



The Learning Revolution White Paper

Review undertaken by a Task & Finish Group
Community Wellbeing and Older People
Policy and Scrutiny Committee

April 2010



left blank for printing

Content

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Preface | 1 |
| Glossary | 2 |
| Summary | 4 |
| Introduction | 8 |
| The Learning Revolution White Paper | 8 |
| Current Provision | 9 |
| Insurance Implications | 9 |
| Health & Safety Implications | 10 |
| The Web Portal | 11 |
| Funding Implications | 12 |
| Evidence | 13 |
| Lynsi Hayward-Smith, <i>Principal Officer, Adult Community Learning</i> | 13 |
| Jenny Coates, <i>Strategic Manager for Partnerships</i> | 14 |
| Elaine Adams, <i>Libraries Service Development Manager</i> | 14 |
| Ron Marks, <i>Workers Educational Association</i> | 16 |
| Tina Nay, <i>Workers Educational Association</i> | 17 |
| Barbara Lewis, <i>University of the Third Age (U3A)</i> | 18 |
| Susan Carragher, <i>Director of Adult Learning and Libraries</i> | 19 |
| Carl Livermore, <i>Risk and Insurance Manager</i> | 20 |
| Stephen Pewsey, <i>Honorary Chairman of Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress</i> | 22 |
| Elaine Woods, <i>Community Information Network Manager</i> | 22 |
| National Women's Register | 22 |
| Summary | 23 |
| Findings and Recommendations | 24 |
| Conclusion | 29 |
| Appendix 1 - Scoping document | |
| Appendix 2 - The Informal Learning Pledge | |
| Appendix 3 - The Learning Revolution Executive Summary | |
| Appendix 4 - Written evidence from the National Women's Register | |
| Appendix 5 - Contact details for witnesses | |

left blank for printing



Preface

I have been a member of several informal learning organisations, large and small, so when the Government issued a consultation paper on informal adult learning (IAL) in 2008 I responded. In October 2009 I attended the launch of the White Paper, 'The Learning Revolution Expo' which was a networking and showcase opportunity for IAL providers.

IAL refers to learning for the pleasure of learning and for self-fulfilment, and not in order to get qualifications. Providers include local authorities and voluntary organisations. Many voluntary organisations face problems in accessing suitable places to meet at an affordable cost. Also, people who want to pursue an interest sometimes find it difficult to get information on where this is available. These are two of the issues this report addresses.

All those present at the meetings of The Learning Revolution Task and Finish Group found the opportunity to meet and the exchanges of information very useful. We want to organise an annual forum where voluntary organisations who provide IAL can come together with county officers to discuss relevant topics and share information. I look forward to meeting many of you at these events.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'J Whitehouse'.

Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse
Chairman of the Task and
Finish Group

Glossary of terminology

| | |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACL | Adult Community Learning is a county wide service which plans and delivers a range of learning opportunities in Essex. |
| CWOP | Community Well Being and Older Peoples Policy and Scrutiny Committee. |
| ECC | Essex County Council. |
| ESTIC | Essex, Southend and Thurrock Infrastructure Consortium brings together all the county's infrastructure organisations including Voluntary Sector Training. |
| IAG | Information Advice and Guidance. |
| IAL | Informal Adult Learning is learning for its own sake. It may be learning for enjoyment, personal fulfilment or intellectual, creative or physical stimulation. |
| IT | Information Technology |
| LAB | A Lead Accountable Body will bring together all the local partners in the area and develop a local plan for all types of informal adult learning. |
| LEA | Local Education Authority refers to the Education Department of a local authority. This term is now obsolete. |
| LSC | Learning and Skills Council |
| LSIS | Learning and Skills Improvement Service |
| LSP(s) | Local Strategic Partnership(s) is a single body that brings together different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors to support and work with each other. |
| MIND | MIND is the lead mental health charity for England and Wales. |
| NLDC | Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund supports community-based learning in the most deprived areas. |
| NWR | National Women's Register |
| OFSTED | Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. |
| P&SC | Policy and Scrutiny Committee. |
| RFID | Radio Frequency Identification is a tagging system used in library books. It is gradually being introduced to replace the traditional barcodes on library items. |
| U3A | The University of the Third Age is self-funded and self-managed and provides education and leisure activities for men and women no longer in full time employment' |
| UNISON | UNISON is the UK's largest public sector trade union. |
| WEA | Workers Educational Association is one of the UK's largest voluntary provider of adult education. |
| Wi-Fi | Wi-Fi allows wireless internet connection through a wireless router. |
| YOT | A Youth Offending Team is part of the youth justice system. They are made up of representatives from the police, probation service, social services, health, education, drugs and alcohol misuse and housing officers. |

Summary

This report reviews the County Council's preparedness to deliver the new requirements for informal adult learning (IAL) associated with *The Learning Revolution White Paper*.

