations, numbers of people attending public meetings and consultations, and numbers responding to surveys may give useful indications.

This may also be an appropriate time to begin to measure numbers of projects initiated by communities.

### ***Examples in Action***

Few of the learning cities in Britain have progressed very far with consultation within communities, although many are engaged with trying to increase participation in education from areas where take-up is low. ***Liverpool*** and ***Birmingham***, however, are developing major initiatives.

In ***Liverpool*** where there has been a substantial injection of European funding in areas of extreme disadvantage, there is a substantial experience of working in regeneration partnerships. This is reflected in communities which may not term themselves "learning communities" but which are learning to work with new forms of participation.

In ***Liverpool*** twelve or thirteen partnerships set up under Objective One funding have substantial sums of money to use for regeneration. In one example a large forum, attracting 90 - 100 people from the local community, advises a board comprising business, education and voluntary sector representatives on local priorities. Substantial funding of over £5 million is involved and the forum has held together at a time when difficult decisions, for example about closing primary schools have had to be implemented. Among the concerns expressed by communities have been access to jobs and training, transport, community security and a need for locally based shopping facilities. As the partnership has developed, conflicts have emerged and been resolved. One example is between employment opportunities and housing priorities. Resolution has involved different parties within the community reaching a compromise. Those working in such partnership stress the value of patience in working through ideas with community interests.

In ***Birmingham*** the City Council introduced a policy initiative called "Local Initiative Local Action" (LILA) in 1996. It is designed to create forums within each ward of the city to enable community participation in local decision-making. £50,000 has been allocated to each forum to facilitate the process of participation. The strategy of decentralisation and devolution of decision-making is perceived as being directly related to the programme of regeneration in the city.

A similar initiative in ***Norwich***, known as "Community Power" has recently obtained SRB4 funding of over £1m specifically for empowering deprived communities through learning in five key wards.

### **Level 3 - Cycles of Learning**

There is certainly a need to work with communities of all kinds in the work of regeneration and economic development. Communities must be involved in decision-making on the changes which affect them and in the developments which influence the places where they live and work. The intention is also to make sure that the wider community, not just the fragmented parts which are subject to economic development funding, is involved in the process of determining its own future. Some elements have traditionally been adept at influencing development. Much of the work discussed here is about widening the power base to include those who do not normally get involved in decision-making in learning and influencing local government and business interests.

In this process, skills and educational development play a significant part. But they must be supported by some of the strategies to support community development which are indicated. It is important to establish an infrastructure of participation and consultation which is self-sustaining if communities are to be able to continue to exert influence over time. This must involve access to learning opportunities to build on and develop the skills for economic success, and a culture to support learning in its widest sense. Cyclical systems to mimic the learning cycle of "*Plan, Deliver, Evaluate and Plan Again*" are needed on a community-wide basis.

The centre of this cyclical process is to involve the communities in evaluating the purposes and practices of the learning community.

#### ***Ideas for Action***

An annual conference can help to keep awareness of initiatives alive and offer a chance to evaluate and assess progress, as well as celebrating successes of all kinds.

Having a written strategy for review, including the people to be involved, can ensure that people and communities are not forgotten because they are not currently centre-stage.

Research projects can keep interest alive and provide valuable information on progress and patterns of participation in learning and community activity, as well as evaluating the quality of such involvement.

Systems to provide routine management information on initiatives for both communities themselves and the learning city initiative should be set up to ensure factual information is gathered.

### **Citizens' Juries**

Citizens' juries are an approach which has aroused a great deal of interest.

***"A small group of people, representing 'general public' meet together to explore a specific policy issue. Witnesses present information and jurors cross-examine their statements. Jurors deliberate amongst themselves and then make public their conclusions."***

(Institute of Public Policy Research, 1994)

#### **Guidelines for Citizens' Juries include:**

- ***Jurors receive sufficient information (both written and oral) to make decisions. Witnesses give evidence and can be cross-examined***
- ***Jurors have adequate time to become informed and discuss the issue. Research in Germany and the US indicates that juries lasting 3-5 days have been most effective. The amount of time needed depends on how specific the issue is. Pilot projects will need to experiment to see whether gaps between the discussions cause significant problems.***
- ***Deliberation, facilitated by a trained moderator, is an important element. It is the process by which different views are tested and arguments are advanced to persuade: if one seeks to persuade then one has to take account of views other than one's own. Deliberation allows for reflection on a particular issue, in contrast with snapshot measures of public opinion such as opinion polls.***
- ***Jurors are encouraged to make decisions from a community perspective rather than as isolated and anonymous individuals, and represent a cross section of society.***
- ***Decisions or recommendations of a citizens' jury are not binding, but it is important that there should be some form of contract or agreement requiring the sponsoring body (e.g. the local council or health commission) to respond and to publish the response to the jury's recommendations.***

(Institute of Public Policy Research, 1995)

From, John Stewart, 'Further Innovations in Democratic Practice', The University of Birmingham, 1996

Means should be found to engage media and people in debate. Citizens' juries, and working to have media involvement and coverage of initiatives, both ensure that impetus is maintained.

### **Essential**

The key issue is how to build non-bureaucratic structures which ensure that pressure within specific communities can be translated into the action planning taking place in the area as a whole on a regular basis, rather than as a result of periodic outreach work.

#### **Assessing Progress in Stage Three**

Are records kept on a series of key indicators and reviewed on a regular basis?

Are approaches made from the community which initiate debate and action planning?

Are there systems for receiving and giving feedback on initiatives?

When new plans for the whole community need to be discussed, is there a coherent plan of action drawn from successful experience?

Is there a culture of learning from communities, and a commitment to researching ways to improve this?

***Facts and Figures***

Numbers of groups existing within the community.

Attendance at regular community activities from those living within the community.

