

Department for Education and Employment

DEMONSTRATION OUTREACH PROJECTS
Identification of best practice

Final Report

NATIONAL OVERVIEW
With INDIVIDUAL PROJECT REPORTS

November 1998

Andrew Watson
Claire Tyers

SWA Consulting

I BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

101 This document was prepared by SWA Consulting (SWA), for the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), and represents the final report of the progress made across twelve demonstration projects. The overall aim of these projects was to develop innovative ways of improving access to information and advice on learning opportunities for adults in disadvantaged communities.

102 The first chapter of this report:-

- presents the background to the initiative;
- summarises the methodology adopted by SWA;
- sets out the structure for the remainder of the report.

Background

103 This section sets the projects in both a national and local context and covers:-

- national background;
- local contexts;
- objectives for local projects.

National background

104 Promoting a culture of lifelong learning is a consistent priority for the government. There have been several initiatives which have taken this forward, both at a strategic level (eg. the Green Paper ‘The Learning Age’ and the work of the Social Exclusion Unit in the Cabinet Office) and at a delivery level (eg. Learning Direct and Individual Learning Accounts). During the life of the project, the government has also announced the ‘Adult and Community Learning Fund’ which aims to fund projects which are “innovative, sustainable and build effective partnerships”.

105 Engaging the interest and commitment of those groups who – for a variety of reasons – have not been traditional learners has proved a significant challenge. Winning the hearts and minds of the disaffected, and providing incentives for those who have failed to reach their full potential, are themes which can be seen in several initiatives parallel to the one discussed in this report (eg. New Start, New Deal). Other examples of initiatives designed to engage young people include the work of Education Action Zones, and schools piloting work-related curriculum initiatives.

106 The purpose of this particular initiative was to develop “innovative ways of improving access to information and advice on learning opportunities for adults in disadvantaged communities”. Projects focussed on improving access to services, as for many non-learners the issues centre around their own self-

confidence and individual barriers to learning (such as a lack of available childcare facilities or language difficulties). The content of the actual services on offer was in some senses secondary, therefore, to the identification of local needs and piloting of innovative approaches.

Local contexts

- 107 The projects were typically based on small defined areas (eg. estates, wards, postcode districts). This ensured that local people could be actively involved and that the impact of innovative approaches would be more visible. Thus, although the DfEE funding seemed relatively modest (c£25K per project), the spend per head of population in the local areas was greater than several other initiatives with larger budgets but coverage of whole local authority or TEC areas.
- 108 One of the criteria used by several projects in defining the boundaries for coverage was the absence of recent investment in the area; it was seen as more appropriate to test out new approaches in areas where there had not been a substantial amount of recent investment (eg. from SRB or ESF monies). Table 1 shows the towns and cities in which projects were based, the organisation acting as lead contractor on behalf of the local partnership, and the area which the project covered.

Table 1: Projects, lead contractors and areas

Project	Lead Contractor	Area
Birmingham	Birmingham TEC	Kingstanding and Stockland Green Wards
Bradford	Bradford and District TEC	Whole TEC and LA area, but with a focus on the Newlands estate and Keighley
Bristol	Learning Partnership West	Knowle West (BS4)
Gateshead	Tyneside TEC	Bensham and Saltwell
Greenwich	London Southbank Careers	Ferrier estate
Hackney	Hackney Borough Council	Pembury & Stamford Hill estates
Leicester	Leicestershire Careers and Guidance Services	Beaumont Leys estate
Liverpool	Career Decisions	Norris Green estate
Manchester	Careers Partnership	Wythenshawe
Norwich	Norfolk & Waveney TEC	Mancroft, Catton Grove & Henderson Wards
Sheffield	Sheffield Careers Service for Adults	Tinsley & Burngreave
Slough	Slough Borough Council	Chalvey

109 The areas demonstrate a diverse range of economic and social problems. Typical characteristics included:-

- isolation (often poor transport links, low numbers of car owners and a lack of access to a telephone);
- poverty (reliance on benefits);
- low basic skills or inappropriate skills for the local labour market (eg. an over-representation of traditional craft skills in an area with job shortages for technician and managerial levels), allied with high levels of unemployment and a core of people with very long periods of unemployment;
- high percentage of lone parents;
- alienation from statutory services;
- high numbers of offenders with large volumes of vandalism, burglary, arson and drugs-related crime;
- discrimination (against the estate and/or individuals due to local reputation, ethnicity etc.).