The work was undertaken by a small Task & Finish Group established by and reporting to the Community Wellbeing and Older Peoples (CWOP) Policy and Scrutiny Committee. The Group met with a number of witnesses associated with the provision of IAL with one of the objectives being to provide an opportunity to share ideas.

Having reviewed both the current provision and the key concepts of the White Paper, the Group concluded by identifying fourteen findings which led them to make thirteen individual recommendations covering:

- Hiring of venues
- Displaying information
- Developing a web portal
- Establishing a local Lead Accountable Body
- Promoting informal adult learning

For ease of reference these findings and recommendations have been brought together in this short summary of the Group's work. Each recommendation identifies the person whom Members feel should be asked to report back to CWOP indicating whether the recommendations are to be implemented and then at a later stage to demonstrate the impact made to informal adult learning within Essex.

The recommendations range from simple measures such as a better display of information in libraries to the establishment of a county wide Directory of Learning Opportunities web portal. They suggest that Essex County Council should become a Lead Accountable Body following the abolition of the Learning and Skills Council in April 2010 as well as promoting easier access to public and community buildings including the need for simpler and fairer charging mechanisms .

Also recommended is the establishment of an annual informal adult learning forum to facilitate the sharing of ideas between IAL providers, leading to periodic Festivals of Learning within Essex to celebrate and make better known learning opportunities to Essex residents.

Finally, the report brings together the presentations given at each of its meetings before explaining the rationale behind each of the Group's findings and recommendations. Readers of this summary are therefore encouraged to read the full report.



| Findings | Recommendations |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Hiring of venues</p> <p>Finding 1 Voluntary organisations have a lack of available venues.</p> <p>Finding 2 Many voluntary organisations are small and/or charities and have limited funds available for venues.</p> <p>Finding 3 At present, any organisation using Essex County Council premises must have public liability insurance with indemnity of £5 million, regardless of the size of the organisation.</p> | <p>Recommendation 1 Consideration should be given to maximising access for informal learning providers to community buildings including schools, libraries and adult community colleges. Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |
| <p>Finding 4 Library staff charge £26 per hour to staff a library when hosting external organisations. This is a considerable amount for many voluntary organisations.</p> <p>Finding 5 At present, there are separate rates for schools.</p> | <p>Recommendation 2 There needs to be greater transparency in respect of charging facilities as the current system is complex, and a fairer system for smaller groups. Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> <p>Recommendation 3 There should be more uniform charging standards and criteria, with greater clarity regarding the eligibility criteria for subsidised rates. Owners: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |

| Findings | Recommendations |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Finding 6 More people would like to join U3A and other similar organisations but finding venues that are affordable or large enough is a problem.</p> | <p>Recommendation 4 Consideration should be given to helping the expansion of U3A and supporting other informal learning organisations in Essex by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Provision of inexpensive venues o Knowledge of how to access existing funding opportunities o Small seed planting start up grants in the region of £100 o Assistance with publicity <p>Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |
| <p>Displaying Information Finding 7 The Wickford Library has an excellent display of information in respect of WEA and other organisations .</p> <p>Finding 8 Libraries receive a large volume of leaflets. Some libraries display them, others choose not to.</p> | <p>Recommendation 5 Where practicable, other libraries should be encouraged to adopt a similar approach to the Wickford Library in displaying information .</p> <p>Owner: Director of Adult Learning and Libraries Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |
| <p>Developing a web portal Finding 9 There are a number of learning opportunities within the county. At present, there is no central resource.</p> <p>Finding 10 It is not easy for Essex residents to find out about learning opportunities in Essex. One of the routes is through the library. Library staff can access information about learning opportunities, but a clear and comprehensive way to display and make known the information needs to be available to all library enquirers and home web users.</p> | <p>Recommendation 6 A Directory of Learning Opportunities (including the main providers and specialist ones, such as historical and genealogical societies) should be developed detailing all the learning opportunities across Essex and available on an information web portal.</p> <p>Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |

| Findings | Recommendations |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Finding 11 A web portal needs cross county resources, people and funding. Whilst providers should ideally be responsible for providing updated information, there are resource implications providing such a portal and consideration needs to be given to making adequate resources available. Ideally, to help border areas of Essex, there should be a link to neighbouring authorities.</p> | <p>Recommendation 7 The development of a learning opportunities web portal should be part of the ongoing improvements to the Essex County Council website. Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> <p>Recommendation 8 Built into any new website contract should be the availability of more complex search facilities. A “Find my nearest” Google-type search facility for informal learning opportunities near the user is needed. Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |
| <p>Finding 12 essexinfo.net provides a free web service for community groups, voluntary organisations and parish/town councils but this provision is not universally known.</p> | <p>Recommendation 9 More should be done to make organisations aware of the existence of and the opportunities afforded by essexinfo.net . Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts Implementation Review Date: April 2011 Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |

| Findings | Recommendations |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Lead Accountable Body</p> <p>Finding 13</p> <p>The proposed abolition of the Learning and Skills Council will provide an opportunity for the County Council to become a Lead Accountable Body with the potential to build even stronger relationships with its partners.</p> | <p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>It is recommended that Essex County Council becomes a Lead Accountable Body and develops strong relationships with its partners eg: providers such as voluntary organisations & colleges of FE.</p> <p>Owner: Leader of the Council</p> <p>Implementation Review Date: April 2011</p> <p>Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> <p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>Essex County Council appoints an elected member and a chief officer to discharge the lead role as Informal Adult Learning Champions.</p> <p>Owner: Leader of the Council</p> <p>Implementation Review Date: April 2011</p> <p>Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |
| <p>Promoting informal adult learning</p> <p>Finding 14</p> <p>An annual informal adult learning forum would provide opportunities for learning organisations to meet together, like the Learning Revolution witness session where ideas were shared.</p> | <p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>An informal adult learning forum should be held annually in different parts of the county.</p> <p>Owner: Leader of the Council</p> <p>Implementation Review Date: April 2011</p> <p>Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> <p>Recommendation 13</p> <p>The informal adult learning forum should give consideration to holding periodic Festivals of Learning to celebrate and make known learning opportunities to Essex residents.</p> <p>Owner: Leader of the Council</p> <p>Implementation Review Date: April 2011</p> <p>Impact Review Date: October 2011</p> |

Full Report

Introduction

In response to the launch of *The Learning Revolution White Paper* in March 2009, it was agreed by the Community Wellbeing and Older Peoples Policy and Scrutiny Committee on 10 September 2009 that a Task and Finish Group should be established to determine if the Council was responding to the Government White Paper effectively.

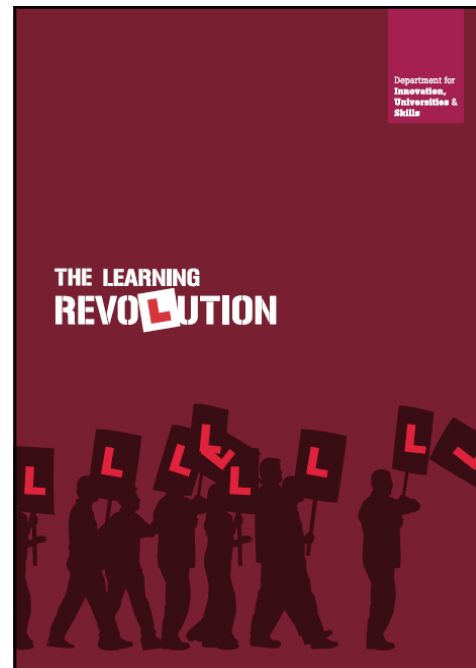
Membership & meetings

The Group was comprised of:

- Councillor Janet Whitehouse (Chairman)
- Councillor Chris Pond
- Councillor Elizabeth Webster

It met on the following occasions:

- 4th December 2009
- 27th January 2010



The Learning Revolution White Paper

Background

The White Paper was published in March 2009 in recognition of the growing number of adult learners. It focuses on informal adult learning and should not be confused with formal adult learning which is for a specific purpose e.g. developing a qualification or further skills to improve job opportunities. Informal learning is learning for a person's personal enjoyment and fulfilment.

The Government acknowledges that informal adult learning can transform people's lives. Informal adult learning can help build people's confidence, add to their personal fulfilment, help those who had bad experiences of formal learning overcome this challenge and it can be a useful tool in improving job opportunities. *The Learning Revolution White Paper* sets out three key concepts to facilitate this growing trend.

Key Concepts

Open space

This provision would allow available space in buildings to be used by learners for their groups and various meetings. There are no restrictions or limitations as to the buildings that can be used. Learners may potentially use non-conventional venues such as pubs, shops, cafes and churches, as well as more conventional workplaces, libraries and galleries.