Attitude changes recorded by survey.

Increased participation in local government elections.

***Examples in Action***

In general, learning communities which are young initiatives are not at this stage of development. Examples of real community involvement and participation in regeneration and research are hard to find. Some initiatives are giving signals of their intentions in this area.

In **Hull** where the "Learning Chapter" was tested on constituent groups by the City Learning Group, there is a commitment to a regular annual conference which explores major themes within the Learning Chapter. Work is currently being done to revise the plan and to consult on its next phase.

## **STRAND THREE: PERFORMANCE**

### **Towards a Model of Value Added**

What value does becoming a learning city add to their communities? This part of the guide seeks to develop an approach which enables learning cities to assess their performance and the value which their activities add.

Performance review and evaluation systems have grown over the past decade, though sometimes not helpfully. The focus has tended to be on measuring performance and "value for money", often in terms of costs, volume of service, utilisation rates, time targets and productivity. Indicators of service quality, customer satisfaction and achievement of goals have often been neglected. Quantitative data has been typically privileged over qualitative data. Learning cities need to avoid the flaws of many performance assessment systems and seek to replicate the best practice.

#### ***A Strategic Plan for Developing Performance Evaluation***

Think total, but plan piecemeal in stages:

- Set targets
- Assess performance against your targets
- Compare performance against another similar learning city
- Analyse and pin-point the value which your learning city has added

Establish this agenda as a three year plan.

Three stages are proposed for learning cities to create the capacity to evaluate their performance. Each is discussed in turn. They are:

1. Internal Assessment
2. External comparison: benchmarking
3. Analysis of value added

### **1) Internal Assessment**

#### ***Embedding Evaluation in the Strategic Planning Cycle***

The first step to achieve this is to develop explicit performance review systems which allow learning cities to evaluate what they are achieving in relation to their expressed purposes.

The confident learning city will seek to place its approach to evaluation at the centre of its strategic planning system. Learning about the progress which is being made is then embedded in the principal arteries of the learning city. Judgements can be formed about the value of its achievements, and the direction and cohesion of the city sharpened.

Each stage of the planning process incorporates reflection upon the purposes and conditions of evaluation. The learning city should be developing strategic plans for new forms of progression in learning, or an innovative approach to collaborative planning for an area regeneration scheme. Whatever the substantive plan, the aim should be to reflect at every stage how progress is to be monitored and evaluated. To develop a performance assessment system, the learning city will need to review a number of key issues and clarify its organising principles.

### ***Audit***

Policy planning will review the changing context of the learning city. This will include changes in central government initiatives; local policy innovations; budgetary changes, and changes in local economic development and demographic patterns. The task for evaluation at this stage is to produce an assessment of local needs.

### ***Evaluation Policy***

While the learning city is determining its specific strategies for enhancing lifelong learning and regeneration, it should be clarifying its policies for evaluation. The issue of who is evaluating progress and for what purposes is an important one for many partnerships. In many places the learning city initiative is very keen not to be seen as a body which sets targets for others. If it were to take on this role then partnerships would be destroyed.

Learning city groups are always reliant on individual institutions to make progress and to provide data. Thus, any target-setting or activity involving evaluation has to have the backing of the whole partnership, whether the aim is external evaluation or the monitoring of progress for local satisfaction.

Some key questions:

- Is the learning community clear about the rationale for introducing the performance assessment system?
- have the values of stakeholders been identified?
- can stakeholders be involved in decision-making about policies and design of the evaluation system?

STRATEGIC PLANNING	EVALUATION PRINCIPLES
<i>Audit</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> assessment of needs
<b>Strategy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- values and purposes</li> <li>- priorities</li> <li>- plans</li> <li>- resources</li> <li>- targets</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> evaluation policies and strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- planning the evaluation</li> <li>- recognise the different values of multiple stakeholders, and who is to be involved in decision-making</li> </ul>
<b>Targets</b> for implementation	<input type="checkbox"/> criteria for assessing performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- choose performance indicators (SMART targets)</li> <li>- establish base-line measures and time periods</li> <li>- clarify data to be collected for each stage of the value chain</li> <li>- recognise qualitative and quantitative data</li> <li>- establish database collection system</li> </ul>
<i>Monitoring</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> monitoring
<i>Evaluation</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> reflection on progress <i>what did we achieve?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> compare <i>how does it compare with our targets?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> evaluate <i>how well are we doing?</i> <i>why have we achieved/failed?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> judgement <i>what more should we do next year?</i>
<i>Action</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> taking actions on findings

### ***Targets, Performance Indicators and Base-line Measures***

The strategic planning process will prepare targets for implementation. The task of the evaluation system is to establish criteria for assessing performance and to choose indicators or measures which allow progress towards the targets set to be assessed. Performance is judged by assessing progress over time from a **base-line** towards a **target**. The **base-line** establishes the starting point, while the **target** defines the distance to be travelled towards a desired end point.

Communities need to measure the progress they are making against targets that they have set. At the very least they will decide on what targets they might usefully adopt to begin to measure such success. Are targets local - as well as national?

There is a need to find means to show that on key external measures of success, their community is making progress and, hopefully, more progress than similar communities which have not collaborated to improve the culture and delivery of learning. On the other hand there is an understandable reluctance to produce more and extra data collection requirements. The goals of a learning city should be locally set and reflect local contexts.

Are the targets **SMART**: **S**pecific; **M**easurable; **A**ttainable; **R**ealistic; **T**ime-related?

A further factor in assessing progress is the wish to include measures to value the processes which the initiative produces. This might be the learning which has gone on in the formation of partnerships, the production of a marketing strategy, or the inclusion of learning in the economic development plan for the city. These factors are not susceptible to numerical measurement. But they could be of vital importance as the first sign of change in culture taking place. Consider whether qualitative as well as quantitative measures can be used.