Objectives for local projects

110 Whilst the specific objectives of the projects were as diverse as the communities in which they were based, a number of common themes were evident. The following represents some examples, of which any number may apply to a single project:-

- taking information advice services out into the community;
- the training of workers who already have a presence in the area, but whose principal role is not in the learning arena (eg. housing workers);
- the recruitment and training of volunteers from local communities who live in the local estates;
- marketing the benefits of learning and raising the profile of current learning opportunities;
- taking learning opportunities into the community;
- working specifically with parents and carers in a family learning model.

111 One of the major challenges facing all the projects was the problem of overcoming existing (negative) attitudes in order to gain the commitment of

local residents. Members of the target group often had extremely bad experiences of learning and/or learning environments in the past, making them fearful and sceptical about learning opportunities. Reaching target groups and gaining their confidence has, therefore, been central to project objectives.

- 112 The nature of the target groups vary, however. Some projects aimed to target specific groups within the community (eg. Asian women), whereas others had a more general approach (eg. capacity building). At least one project convened a focus group of employees living in the area to help define community needs and hence priorities for the project.

Methodology

- 113 The aims of the external role, undertaken in this study by SWA, were defined as:-

- “to identify effective practice in engaging individuals living in disadvantaged communities;
- to develop case studies for wide dissemination;
- identify features of successful and effective partnerships in disadvantaged communities.”

It is important to note, therefore, that the purpose of this study was to identify elements of good practice rather than to produce an abstract piece of evaluation.

- 114 In addition to this report, six project briefings have been produced which include practical guidance, derived from the experiences and best practice across the projects.

- 115 Key components of the methodology were:-

- preparation and national events;
- fieldwork;
- project briefings and a review of parallel initiatives.

Preparation and national events

- 116 Initial groundwork involved the review of project bids, which set the projects in a local context and outlined aims and objectives. Initial meetings with DfEE representatives were followed by a national event to introduce the role of SWA, facilitate informal networking among project representatives, and to set the initiative within a national context. A further national event was held to

launch the interim report in March 1997 and to inform individual projects about national progress.

Fieldwork

117 There were two main fieldwork phases, with visits to each of the projects arranged in consultation with local project managers. Their help is gratefully acknowledged. Typically visits included at least some of the following:-

- discussions with the project manager and the project co-ordinator;
- a tour of the project's target area and any premises used for outreach work;
- a meeting with representative(s) of partner organisation(s);
- attendance at a meeting of the project Steering Group;
- informal discussions with clients or volunteers.

118 It was also helpful to view any materials which had been produced as part of the project, including examples of marketing or evaluation tools.

Project briefings and a review of parallel initiatives

119 Project briefings have been constructed using a theme-based approach (eg. "outreach: getting started") in order to enable insights and practical experiences to be included from several projects on the same issue. In this way a broader range of experiences across projects can be presented and particular approaches highlighted.

120 In order to broaden the range of good practice reviewed, suggestions were sought on parallel initiatives, which, although not formally part of this exercise, have yielded useful material. These have been fed into the project briefings, as appropriate, and include information from other local projects and relevant national (and European) initiatives.

Report structure

121 The following chapter of this report constitutes an overview of progress made across the twelve projects. Project-by-project summaries are provided as appendices. These would be more appropriate for readers seeking information on one or more specific local projects. Brief reports are given on each in turn.

122 The following outline structure is adopted throughout:-

- project context;
- project objectives;
- management arrangements;

- progress against objectives;
- next steps;
- principal learning points

II OVERVIEW

Introduction

- 201 As will be apparent from the discussion of local objectives in Chapter I, the nature of the projects varies tremendously. Some decided to use the funding to engage in a new venture or to try a new approach; others elected to use more tried and tested methods but with new elements; others sought to add value by enhancing existing services. Each project has made progress towards their aims and objectives: this chapter seeks to provide an overview of common themes and experiences.
- 202 The structure for this chapter follows the same pattern as that adopted for the individual project descriptions in the appendices. Sections are headed:-
- management arrangements;
 - progress against objectives;
 - next steps;
 - principal learning points.
- 203 From the outset, however, two caveats should be noted. Firstly, summaries of this type inevitably miss out more than they cover! Fuller descriptions are set out in the individual appendices. Secondly, it is inevitable that summaries such as this cannot take into account the local nuances of each project. In an initiative striving for local responsiveness, these local factors should be centre-stage, - not peripheral. Here, too, the better contextual material can be found in the project-by-project descriptions in the appendices.