The Web Portal

One of the key challenges of informal adult learning is finding out what opportunities there are within a learner's community. This is because there is no single online point of access. The White Paper discusses facilitating the creation of an online bank, listing learning opportunities for individuals.

Festival of Learning

Another concept is that of learning from each other and Members were impressed with the national Festival of Learning. It was launched at the Expo event at Spitalfields Market, London on 6 October 2009 continuing with smaller events throughout the UK hosted by learning providers.

The purpose of the Festival was to reach out to informal adult learners, those who already enjoy adult learning and new groups of learners.



A wide range of events were hosted, promoting the benefits of informal learning for individuals, organisations and wider society.

The objectives of the Festival of Learning were as follows:

- Improve connections between different kinds of learning experiences and encourage people to broaden interests
- Encourage more and different people into learning, especially disadvantaged people/groups
- Host activity in new places, new ways and at more flexible times
- Support people to share expertise and set up self-organised groups and learning clubs
- Use broadcasting and technology to stimulate and support learning; and
- Build new sector relationships and new partnerships, strengthen capacity and encourage transfer of knowledge

Members of the Task and Finish Group feel that the recommendations in *The Learning Revolution White Paper* will be beneficial for Essex residents. There are currently 36,000 learners in Essex who stand to benefit from its recommendations and Essex County Council has already demonstrated its commitment to informal adult learning by signing The Learning Pledge -see Appendix 2.

Current Provision

The Group identified key areas which are relevant to the recommendations in *The Learning Revolution White Paper*. Set out below are the current arrangements for each of these areas.

Open Space

Insurance Implications

Potential users of Essex County Council properties need to comply with the conditions of Essex County Council's Property and Liability insurance policies to ensure that insurance cover is maintained.

The key areas for compliance are as follows:

Reasonable Care

- Essex County Council must take all reasonable precautions to prevent or minimise losses or liability arising in connection with its insured risks. To meet the test of reasonableness, Essex County Council would need to give serious consideration with regard to key holder security of the premises being used by the third party. Ideally only employees of Essex County Council should be responsible for unlocking and locking of premises and activating fire and security alarms when appropriate. A compromise solution could be for competent building users, who have been suitably trained, to be responsible for the keys. Such an agreement which will need to be documented, must be personal to the approved hirer and cannot be transferred.
- There should be a written record of those people entrusted with key-holder responsibilities and they should be recorded as official volunteers of the authority.
- Ideally Essex County Council should maintain the critical management of its properties, and the above is a compromise solution if Essex County Council staff cannot be on site when the premises are being used.
- It should be noted that Essex County Council self insure to a very significant level, so most insurance losses would be funded by Essex County Council itself. However the larger IAL organisations carry their own insurance which would cover most situations.

Subrogation

- When Essex County Council makes an insurance claim, the insurance policy passes the council's rights of recovery against any person(s) or organisation(s) that have caused a loss to the insurance company. Essex County Council cannot prejudice these rights by virtue of a contract/agreement or otherwise.

Hirer's Liability

- Essex County Council's insurance policy provides an indemnity of up to £5,000,000 for third parties in the form of individuals or organisations hiring Essex County Council premises under the terms of the hire agreement (excluding political parties, professional entertainers and hire for profit making ventures) . This provides an indemnity to the hirer for their legal liability in the event of injury or damage to property including damage to the premises being hired.
- However, the liability of one person to another participating in the same group event is excluded. Hirer's Liability is intended to cover individual people or small groups who are non commercial users/hirers of Essex County Council premises. However, the insurance cover of the larger IALs covers this.

Health & Safety Implications

The health and safety implications of the proposal could be managed by producing a clear and concise 'Hirers Contract'. Any contract would need to state the responsibilities and expectations of those involved.

The responsibilities should include:

- Contact details of the venue and the hirers' responsible person.
- Information to the hirer on action to be taken in the event of an emergency such

as electrical failure or fire.

- Calling the emergency services. The post code of the venue needs to be readily available for the hirer to use if required.
- First aid arrangements, access to first aid box, telephone.
- Fire evacuation procedures.

Essex County Council buildings, not previously used for out of hours activities, may require improvements and upgrades in their emergency fire systems such as better emergency lighting and fire detection. This would require additional resourcing.

The expectations should include:

- What the hirer intends to use the building for. If this involves using electrical equipment the establishment will need to know it has been checked and is safe to use. If there is a risk of electrical equipment coming into contact with water or any liquids then a circuit breaker needs to be provided.
- Expected numbers of people attending the activity. The establishment needs to make sure there are enough facilities to manage the activities safely. There may be a need to provide entertainment or an alcohol licence.
- Depending on the activity, the establishment would need to make a judgement as to what is adequate supervision, .
- The building should be safe to use and left in the same condition following the hiring. This is to prevent slips, trips and falls.