### ***Evaluating Progress***

A suggested cycle for evaluating and improving achievement is:

*What have we achieved?*

*How do we compare with our targets?*

*What more should we do to achieve next year/plan period?*

*Taking action based on what has been learnt.*

There is no universal system to be implemented: it has to be made-to-measure for each organisation. Plan to overcome problems which can occur with:

- lack of commitment from key people
- inappropriate organisational culture
- too little time devoted
- inadequate staff expertise
- defining indicators and obtaining the appropriate information.

## 2) External Comparison: Benchmarking

The challenge for the second level of reflective learning is to move beyond internal assessment of progress to compare with the best practice in other learning cities in similar circumstances. This helps cities to learn from others and to develop understanding about why others in similar situations can do better.

This task requires a move beyond quantitative data to an understanding of the qualitative processes within and between organisations, services and communities. "Benchmarking" provides an appropriate mechanism for this process of comparative analysis.

### ***Benchmarking***

Benchmarking is the process of comparing your partnership's performance with that of others in similar circumstances which have achieved the best performance. The process of benchmark comparison begins by identifying the gap(s) between current performance and the best practice of a community which is like in kind. The criteria for comparison derive from wanting to achieve the same objectives from similar sets of circumstances.

#### ***Key Elements of a Process Benchmarking Exercise***

- identify the area of activity to be benchmarked and the critical points in the process that need improvement... and the indicators that you are going to use to measure progress;
- collect data, analyse and map those processes in your own organisation;
- choose benchmarking partner(s) who are better than you are. Agree the data to be collected;
- share the information with benchmark partners;
- compare and analyse inputs such as staff time and costs, outputs and outcomes, throughputs, processes procedures, policies;
- identify gaps in performance;
- identify the best process for your organisation - that is one that would deliver what you want to deliver locally;
- implement the changes;
- monitor and review and compare with the best.

Local Government Management Board, 1996

As the LGMB emphasises, *"Benchmarking does not mean copying what other people do; it should be a learning process, challenging existing ways of working and identifying step by step changes that can close the gap between current performance and best practice."*

### ***Comparing and Learning from Others***

The success of benchmarking will depend upon the quality of collaborative learning which the learning city can engender within, and between partnerships. Shared understanding and agreement is the condition and purpose of the learning cycle. This requires trust and co-operative working between different organisations and interests. Benchmark clubs or networks can be formed to support gathering, sharing and understanding information.

### ***Recognising the Diversity of Interests***

The learning city will understand that diversity of interests within the city may hold different substantive values, as well as give different weight to the significance of value for money, service quality and equity. The task over time is to develop some shared understanding about the values which the learning community wishes to assess for what has been achieved.

The diversity of stakeholders whose values and interests need to be taken into account include:

- public, private and voluntary sector organisations and agencies
- elected representatives
- senior managers, professionals and front-line staff as well as trade union officials
- the range of public interests, including tenants, parents, service users and community groups.

### ***The Aims and Tasks of Collaborative Working***

The processes of reflection and evaluation lead into the tasks of forming shared judgements and agreements about future plans and priorities to improve the learning city. The quality of these judgements will grow out of the quality of collaborative learning which has grown up between authorities, organisations and agencies in the learning city. The DTI/DfEE document "***Competitiveness through Partnerships with People***" (1997) lists "***Five Paths to Sustained Success***". These help to summarise the essential conditions of collaborative working:

- *shared goals: understanding the business we are in*
- *shared culture: agreed values binding us together*
- *shared learning: continuously improving ourselves*
- *shared effort: one organisation driven by flexible teams*
- *shared information: effective communication throughout the organisation.*

A community which reflectively monitors and evaluates its development will ensure that the different sectors of the city, town or region are aware of, seek to learn from, and replicate where appropriate imaginative and effective practices of regeneration and lifelong learning.

### 3) Analysing Added Value

What value does a learning city add to its area or region? What have been the outputs of various initiatives? What has been the impact on the community? What benefits will follow for cities and towns in developing the ideas and partnerships on which learning depends?

These are reasonable questions to ask, especially when authorities and organisations are being invited to commit public money to what can appear abstract purposes - to encouraging lifelong learning or economic and social regeneration. The essential task of the learning city is to:

- analyse the relative achievement of different initiatives
- learn why some initiatives were, and were not effective
- form judgements about future action.

This stage of the assessment framework allows judgements to be formed about the value which the learning city has contributed. The value added approach can be understood in two steps:

- understand the "value chain"
- evaluate the value added.

#### *The Value Chain*

The existing models of value analysis often emphasise the cost or efficiency of services. This is encapsulated in the idea of "value for money". A more sophisticated concept is needed to understand the value of a learning city. It should be one which expresses the variety of values and the layers in which they are added to enhance the quality of life in the locality.

A variety of values needs to be recognised and celebrated. This is not only the new resources of finance and staff generated, but services produced, opportunities created for personal development and participation, the satisfactions engendered, and the longer-term enhancement of wellbeing in the community. The learning city needs to understand how value accumulates through all its activities and how these are connected together.

The idea of the "value chain" derived from the work of Ian Sanderson and colleagues of the Policy Research Institute provides the sophistication required. This concept suggests that the value which is produced by services for communities can be broken down into a chain of processes, each stage of which adds value to the process. The five stages of the value chain are as follows:

1. **Inputs/Resources.** These describe a wide variety of inputs: the appointment of staff; time contributed; financial resources added; materials and accommodation provided; the information and technology that is offered; the skill and knowledge of people at different levels of organisation. These resources are probably a necessary condition for many values to be contributed to the community: they provide the foundation on which other layers of value depend.
2. **Service Process.** This refers to the processes of organising and managing the production of services and activities of the public sphere. In the context of learning cities the inter-agency partnerships and networks will form particularly significant processes which become a precondition for service provision. Likewise, the processes of relating to, and involving the public will identify the quality of producing services. Process adds value, not only in being the precondition for delivering a service but in determining the style of provision. A public service orientation in service delivery enhances the value of producing services which are responsive to public needs.
3. **Service Outputs.** These refer to the services actually delivered to users "which may be measured in terms of capacity provided (e.g. facilities, places); throughput (customers/clients using facilities or occupying places); or other measure of the service provided or level of activity undertaken (e.g.

hours of care for social services clients; hours of teacher contact for pupils; passenger mile of bus services). Related measures include awareness of the availability of services and levels of take-up."