Management arrangements

- 204 The principle of partnership working was central to the aims of this initiative; contracts were not awarded to any agency operating in isolation. The precise nature of the partnerships varied, as did the contract holders for each project. Common partners have included careers companies, borough or city councils, Training and Enterprise Councils and local colleges. Significant contributions have also been common from the voluntary sector.
- 205 All projects have formed Steering Groups. Membership has not been limited to the key partners, however, and often representatives have been sought from other groups specifically to increase community involvement. In some cases subsidiary groups have met regularly to provide assistance on less strategic, more day-to-day local issues. The membership and conduct of Steering Groups has often been a clear indicator of the quality of the partnerships in action.

- 206 In some cases, partnership arrangements pre-dated these projects and there was clearly an element of trust and a track record of joint achievements. In other areas, effectiveness has been the result of conscious strategies to spread ownership and facilitate practical contributions from all those with a part to play.
- 207 Where problems have been experienced, they have tended to be specific to local projects and less susceptible to generalisation. Examples include:-
- partners having areas of their funding cut or funding periods coming to an end during the life of the project;
 - conflicting advice to project staff from different partners;
 - crucial areas of the project changing hands mid-project;
 - partners taking only a limited role in the project, gradually reducing their involvement over the life of the project.
- 208 Typically, one of the partner organisations has taken on the overall responsibility for project management, and designated an existing member of staff as project manager. The role of project co-ordinator, however has been fulfilled in a number of ways, each with particular strengths and weaknesses. These include:-
- external appointments. This method was the most transparent and often worked well, but it also resulted in delays at the front end as posts were advertised and selection processes followed;
 - secondments. Individuals with experience of working for one or more of the partner organisations often brought useful prior knowledge and contacts to the project. However, difficulties could surface if partners were not confident that impartiality would be maintained;
 - additional payments to local agencies to buy in expertise or secure enhancements (whether in terms of volume or quality), but without making any formal appointments. This approach brought great flexibility but reduced the ability of the project manager to influence directly the working methods adopted and monitoring of interim deadlines
- 209 Several co-ordinators were appointed on a part-time basis. This nearly always brought challenges of conflicting priorities and pressures. Part-time post holders have also been more likely to leave part way through a project.
- 210 At estate level, what has been crucial is that a continuity of service is maintained and appointments are kept despite, for example, staff illness or holidays. Clients often exhibit low confidence and have had negative experiences with agencies in the past, making it more important than ever for services to operate as advertised. Projects have taken steps to ensure,

therefore, that the impact of missed appointments or the rescheduling of sessions has been minimised.

211 Measures include:-

- the organisation of a booking system for tutors;
- ensuring advance notice is given to learners of any changes to planned arrangements;
- the provision of organised cover for staff holidays, worked into the project plan and budget.

Progress against objectives

212 In an overview of this nature it is clearly impractical to report on the complete range of project objectives, due to their diversity across projects (as outlined in paragraph 109). The following section, therefore, provides a summary of some common themes.

213 Progress is discussed under the following headings:-

- networking;
- familiarisation and safety issues;
- reaching the client group;
- working with local people;
- making tough decisions;
- overall impact.

Networking

214 Part of the brief for projects at the bidding stage was to work in conjunction with existing initiatives and other agencies wherever possible. Rather than a peripheral activity for projects, this has often been central to working methods; all projects acknowledged the need for networking. For some projects this task proved more difficult than for others; in practice, it tended to depend on the strength of existing networks.

215 Many projects were involved in building up networks almost from scratch in locations where either the partners in the project had little prior local presence or simply where the provision in the area was severely limited. The task of networking has often taken longer than anticipated, either due to the diversity of local groups present within an area, or due to difficulties inherent in working with community groups (eg. where representatives are only contactable when their organisation is holding events or conducting sessions).

216 Once established, however, networks of individuals or organisations with prior experience of working in the area, proved to be of great assistance to almost all the projects in a variety of ways. The extent of their assistance varied, ranging from an accompanied walk around the estate, through a loan of premises, to help in producing marketing materials, or the referral of clients. A variety of

organisations have been of assistance and have included the private, public and voluntary sectors.