The Web Portal

The importance of collating and signposting informal learning opportunities is recognised in *The Learning Revolution White Paper*. Many learners continue to regard their local library as the main information point regarding learning opportunities in their area. The Library Service collates and coordinates all known learning opportunities; however, the Service also relies upon staff to search the internet for appropriate courses. There are numerous sites available. Such sites include:

Essexlife.org

Essex Life began in libraries as a card catalogue of local groups in the area. This has been transferred to CDs and put onto a website. There were around 4,000 records.

It now includes childminders and early years information. Search methods include searching by certain types of organisation or group and limiting by area or postcode.

Depending on how customers approach the search, the success of searches varies. Organisations can update the records themselves.



Essexinfo.net

The essexinfo.net provides a website area for parish and town councils, community and voluntary groups. An A-Z is available where customers can browse by organisation, category or district.

ESTIC (Essex, Southend and Thurrock Infrastructure Consortium)

This is an information website for the voluntary sector and covers mainly more formal, registered organisations. ESTIC and Essex Life cover similar information and therefore the Council is working with ESTIC to try and avoid duplication.

Sport Essex

A further website is Sport Essex which harvests information through Essex Life.

Explore Culture

A new website creation is Explore Culture, looking at cultural activities across the county.

The Essex County Council web development team is looking at a facility to search for nearest facilities and services. A better search facility is also being developed on Essexlife to define and narrow the search.

The Learning Revolution White Paper discusses the concept of a web portal whereby all the learning opportunities available in Essex would be available on an information portal. It was recognised throughout the witness sessions that such a portal would be extremely beneficial to users and library staff.



Funding Implications

The Learning Revolution White Paper envisages the use of £210 million Learning and Skills Council funds called Adult Safeguarded Learning (currently used for personal and community development learning, neighbourhood learning for deprived communities and family learning) with the intention of joining with other existing national and local lifelong learning budgets.

Local Authorities will be invited to become a Lead Accountable Body (LAB). A Lead Accountable Body will bring together all the partners in the area and develop a local plan for all types of informal adult learning. The

New Funding Arrangements

In **April 2010**, the Learning and Skills Council will be abolished and adult learning will be managed by a new successor body called the **Skills Funding Agency**.

In **Spring 2010**, local authorities will be invited to become **Lead Accountable Bodies**.

From **August 2011**, the Skills Funding Agency plans to channel the entire available informal adult learning budget in a local or sub-regional area through identified Lead Accountable Bodies.

LAB will manage all the funds for informal adult learning.

At present, some of the budget is paid directly to Further Education Colleges and other organisations. This deregulation will mean increased flexibility in how the funding can be used.

Accepting the role of Lead Accountable Bodies would enable local authorities to better position their resources. This would also enable other local services, such as libraries, to play an important role in supporting Lead Accountable Bodies to broaden choice for local people.

Evidence sessions

Lynsi Hayward-Smith, *Principal Officer, Adult Community Learning*

Lynsi Hayward-Smith is responsible for the provision of Adult Community Learning Services for the Council. Her overseeing role is focussed on strategic matters. Details of what is currently being provided by Essex County Council are outlined below:

- The curriculum is planned centrally to ensure consistency. Local dimensions are gained through Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) teams and partners. The service has a strategic manager responsible for partnership working in each district.
- There are three funding streams available under the Adult Safeguarded Learning Grant and two relate to the informal learning agenda. These are as follows:
 - (i) Personal and Community Development Learning Fund
A mapping exercise has been carried out to inform the learning. Currently there are learning groups in all districts.
 - (ii) Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund (NLDC)
The entry criteria is based on work in deprived communities and targets the most vulnerable people and hard to reach groups. Services are commissioned via voluntary organisations who provided training in the community.



Lynsi Hayward-Smith (centre) holds the Matrix Excellence Award. ACL received this Award following their outstanding OFSTED inspection in June.

ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICES

- There are currently 36,000 learners in Essex.
- Learning is being provided across 250 learning centres.
- Adult Community Learning Services own 20 buildings
- 4,300 courses are currently on offer

- The service delivery model is based upon local needs and includes partnership planning. Work is currently being carried out with the 11 LSP strategy managers, local partners and voluntary organisations to map what is currently being delivered and by whom. District Councils and local people are also included in the planning process.