4. ***Intermediate Outcomes.*** Outcomes refer to the effects of services on both the direct user/recipients and the wider community/locality. They may be the intended benefits to users or may be unintended effects or even unforeseen side-effects. Short-term or intermediate outcomes refer to the effects which can be discerned soon after receipt of a service (e.g. satisfaction, immediate user benefit). For example, the provision of a creche may lead to an immediate benefit for lone mothers who are able to take up employment opportunities or places in education and training.
5. ***Long Term Outcomes/Benefits.*** These refer to the wider impact of services on the life users and the community. For example, the provision of a creche may lead to long-term benefits to the community of higher employment, and or an increase in educational qualifications and capabilities of citizens in the community.

### ***Evaluate the Value Added***

If the work of the learning city wishes to enhance the value of the locality, it needs to test and evaluate the value which has been added. More resources may have been added, but have they been added economically? Services may have been developed but has this been done efficiently and are the outputs effective? These questions need to be answered before the learning city can be confident that it has added value. These tests for value added are set out below.

### **Tests for Value Added**

#### ***Economy and efficiency address "value for money"***

- Economy refers to the cost of resource inputs
- Efficiency expresses the relationship between outputs and inputs

#### ***Effectiveness addresses quality of service***

- Extent of achieving defined standards/objectives which express values sought
- Effectiveness expresses relationship between intended and actual outcomes
- Quality relates to standards of achievement/service
- Process quality looks at attributes of organisational and management capability
- Service quality looks at the attributes of service delivery

#### ***Impact***

- Assessment of net added value of the service in terms of benefit to the community/locality

#### ***Equity***

- Who receives the service and who bears the cost

#### ***Key questions for planner***

- *Economy:* How do actual costs compare with planned costs?
- *Efficiency:* What is the relation of outputs to resource inputs?
- *Awareness:* Are the intended beneficiaries aware of the service?
- *Take-up:* Are the intended beneficiaries actually receiving the service?
- *Quality:* Are quality standards and customer satisfaction being achieved?
- *Effectiveness:* Do actual outputs and outcomes achieve intended objectives?
- *Impact:* What improvements are made to the quality of community life?
- *Equity:* Is distribution of outputs, outcomes, benefits and impacts equitable?

Ian Sanderson et al, "Made to Measure - Evaluation in Practice in Local Government",  
Local Government Training Board, London, 1998

These tests of quality can be applied to each stage of the value chain as illustrated below. This approach to analysing value - internally, comparatively and analytically - needs to be applied to the various aspects of the learning city's work.

	<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
<b>TESTS</b>		<b>Service (process)</b>	<b>Service (outputs)</b>	<b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>	<b>Long-term Benefits</b>
<i>Economy</i>	Resource Time Staff	Organisational capability Strategic planning Systems of evaluation	Services Information Advice	Capabilities Skills Satisfaction	Quality of life Culture Knowledge Democracy Citizenship
<i>Efficiency</i>					
<i>Effectiveness</i>					
<i>Equity</i>					
<i>Equality</i>					

*Example: A plan to create a multi-purpose community centre*

*Describe the elements in the value chain*

**Inputs**

- budget: capital and revenue
- staff: numbers and skills
- materials, facilities

**Service Process**

- multi-professional partnership
- collaborative decision making
- user and community involvement in decision making

**Service Outputs**

- courses, training
- library, IT resource centre
- creche
- advice
- groups (women's group, youth club, health awareness campaign group, etc.)
- leisure and recreational facilities

**Outcomes**

- learning
- skill acquisition, qualifications

- opportunities for job take-up
- recreation
- voice: articulation of individual and community needs
- satisfaction

***Benefits***

- greater opportunities; equity - for women; support of learning needs; child care; job opportunities

***Evaluate value added***

- clarify purposes
- set targets
- compare achievements with planned targets
- compare achievements with other like centres (benchmark)
- analyse value added
  - has the centre been economical?  
*compare actual with planned costs and costs elsewhere*
  - has the centre been efficient?  
*what has been the relation of service outputs to resource inputs?*  
*how does this compare with other centres?*
- has the centre been effective? Have outputs and outcomes achieved planned objectives?
- has the centre been equitable? Have its services, benefits etc. been enjoyed equally by women as well as men, and by all generations?

### **Performance Assessment**

The third strand introduces a cycle of collaborative learning that involves conscious, routine processes of reflection and evaluation. This enables cities to judge the added value which learning cities are contributing.

The learning city is reflective, seeking to learn about itself and how it is changing. It develops the capacity to monitor and consciously reflect back upon its development so as to understand better how to make progress in the future. It is willing to reflect on and question the principles which are underlying the processes of regeneration.

This makes the processes of evaluation central to the learning city. It will introduce mechanisms of monitoring, review, and comparative analysis to judge the value which the learning city is adding. Evaluation proceeds through levels of complexity:

- building *internal assessment*
- developing *external comparison* which generates dialogue about quality and encourages benchmarking, the comparative understanding of excellent performance between like organisations
- developing *evaluation analysis* of the value added chain. The learning city will strive to generate a culture of research, to become a self-aware value adding city.