217 The benefits of working in this way are significant. Examples include the following:-

- working with an organisation which already has a high profile and positive image has helped projects to establish credibility and reduce lead time;
- individuals have often shared invaluable local knowledge and contacts, which may have been built up during years of experience;
- experienced practitioners have helped in testing out new materials and in identifying what is likely to work with a particular target group (eg. the piloting of a community directory with a number of local organisations);
- community organisations have often been able to provide highly specialised assistance (eg. the production of marketing materials in community languages);
- community and voluntary organisations have assisted in publicising projects through word of mouth and by referring clients. This happened to an extreme extent in one project where a community worker helped to start a chain reaction resulting in courses being over subscribed.

Familiarisation and safety issues

218 For many staff the first challenge was to familiarise themselves with a new and potentially threatening environment. Often the common sense approach of setting off around an estate or area on foot or by car has been the best - and only feasible - way, of doing this. Using this approach has also helped in identifying important venues, relevant organisations and potentially supportive local employers.

219 Projects have experienced major difficulties in finding suitable premises. The disadvantaged communities targeted by this initiative generally have poor local facilities. It has been unusual for projects to have a great deal of choice over where to hold sessions or courses and if these premises became unavailable for any reason, an integral part of the project fell under threat (eg. one project where the job-preparation club was forced to move four times, often at short notice, resulting in a loss of credibility, profile and eventually clients).

220 For some projects the difficulty in securing suitable (and reliable) premises has resulted in the dilemma of whether to persevere with on-site provision or take the services further away from the community in order to offer a more congenial setting. Whilst superficially attractive, the general conclusion has been that the latter can be hugely counter-productive, as residents are often unwilling or unable to leave their immediate vicinity to engage in activities of any nature. Whilst individuals will need to overcome these barriers at some

point, the initial steps are almost definitely easier if taken locally. The only exception has been where clients have preferred to travel beyond their estate when they wish to discuss personal issues of a sensitive nature.

- 221 Security is an obvious concern for any outreach worker. For example, taking learning opportunities out onto estates, especially at night, potentially puts both staff and learners at risk. Another, perhaps less obvious, concern arose on estates with high crime rates, where residents were nervous about leaving their homes because of the risk of burglary.
- 222 Projects have tackled the issue of safety in a range of common sense ways, such as maintaining a booking system detailing the whereabouts of staff, and never leaving one member of staff alone on the premises. Local workers, who may have to deal with enquiries in their own home, are also at risk; the installation of a separate phone line to deal with telephone queries has helped. Ensuring the safety of clients on their way to and from sessions or classes has, however, been outside the control of projects.

Reaching the client group

- 223 Working with a variety of client groups required the projects to adopt a range of methods to attract individuals and raise awareness. All projects became involved, therefore, in some form of marketing and/or awareness raising activities and for some this was a crucial element in the overall project programme. The actual approaches to marketing, however, differed greatly on a project-by-project basis.
- 224 Some projects allocated funds from the budget to produce high quality advertising leaflets, believing it to be a cost-effective form of advertising in the long term. Other projects have used inexpensive leaflet or poster campaigns around local community sites. Other examples include:-
- the use of local press and/or radio;
 - the employment of voluntary workers with express responsibility for promoting the project amongst their peers;
 - printing information on bus tickets;
 - the use of supermarket notice boards.
- 225 The use of networks has also been beneficial in 'spreading the word' and in referring clients. It may be, therefore, that simply 'getting out there' and providing a responsive and high quality service (and being seen to do so!) is actually the best marketing method.
- 226 The nature of the target group has dictated to a certain extent the effectiveness of these different methods. However, some of the projects have been able to demonstrate specific examples of marketing success stories. The use of a leaflet campaign, either delivered on a whole estate basis, or through the local free press, proved extremely effective in a number of areas. In other areas it was advertisements in local community bulletins. However, the general

experience has been that word of mouth referral is the most effective way of encouraging people to participate.

Working with local people

- 227 The idea of working closely with local people, who may have first hand experience of the barriers facing potential clients, has generally been found to be effective. However, finding willing (and able) volunteers has not been easy, thereby raising a whole range of issues around recruitment and training. It is also apparent that projects have had very different experiences, depending whether volunteers have been sought 'cold' from the community, having little or no previous experience, or from those who are already active, working for other organisations or initiatives. For ease of reference the issues of recruitment and training are discussed separately below.