Jenny Coates, Strategic Manager for Partnerships

Jenny Coates has recently been appointed as Strategic Manager for Partnerships. This new role encompasses work related to partnership strategy management.

Funding is available via the Neighbourhood Learning and Deprived Communities Fund (NLDC) Project. The greatest bulk of the funds go to partner organisations as third sector providers. These are ideally placed to deliver learning.

It is a requirement of the funding that a minimum 75% of the available funding must be used to provide learners with employability skills.

There is a little flexibility whereby providing courses designed to raise self esteem and self confidence, in order that people feel confident to seek employment, could be provided within the criteria.

Elaine Adams, Libraries Service Development Manager

Elaine Adams introduced herself as being the Service Development Manager and outlined the role that libraries played in relation to the provision of informal and formal learning. The Panel was advised as follows:

The core provision of the Library Service is to provide learning. The Service caters for the learning needs of all age groups. 'Out of school learning' is considered to be informal learning; 'In

Aspirations of the ACL Service

1. Provide appropriate information and make people aware of services available.
2. Work strategically with partners to plan future programmes.
3. Champion learner entitlement by ensuring people know they have an entitlement and signposting them to appropriate services.
4. Support the role of 'Community Champions'.
5. Ensure inclusion of the most vulnerable people, especially those with poor mental health.

Strategic Manager for Partnerships role

This new role involves the following aspects:

- Working closely with the Local Strategic Partnerships and sub groups.
- Working to increase engagement with the health and wellbeing groups. In particular, more engagement with groups associated with those with physical and mental health disabilities.
- Looking at which existing courses learners are currently undertaking and consulting with local people to discover what people are interested in and what new courses might be required.
- Mapping which Learning and Skills Groups are currently being provided at Borough and District Council level.
- Raising Awareness.

school learning' is considered to be formal learning.

The Library Service works closely with Adult Community Learning Services and provides signposting to a mixture of appropriate accredited formal learning courses and to non-accredited informal learning courses which could be provided by other organisations.

The Library Service itself provides a range of informal and formal learning activities. These include the following:

- (i) The lending of books is considered to be a provision of informal learning.
- (ii) Training parents and children through providing informal activities such as to share books together
- (iii) Providing Book Groups
- (iv) Author Days
- (v) Coffee and Crime Days (reading/reviewing crime novels)
- (vi) On Line Learning
- (vii) Book Start – 'Rhyme Time'
- (viii) Taster Sessions

During the Festival of Learning held in October 2009 the Library Service put on a programme of learning within the county. Examples of some of the activities were given as follows:

Epping Library

- (i) A UK online course which provides computer skills. This has been funded as part of a Government initiative and it is envisaged that this will be introduced to a further 29 libraries in the future.

Loughton Library

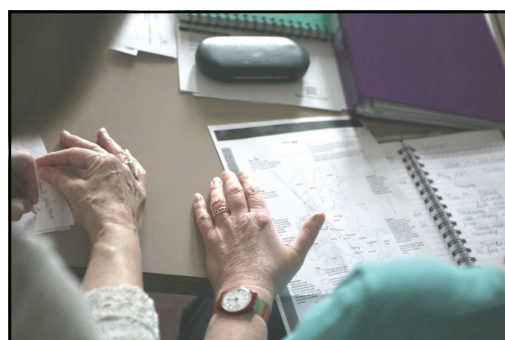
- (i) Learning Direct event
- (ii) Poetry Workshops (attended by poets)
- (iii) The provision of information and advice and guidance sessions

Harlow

- (i) Streets to Homes events which provided employability skills.

Libraries Service

- There are currently 73 libraries in Essex.
- There are approximately 500,000 members of these approximately 300,000 are active members.



Other Learning Initiatives

Youth Offending Team (YOT)

The YOT provides a programme whereby young offenders help to train the 'older generation' to learn to use computers using the BBC's online teaching course Webwise.

It was suggested during the witness session that a 'Directory of Learning Opportunities' be created, detailing all the learning opportunities available in Essex. It should be available on a web portal. Elaine Adams agreed this would be an excellent resource.