Analysis leads to improved cohesion. The learning city values *connectedness*. This ensures that imaginative innovations are understood and connected together across the city. What is learned in one part is shared by all.

- *"Evaluation is in and of itself perhaps the central process: if the city is to learn from its experiences, it must be committed to effective and ongoing evaluation processes; it must reflect, consider and reconsider, monitor, think and rethink."*

(Charles Landry and François Matarasso)

- Evaluation and research are the key to learning in the learning city.

**Learning to Add Value**

	<b>LEVEL 1</b> <b>Getting Organised</b> <b>(Building)</b>	<b>LEVEL 2</b> <b>Towards Shared Understanding</b> <b>(Dialogue)</b>	<b>LEVEL 3</b> <b>Cycles of Learning</b> <b>(Reflection)</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> internal evaluation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> integrating into the strategic planning system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> comparative analysis, understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the value chain</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> culture of reflection and action</li> </ul>
<b>PEOPLE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> policy planners, statisticians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> policy makers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> different perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> active involvement of citizens and service users</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> researchers</li> </ul>
<b>PLANS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> performance assessment system:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- criteria</li> <li>- targets/standards</li> <li>- performance indicators</li> <li>- baseline data</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> comparative data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> research, developing knowledge of medium, longer term processes</li> </ul>
<b>PROCESSES of organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> monitoring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> supported self-evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> benchmarking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> organisation integration:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- performance review</li> <li>- policy planning</li> <li>- public service</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inter-organisation professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the learning organisation:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understanding and resolving differences within and between organisations and the public</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> performance review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> comparative discussion and evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> collaborative agreement and accountability</li> </ul>

## **Level 1: Getting Organised - Internal Assessment**

The use of performance review and evaluation systems has grown over the past decade. The focus is on measuring performance and value for money, often in terms of costs, volume of service, utilisation rates, time targets and productivity. Indicators of service quality, customer satisfaction and achievement of goals have been harder to produce and, as a result, are less well developed. Quantitative data has been typically privileged over qualitative data. Learning cities need to avoid the flaws of many performance/evaluation systems and seek to replicate the best practice.

The first step to achieving this is to develop explicit performance review systems which allow learning cities to evaluate what they are achieving in relation to their expressed purposes. The first step towards this is the development of a system of local performance measures which reflect local priorities.

### ***Ideas for Action***

Performance indicators should follow the partnership's priorities.

Individual projects should have tightly defined outcome measures and be thoroughly reviewed.

Priorities should be based on needs: assessment backed up with baseline data.

Local data collection should be for early discussion so that the partnership can influence individual data collection, e.g. local TEC surveys.

Institutions will be collecting information for their funders. Careful attention needs to be given to how such information can be accessed to serve local needs and be shared between partners. Some information will be market sensitive.

Cross-sector targets, e.g. measuring progress in literacy in schools, FE and, where possible, the voluntary sector and levels within the community are possible at local level.

Targets should reflect the local economy and local circumstances.

All targets indicators should be SMART.

Local targets can be related to matters outside education and training and as initiatives develop they should be. Levels of inward investment, numbers of voluntary groups, neighbourhood watch schemes etc. could all feature as the initiative grows.

Performance indicators should be few but significant to the partnership and attractive to the media.

### ***Pitfalls and Perils***

Learning city groups must always rely on individual organisations within the partnerships to produce data. Any target-setting will need the backing of the whole partnership. It will fail if it is seen as an imposition of a further external judgement on institutional performance.

### ***Essential***

A cycle which includes review of baseline data, realistic targets with appropriate timescales, and a process for review and report timed to feed future action planning.

Performance indicators which measure participation, achievements, awareness and attitudes.

### ***Assessing Progress in Level One***

Have local indicators reflecting priorities been set?

Is adequate localised baseline data in place or being secured?

Are there indicators relating to the whole lifecycle, i.e. pre-school, school-based and post-school?

Is there an indicator that relates to learning at work, e.g. Investors in People, NVQ successes?

Is there an indicator which relates to informal learning, e.g. participation in Adult Education, number of library books issued?

Are there indicators covering the key areas of awareness and attitude, participation and achievement?

### ***Facts and Figures***

National Data, e.g. National Education and Training Targets, schools league tables and the Labour Force Survey can be used to define local baselines.

Data collected locally, e.g. the TEC household and employer surveys can be influenced and can include questions which are both relevant to their institution and to the learning city Partnership.

Measures such as attendance at meetings, voting behaviour, and numbers of events and organisations in the community all give indicators of community health.

### ***Examples in Action***

In ***Derby*** a decision was taken to focus the targets for the Learning City on the National Targets for Education and Training, and to localise the targets to get at problems disguised within them. With good information from an extended household survey, areas of concern could be highlighted and targets and resources focused on specific activities, e.g. boys' achievements in English, women in specific occupational sectors. The targets were agreed by both the forum group and the executive group of the initiative.

In ***Stockton-on-Tees*** no formal targets have yet been set. But there is a clear prioritising of activity around three areas: basic skills, the marketing of learning, and information, advice and guidance. It is in these areas that activity planning will be focused.

## **Level 2: Towards Shared Understanding - External Comparison**

When internal targets, action plans and methods of assessment are in place or in development, learning cities want to measure themselves against what is happening in other places. This is to learn from the practice of others and to begin to make sure that they are performing better as a result of the learning city work than those in similar situations who have not engaged in the same kinds of partnerships and participative strategies.

This task requires learning cities to use quantitative data and to move beyond this to an understanding of the qualitative processes within and between organisations, services and communities. One of the key ways for establishing such comparisons is benchmarking.