Recruitment

- 228 Perhaps unsurprisingly, it has been far easier to find volunteers with previous work experience in the field. For a number of projects, networks have been strong enough, with previous work of a high enough profile, to allow access to a database of volunteers from within one of the partner organisations, or one of their intermediaries. In attempting to attract volunteers who have less direct experience and who may live themselves on a target estate, the challenge has been greater.
- 229 Most of the points made above in connection with marketing apply here too. Direct approaches through friends and contacts is nearly always more effective than "appeals" through posters, leaflets or use of local media. One project co-ordinator asked key local people (eg. the vicar, and the community education tutor) to list those residents whom they felt may be receptive to an approach. This achieved some success but there was still some suspicion in the minds of those contacted as to why their name had been put forward.
- 230 One of the barriers to generating volunteers from the community has been concerns over the loss of benefits. Even where projects have agreed to pay their volunteers an hourly rate, there have been difficulties in making these payments without affecting benefits. Ways round this have included phasing of payments, and deeming payments to be 'incentives for participation' rather than wages. Informal liaison with local staff of the Benefits Agency has also helped.
- 231 When volunteers were found, they have tended to be recent learners and female; this has made the provision of help with childcare a high priority. It has been far more problematic to find male volunteers, especially when male 'champions for learning' have been sought. There **have** been examples of more balanced male/female teams, however. Courses in IT and practical subjects have tended to be more successful at attracting male learners.
- 232 Where volunteers from the local community were recruited, there were many additional advantages. For example, some projects were able to take on people

with knowledge of community languages, religions and cultures (eg. on one estate with a large Turkish community where a Turkish volunteer was found). Establishing credibility is far easier for such workers: they know the local area and are able to speak authoritatively about the problems facing residents.

Training

233 Local workers were typically given some form of training, whether they worked directly for the project, for another organisation, or were community volunteers. For a number of projects, therefore, the provision of training has formed a major part of their overall plans.

234 Some examples include:-

- programmes designed internally but with Open College Network (OCN) accreditation;
- on the job training, working with experienced community workers;
- training tailored to the specific needs of sessional workers;
- referral onto other project strands involving training.

235 Providing training that was appropriate for volunteers with relatively little experience of learning situations required particular care. It was important to be responsive to the needs of individuals and to design appropriate and useful course and resource materials. With such a varied target audience this was challenging, but any time spent in getting this right paid dividends in the long term (eg. in one project where resource materials were redrafted several times, but the resulting pack is now ready for future use in training).

236 A common area where training was required was in IT, not only in using the systems, but also in overcoming a lack of confidence. Whilst individuals may have been particularly cautious in this area, basic training which allowed them to become more computer literate generally resulted in a great sense of accomplishment. The ability confidently to use IT is obviously a highly transferable and useful skill: workers benefiting from training in this area were therefore able to take away a concrete benefit from their participation in the project.

Making tough decisions

237 Due, in part, to the innovative nature of the projects and the targeting of a 'hard to reach' client group, it has been necessary for a number of projects to redefine their objectives and working methods part way through. Without exception, however, the results have been positive and difficulties have been overcome through the adoption of a flexible stance and on-going consultation with the community.

238 Some specific examples include the following:-

- when the planned public access IT terminal could not be developed within the project time-scale, portable laptop computers were used instead. These could be taken out to community sites and were used to access non-traditional client groups very successfully;
- funds originally spread evenly across two estates were concentrated in one, as take-up was much higher on this estate. Demand for courses has been so high that sessions are now scheduled until December 1998;
- when community organisations failed to take up the offer of small grants, this part of the budget was released and used to provide first-aid courses which are now running to capacity;
- when take-up was minimal for confidence raising courses, the decision was made to work with existing groups rather than targeted individuals. The take-up is now much higher.

Overall impact

- 239 It is difficult for projects of this nature (short-term and experimental) to demonstrate their effectiveness in any objective way; indeed, this study was never intended to provide a formal impact assessment. Thus, whilst several projects maintained databases of individuals accessing services and the subsequent actions taken, greatest reliance was placed on qualitative or 'soft' data when seeking to gauge the impact made.
- 240 The general feeling amongst project staff has been that these projects have been extremely successful when placed in context; the target areas and client groups were, by definition, hard to reach. It has been common for project staff to work quite intensively with a small group of clients in addition to more casual users of the project resources. Other outcomes include quite large numbers of estate residents taking small steps such as attending a course that may or may not be work related, or attending sessions for which the main purpose was awareness raising (eg. family workshops which gently introduced the idea of learning within the family).
- 241 From the outset, it has been a general concern that the short funding period could be counter-productive in gaining the trust and participation of residents. Too many schemes in the past were said to have raised expectations but failed to deliver any permanent change. However, the work of many of the projects is already having a lasting effect on their target communities, not least through identifying real needs that were unmet by provision previously available.
- 242 Some specific examples include:-
- the purchase or sharing of computer aided guidance packages that will be available to the community beyond the funding period;
 - increasing the feeling of community on an estate, and developing informal networks amongst residents;