Ron Marks, *Workers Educational Association (WEA)*

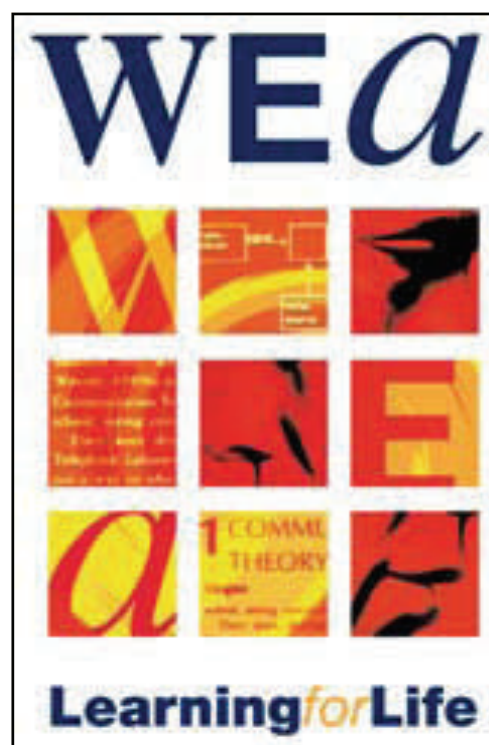
The Eastern Region WEA is part of the WEA National Association which is one of the largest voluntary providers of adult learning.

The Association is a 21st century, democratic, voluntary adult education movement, governed by its members. Its main purpose is to widen participation in learning, enabling people to realise their full potential.

Originally, it had been set up to provide workers who had missed out in education with learning opportunities. Currently the majority of learners in the branch programme are retired workers. There is no criterion for entry.

The WEA works closely with Essex County Council Adult Community Learning and Library Service.

The WEA receives national funding via the Learning and Skills Council; other income comes from local and national Government agencies in the form of project funding as well as fees from partner organisations and learners. Learners' fees (£3 per hour) formed 47.6% of the funding income. There is no charge for those learners receiving benefits.



Successful bids for external funding in 2009-2010 included the following -

National Project with Regional Involvement:

- (i) Big Lottery Fund – Family Learning for Social Cohesion in Basildon. Scheduled for the end of May 2010.
- (ii) Community Learning Champions. To train Champions scheduled September 2009 to March 2011
- (iii) Learning Revolutionaries. To train and support revolutionaries to engage with new learners in the community to implement self organised learning circles. Scheduled for March 2010

- (iv) Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). Provides information learning technologies designed to improve the use of new technology in WEA courses

Regional Projects (Essex Only)

- (i) NLDC Learning opportunities, Essex LEA target groups in Basildon. Scheduled for July 2010
- (ii) Information Advice and Guidance (IAG), delivery of IAG sessions. The next steps of this project are scheduled for July 2010.

The WEA in Essex 2008-09

There are 3 strands to the educational programme:

- (i) Second Chance to Learn (416 enrolments on 49 courses)
This is targeted at people with few, if any, educational qualifications and provides learning in the preparation for work, skills for life and courses leading to level two qualifications.
- (ii) Community Involvement (973 enrolments on 113 courses)
The WEA works with partners such as MIND in Basildon and UNISON and small employers to address the needs of people who are socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged.
- (iii) Cultural Studies (3,354 enrolments on 158 courses).
This unique strand offers the opportunity for serious educational study in the humanities. This is the Branch programme run by its members.

In line with the White Paper the WEA future aspirations include the following:

- (i) Working closely with the Local Authority to create a joined-up, innovative and broad local learning offer.
- (ii) Continuing to respond to the White Paper's four initiatives
- (iii) Continuing to develop the already rich network of volunteering within the WEA branches.

Tina Nay, *Workers Educational Association (WEA)*

There are 46 branches in Essex which run the general programme. Branches have a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. The Branch decides what is taught each year and then the Region employs tutors to teach the subjects under the management of the county organiser.

The branches are run by volunteers. Professional tutors usually undertake 2 hours teaching for 20 weeks per year. Most courses are run during the daytime but there are some evening courses available. Branch members decide on the timing and venue for their courses. A diverse range of learners attend courses. In Chelmsford one course had been attended by a 90 year old learner, learners with and without degrees and a 20 year old learner currently attending university.

The WEA has no property or estate from which it can provide the service. It therefore relies upon other institutions such as suitable churches/community halls and other community venues.

Barbara Lewis, *University of the Third Age (U3A)*

Barbara Lewis introduced herself as being Vice Chairman of the Third Age Trust (the national body to which U3As are affiliated). The title University of Third Age refers to the third age of life as follows:

- (i) First Age - Formal Education
- (ii) Second Age - Work/family
- (iii) Third Age - Finished the above, some time to yourself

There is no age limit or formal qualification required to join the U3A. However the entrance criteria requires the learner not to be in full time employment.

The main principle of the organisation is related to members sharing educational experiences.



“Those who teach shall also learn and those who learn shall also teach.”

Barbara Lewis quotes one of the U3A's guiding principles.