Another means of developing external perspectives on activity is through measurement against national targets, league tables and other appropriate data. This involves defining relevant and useful priorities. Data on learning may be a useful starting point. A third method which initiatives in Britain have found particularly useful as they start work is networking with other places in a formally constituted network. In this instance this is the Learning City Network itself.

### ***Ideas for Action***

***Benchmarking*** - benchmarking a whole city is not likely to be appropriate or possible. The first task should be to identify areas where this approach would be useful and where it would help the initiative to achieve in a priority area.

Having identified the area, choose a partner area which you feel is better than you. Their situation should be close enough to your own to make what you learn meaningful.

Be sure that you are clear about the data needed and its availability.

Choose comparable indicators.

Evaluate the comparison by identifying the gaps in performance and which processes are useful to your organisation, then implementing change and re-evaluating.

Using national data on learning involves using only data which is collected nationally in a uniform way, and which follows the data collected in relation to locally determined priorities. Possible sources will include:

- School league tables at all stages to GCSE
- National Targets at Foundation Level: Lifetime Targets are also possible but data on them may be less uniformly collected
- Labour Force Survey data
- National Adult Learning Survey published by DfEE
- Labour Market and Skills Trends published annually by DfEE
- Audit Commission Performance Indicator information which covers a wide range of services but few qualitative measures: these are being developed in a number of areas
- FEFC and HEFC statistics and, perhaps, the data which FE and HE institutions must prepare for their funding body
- Crime statistics are collected locally and nationally. There are undoubtedly other databases which might be explored outside the sphere of education and training. Initiatives in Britain have not, in general, tackled the data sets in relation to learning. Other data may need to be considered for a later phase of development.

**Networks** - belonging to a network in relation to all or part of the learning city activities can bring fresh ideas, good practice and possibilities for benchmarking activity. There are networks for many purposes: for learning city work the most prominent ones are:

- the Learning City Network
- the European Lifelong Learning Initiative which produces information, newsletters and has supported specific initiatives
- European networks such as the Network of Educating Cities: their role in connection with British initiatives is not yet highly developed.

When joining a network it is vital to ensure that the information flow from it is shared with the initiative as a whole.

Networks involve time, resources and commitment. This needs to be resourced.

### ***Pitfalls and Perils***

National comparisons have been identified as problematic. Simple positions within league tables are likely to be counterproductive and demoralising, especially in places engaged in efforts to regenerate. All targets should be about improvement from a baseline and the baseline should be defined.

For successful communications, network members should represent the group as a whole. They should not represent one sector within it, or an individual interest.

### ***Essential***

There is a need to encourage and work for urgent decisions on which National Targets would form a useful core for all communities to measure, and to encourage, and perhaps seek funding for, sharing and benchmarking among initiatives.

### ***Assessing Progress in Level Two***

Has the initiative any contact with other similarly focused communities through a network or other means?

Have specific areas been identified which would be appropriate starting points for benchmarking?

Have decisions been taken on what data might support national comparisons in key areas?

Are targets in relation to nationally collected data in place and available to partners?

Are targets and proven progress publicised with communities and in the media?

***Examples in Action***

The Learning City Network

About twenty Cities are currently in membership although not all these places have "declared" themselves as Learning Cities. For some, the Network is a forum to investigate what this might mean and to draw ideas about partnership between learning and regeneration. The Network meets three to four times each year. Meetings focus on sharing the practice and progress, development activities with speakers and inputs designed to take thinking and debate on City and learning issues forward.

The location of the Network meeting changes each time so that there can be local input from individual host cities. This is part of the sharing of practice. As well as meeting for support and development, the Network responds to government reports and documents which relate to community learning. A recent example was the evidence brought together for the Fryer Report "Education for the 21st Century". This made the case for the role of the Learning City in widening participation in lifelong learning.

### **Level 3: Cycles of Learning - Evaluating Added Value**

If there were no Learning Cities, things would still happen in terms of lifelong learning and community development. The individual activities of institutions and the requirements of bids for community partnerships would result in increased participation activity. What is the value that learning cities add to what goes on through the normal processes of government and education and training provision? And how can this be assessed?

It is not always easy to evaluate the effectiveness of a small piece of work let alone a complex organism like a learning city. In Levels 1 and 2, achievements have been examined and frameworks for measuring them suggested. A measure of added value might be the difference between the achievements of a learning city and communities of similar size and composition. However this does not look at the cost-effectiveness, the underpinning processes or the development of elements within the achievement.

The idea of the Value Added Chain which discussed earlier in this Strand is a flexible system to approach the issue of added value. This Level suggests how it can be practically applied to the learning city and its activities. No learning city has yet applied this framework for assessment. This part of the guide is structured to begin to show how it might be used. It goes through the chain showing how it relates to the practicalities within learning cities. Examples are given where possible. There is a checklist for action to start communities on this process.

#### ***Assessing Inputs - What has the Learning City Initiative Drawn in?***

Many learning cities have set out to draw in more funding for learning and educational activities. Many have been successful in doing things. Sometimes the existence of a partnership creates a focus which can attract both public and private sector funding. The media attention the learning city can obtain and sustain may also mean that funding, media resources, time and energy can be attracted to the partnership rather than its individual partners.

#### ***Ideas for Assessing Inputs***

Has the partnership made successful joint bids for funding? Compared with individual bidding, how successful has this been?

Has media coverage for learning increased and at what cost to institutions' budgets?

Has private sector funding been attracted specifically to the initiative?

#### ***Examples of Added Value Through Input***

In **Hull**, the Learning City Group has been successful in promoting a city-wide Single Regeneration Budget bid for learning. No single institution could have obtained this kind of commitment from the City, TEC and private sector who must support such bids.

In **Thetford**, the "Learning Curve" resulted in a focus of education and training expenditure in the town, often to the displeasure of other market towns in the area. This included inputs such as a project where a major computer supplier put IT provision in the supermarket, a County Council school improvement initiative, marketing money, an after school organisation approaching the group about mounting provision and a local college investing in improved facilities.