- the personal development of volunteers, including the facilitation of support groups;
- building up links with schools and agreeing to work collaboratively in the future to provide literacy classes for parents;
- establishing formal networks of contacts for community workers which raise morale and provide a framework for lobbying, information giving and acting as an intermediary to LEA provision;
- building capacity through the training of local workers with no previous qualifications in advice and guidance.

243 One project has sought to build sustainability for the future by adopting a “cascade” model. Each volunteer was encouraged to run three presentations for their family, friends, neighbours and other contacts. Most of the attendees were non-learners for whom the intended outcome was a guidance interview or learning programme. In this way, the word was intended to be spread as widely as possible, using local “ambassadors”, rather than through the “professionals”.

Next steps

244 Finding additional funding to continue the work of the projects has been an issue discussed by all the projects, and some have already taken this forward. Generally project staff are loath to lose the depth of experience built up over the past year. Overall, funding has been found from a number of sources including ESF and SRB; often different streams within the same project have secured funding from different sources. Other projects have been able to extend their activities within the funding originally allocated. Demonstration of early success has always been a key component of building the business case for future funding.

245 The likelihood of having to switch from the flexible funding of this initiative to more target-driven funding streams has caused some concerns. Thus far, projects have been able to help a wide variety of people; the concern is that now they may be forced to focus on those who are more job or education ‘ready’. Most of the projects, however, have welcomed the ‘Adult and Community Learning Fund’, and intend to submit bids.

Principal learning points

246 All projects have generated their own successes and learning points: examples can be found in the project summaries in the appendices of this report and in the project briefings which accompany this report. However, a number of messages have emerged which apply in a more general context.

247 These are now summarised:-

- never underestimate the time it takes to organise and implement any initiative, as lead times tend to be longer than anticipated;
- exploit local networks, local contacts and word of mouth; an in-depth knowledge of an estate will be vital;
- the ‘look’ of marketing materials is less important than their contents. They should be simply worded, local, and highlight the benefits of participation in learning or guidance (eg. personal satisfaction, increased confidence, finding a job);
- be aware of cultural and religious differences and be prepared to accommodate them. Local organisations or volunteers can be particularly helpful with in-depth knowledge of local needs;
- learners tend to be more motivated by jobs rather than training opportunities. The provision of supporting information (eg. about grants and childcare facilities) will help to minimise concerns over the costs of training;
- a friendly and informal approach works best. Unhurried introductions to the learning process, staff, venues and – critically – other participants bear dividends in the long run;
- when approaching parents, discussing ways in which they can help their children rather than themselves by taking on guidance and/or learning is often the most effective way in;
- school staff will be more supportive if they feel their pupils will benefit, and that their workload will not be radically affected;
- ownership amongst local people and organisations is crucial. Ideally they should be fully involved at every stage (although local sensitivities and politics may make this difficult). Consultation will certainly help in defining objectives;
- the barriers to participation which people cite may not be an accurate reflection of what really is really preventing them. Reasons may centre on a lack of confidence and self-esteem as much as on a lack of funding, for example;
- generally speaking, ‘rough and ready’ services, locally delivered by local people (even if they are not ‘experts’), are more effective at breaking down barriers than encouraging local people to travel to mainstream services;
- initially, clients react more favourably to basic information and advice services. Guidance in the fuller sense can be off-putting to clients in the early stages, although having a valid contribution to make in the longer term, of course;

- make a point of celebrating success. Achieving a Level 1 certificate may represent a huge achievement for those without previous experience of adult learning. Making this a positive exercise will help convert a one-off taster into a thirst for lifelong learning;
- be prepared to change tack several times. There is little to be achieved from persevering with an approach which is not proving effective;
- promoting “sustainability” is crucial. Short term projects without a strategy for embedding will not bear dividends beyond the funding period;
- the security of staff, volunteers and clients must always be paramount;
- information databases are a great asset but tend to need “mediators”. Clients often have considerable reservations about using IT and lack the confidence to try it out with support;
- the danger of losing benefits can be a powerful disincentive to potential volunteers.