### ***Service Process - Is the Learning Community Organised to Deliver Differently?***

Learning cities organise through partnership and collaboration within and across sectors. These organisational structures add value in so far as they enable delivery to be more effective and better fitted to needs. The particular strengths of the learning city approach are perceived to be the links between economic development and learning, and community development and learning. Organisational structures should support these two connections in a vibrant and creative way.

#### ***Ideas for the Assessing Service Process***

Are there clear indications in economic development plans for the community of the role of learning? Are the aims of the learning city and those relating to the economic development of the region synchronised?

Do partners within organisations recognise better and more effective working arrangements with partner organisations than at the beginning of the initiative?

Is there an increase in availability of information on the expressed needs of communities?

#### ***Examples of Added Value Through Improved Service Process***

In **Norwich** and in **Hull** the Learning City is a part of the economic development strategy for both cities. This is apparent in all the published information on economic development planning. The aims of the Learning City initiatives both support the strategy for the city as a whole and the need for economic development to include development of people's skills is clearly spelled out.

In **Sheffield** the Learning City Group had been meeting for some time alongside the Education Strategic Forum of the TEC. Both these organisations had a key interest in developing the learning infrastructure and community participation in the city. Drawing together of the two forums and a clarification of roles has made partnership activity easier and this has prevented unhelpful duplication of activity.

### ***Service Outputs - What has the Learning City Delivered to People Living Within it?***

A key measure of added value is the products that would not have been there through the efforts of single providers alone. One measure is these products themselves - new learning centres opened and take-up of what they have to offer. Related measures might be the awareness of what is available and attitudes towards it. In many ways, this is the most concrete way of expressing added value which current learning cities have to offer. Learning cities can show concrete outputs in terms of media campaigns, guidance projects, computer links for schools and joint work with partners' organisations involved.

#### ***Ideas for Assessing Service Outputs***

What projects has the partnership, rather than any single individual provider developed?

What facilities are provided and how is such provision measured? This could be places in a creche, hours in course delivery, training places available etc.

Is the project being evaluated for hard data, e.g. numbers of users, social groups of users etc?

Are projects without buildings or course outputs, e.g. media events being measured and compared with the cost of equivalent marketing/publicity for individual institutions?

### ***Examples of Added Value Through Service Outputs***

In *Norwich* during Adult Learners Week 1997 the Learning City Partnership used external funding to co-ordinate and run a Learning Festival. This raised awareness of the learning opportunities available in the City through a programme of taster events, outdoor activities and exhibitions. At the same time the notion of the Learning City was publicised through the badging of the events themselves. The local press are a part of the Learning City Group and gave considerable coverage, including publishing programmes of events in the paper.

### ***Intermediate Outcomes - the Benefits to Users***

Arguably the most important benefits of learning city initiatives are those felt by the people living and working within them. They enjoy the use of better infrastructure and opportunities for learning and the opportunity to engage in the developments and changes going on and influence their direction. Some of these are planned but some will be unintentional. It is important to capture both these if possible. These intermediate outcomes are the discernable differences and benefits felt by individuals as a result of the activities of the partnership.

### ***Ideas for Assessing Intermediate Outcomes***

Assessing benefits for users means asking those involved. This should involve both quantitative data (e.g. percentage of satisfied customers, number of examination passes achieved) with qualitative data.

Collection of case studies can be important for giving depth and meaning to the figures. They are also vital for publicity and marketing where role models can be important.

In dealing with adult learners, destination data should be collected, if possible, particularly on vocationally-oriented training provision.

Each kind of provision will suggest its own intermediate outcome measure. It is important to look beyond the immediate users of individual schemes. Nursery places may benefit children in terms of their pre-school development, but they may also benefit parents in terms of being able to access jobs or training. Both aspects should be explored.

As well advising on satisfaction and informing on value added, the collection of information on outcomes for users gives valuable feedback for future planning.

Assessment of long-term outcomes looks beyond the experience of individuals. It looks at what has happened to the community as a whole that may be attributed to the partnership and participation which have resulted from the initiative.

### **Example of Added Value through Intermediate Outcomes**

#### **Norwich - The Learning Shop**

Educational guidance in **Norwich** has a history of collaboration but has consisted of a number of short-term initiatives. These have revealed substantial need, with periods when little has been possible in terms of provision, other than that provided in connection with government training schemes. None of the providers of post-school learning in the city has premises in the city centre: though all offered guidance, their location tended to tie it to particular institutions. Norwich is the only major city within a 45 mile radius. Large numbers of people come in each day to shop and work. the city centre is compact with the City Hall and market providing a landmark in the shopping centre.

The group which meets to drive forward the Learning City has representatives from the TEC, all post-school education providers, City Council, employers, media, the LEA, Careers Service and the voluntary sector. The partnership has attracted a limited amount of funding from DfEE to take forward the Learning City initiative.

Two major providers, the College of Further Education and the University of East Anglia had been having joint discussions on funding a city centre learning shop - this would give information on educational opportunities, on their provision, and information from other local providers. The Learning City group discussed and supported the initiative, assisting joint working between institutions. Applying some of the DfEE funding to the project provided advice on its development to its individual member organisations who "own" the shop, embedding it in the Learning City initiative and using the shop as the public face of the Learning City.

Norwich City College and the University of East Anglia are the main funders and jointly planned and set up the initiative. Additional funding for premises and start-up costs came from Bull International, Norwich City Council and the DfEE funding. Additional partners who also contributed funding include Norfolk Adult Education Service, Norwich School of Art and Design, Open University and Easton College (Agriculture and Horticulture).

The shop is in a prime central location in the market area and is opposite the Norwich Advice Arcade which houses organisations such as the CAB. It has large shop windows with displays from providers and has a high standard of decoration and furnishing. It is permanently staffed with trained advisers and is open six days each week. As well as information on formal learning, it carries the Norfolk Library Service database on local clubs and societies.

In its first six months of operation the shop has been visited by 12,000 people from all sectors of the population, from those with basic skills needs to post graduates. Take-up of learning opportunities is being monitored. At least one provider believes that increased numbers have been seen through referrals. Callers are often referred to other agencies for specialist advice and support. The process involved in setting up the Learning Shop involved complex negotiations between stakeholders, and with the Careers Service which also offers elements of educational guidance to adults and is encouraged to make such provision self-financing, as well as the normal processes involved in setting up a new facility. What **adds value** in terms of what has happened is the involvement of all of the city's publicly-funded adult learning organisations in a joint project which markets learning opportunities to all prospective learners. For their contribution, each provider is getting a "6 days a week" information outlet in the middle of the city. No single provider could do this alone: if they were to, the information to the public would be poorer. The interest and involvement of the City Council, employer interests and the voluntary sector might not have accompanied a single provider initiative. A facility which did not involve negotiation with the Careers Service would not have received the support of the TEC or the DfEE. The Learning Shop is a public face for the Learning City - it is also a demonstration of the value of collaboration over competition.

## **Moving Ahead - Three Year Development Plan**

Looking to the long-term means planning for the long-term. The following check list structure will enable learning cities to assess themselves and what they do for added value activity. The check list gives headings for a three-year development plan. For each activity category, it is important to note:

- **WHO** will do the work
- **HOW** it will be done
- **WHEN** it will be done
- **HOW** it will be evaluated.

### ***FOR YEAR ONE:***

- Have the purposes been set?
- Have plans been developed?
- Have performance criteria been established?
- Have targets been set?
- Have data been collected and recorded?
- Is monitoring taking place?
- Have achievements been reviewed and evaluated?
- Have practices been adapted?

### ***FOR YEAR TWO:***

- Have benchmarks been set?
- Have comparators been chosen?
- Have data been shared?
- Have discussions been arranged to probe performance differences?
- Has evaluation taken place?
- Have the analysis and conclusions been agreed?
- Have practices been adapted?

### ***FOR YEAR THREE:***

- Has the value chain been analysed?
- Has the value added been evaluated using tests of efficiency etc?
- Has public opinion been tested?
- Has an independent review taken place?
- Have conclusions been drawn?
- Have practices been adapted?

## USEFUL PUBLICATIONS/CONTACTS

### *References*

*“Modernising Local Government: Improving Local Services through Best Value”*,  
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, London, 1998.

*“Made to Measure - Evaluation in Practice in Local Government”*,  
Ian Sanderson; Tony Boviard; Paul Davis; Steve Martin; Anne Foreman. Local Government Training Board,  
London 1998.

### *Publications*

Learning City Network publications are available from:

**Learning City Network Secretariat**, 111 Grantham Road, Bingham, NOTTINGHAM NG13 8DF  
(Phone/Fax: 01949 831171)

*“Learning City Network Aims and Objectives”*, January 1996

*“Learning City Network Next Steps”*, April 1997

The DfEE’s *“The Learning Age”* Green Paper, February 1998, is available from:

**The Stationery Office Limited**, P O Box 276, LONDON SW8 5DT  
(Phone: 0171 873 0011 Fax: 0171 873 8200)

The DfEE’s Careers and Occupational Information Centre (COIC) publishes the *“Newscheck”* magazine  
and a range of careers education and guidance publications. These are available from:

**COIC**, P O Box 298A, THAMES DITTON, Surrey KT7 0ZS  
(Phone: 0181 957 5030 Fax: 0181 957 5019)

The DfEE’s Skills and Enterprise Network publishes regular digests and summaries of Labour Market,  
Research and Evaluation reports, together with details of new publications and events which focus on labour  
market, training, education and enterprise issues. Details of the Network’s services are available from:

**DfEE**, Skills and Enterprise Network, Level 3 North, Moorfoot, SHEFFIELD S1 4PQ  
(Phone: 0114 259 4075 Fax: 0114 259 4713)

The DfEE’s range of publications dealing with research, development, committee reports and National  
Targets is extensive. They are available from:

DfEE Publications, P O Box 5050, SUDBURY, Suffolk CO10 6ZQ  
(Phone: 0845 6022260 Fax: 0845 6033360).

Those of particular interest are:

*“Higher Education for the 21st Century - Response to the Dearing Report”*

*“Further Education for the New Millennium - Response to the Kennedy Report”*

*“University for Industry - Pathfinder Prospectus”*

*“Learning for the 21st Century - First Report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing  
Education and Lifelong Learning”*

*“Skills for 2000: National Targets for Education and Training: Action to Raise Skill Levels”*

*“National Adult Learning Survey” (ref: NALS 97)*

The DTI/DfEE’s working document report, *“Competitiveness Through Partnerships With People”* is  
available from:

**DTI**, Admail, 528, LONDON SW1W 8YT

(Phone: 0870 1502500 Fax: 0870 1502333)

NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) publications are available from:

**NIACE** at 21 De Montfort Street, LEICESTER LE1 7GE

(Phone: 0116 204 4200/1 Fax: 0116 285 4514)

*“Learning Cities”*

*“The Learning Country: An Education Manifesto for a New Wales”*

Publications dealing with the Investors in People National Standard and its role in workplace learning are listed in a catalogue available from:

**Investors in People UK**, P O Box 242, Goldthorpe, ROTHERHAM S63 9YP

(Phone: 01709 892782 Fax: 01709 892783)

*The Policy Research Institute, the Local Government Management Board and the Audit Commission should be contacted directly about their ranges of research and guidance publications.*