U3A Nationwide

There are currently 763 U3As in the UK with 247,500 individual members. Word of mouth recommendations have been the main medium by which the membership has grown. Administration costs are kept to a minimum. The national office consists of a company secretary and only four or five paid administration staff mostly part-time.

The average U3A now has 310 members and runs 30 separate interest groups which meet regularly, ranging from weekly to monthly. However size varies considerably, some are over 1,000 members

Apart from applying for grants for projects and development work, the U3A movement does not receive any government grant or other financial support as it is entirely funded from members' subscriptions.

Essex and U3A

There are 30 U3As in Essex providing over 870 interest group meetings every month. Based upon the above averages; this means there are at least 9,000 members of the U3A in the County. In addition, U3As hold monthly meetings which consist of a business element and a presentation, (covering a diverse range of

topics), from an invited speaker. They also arrange educational and cultural visits.

Although many more would like to join U3A, many of the U3As in Essex are full as their main meeting venues can not hold any more members.

There is one U3A which holds meetings in a cinema which can hold 350 people. Some U3A meetings are held in churches. To be able to meet demand for U3A membership in Essex there is a need to find bigger premises; attendance of between 250 and 350 members is not unusual. Smaller premises for study groups is also needed. There is a need to create awareness of potential venues and engage more creatively with these sites.

To continue U3As expansion in Essex and nationally, there is a need for:

- Inexpensive places to meet
- Funding streams—start up grant of £100 or small amounts to plant seeds
- Publicity assistance to raise public awareness

Susan Carragher, Director of Adult Learning and Libraries

There are 73 libraries across the communities of Essex and there have been frustrations about the lack of use out of hours. The Rural Commission report has also highlighted the fact that libraries could be better used.

The Library Service has been communicating with Asset Management, Health and Safety and Risk Management among others to look at the options, but it is acknowledged that the situation is complex. The Library Service is using pressure from reports like *The Learning Revolution White Paper* to try and position libraries as a community resource.

There are a number of issues which need to be addressed such as risk, health and safety and the legal aspects of sharing space etc. These are being considered as part of the Authority's Transformation Programme which may provide a blueprint to apply to other County Council buildings for out of hours use by communities.

Different types of occupancy have been considered along with cost implications and it is felt that some third sector organisations may find the licence/lease costs too prohibitive. The Service is working with legal services on a template for simple leases which could be used.

Susan Carragher outlined to the Group an example of a partnership with North Weald Parish Council who have approached the Library Service regarding shared space in the library there. This has benefits for both partners. The County Council have been able to put in self service equipment, known as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) which, with the help of the Parish Council, allows longer library opening times.



The Parish Council receives some of their rent rebated for facilitating longer library opening times. The Service is looking to developing partnerships with other organisations using a similar model. There are currently eight other potential partners being looked at.

There are still 33 libraries without RFID and the options for these libraries are being looked at to improve services.

It was explained that the Council has agreed to fund Wi-Fi rollout in libraries. Previously the number of computers available and physical layout has affected how IT was delivered in libraries.

By April 2010 there will be a corporate bandwidth roll-out which will address some of the issues of slow log-in which had been experienced. There will be opportunities to re-furbish some of the libraries and change the way the space is used to be more accommodating.

There are approximately 600 different partnerships in respect of informal adult learning in libraries. The partnership concept could lead to other benefits of reaching out and engaging with communities and putting services into other premises.

Partnerships could help to avoid future closures of community resources. There could be options for integration and partnerships with other County Council premises such as Adult Community Colleges, schools and those relating to community wellbeing.

Carl Livermore, Risk and Insurance Manager

There is a comprehensive insurance programme for the Council. The Council is responsible for the first £1.2m of every property and liability claim. The insurance is currently being tendered which may lead to changes in 2010/2011.

In respect of the Open Space recommendation of *The Learning Revolution White Paper*, from the insurance perspective it is necessary to manage the risks whilst still trying to

North Weald Library Partnership

The Parish Council in North Weald were looking for alternative accommodation and approached their local library to see if premises could be shared. The Library had capacity to provide a separate office space for the Parish Council, which operates on the mornings when the Library is closed.

The Library receives between 30,000 to 40,000 visitors per annum which equates to 50-100 people per day. The Parish Council receives around 1,000 visits per annum which equates to 20 visitors per week.

The cost for the RFID equipment and installation is between £40,000-50,000 and is considered to be a long-term investment.



ensure that things can go ahead. Contractual arrangements need to be in place which set out roles and responsibilities. Insurance needs to be clear in the arrangements and a requirement of the County Council is for organisations to have their own public liability with a minimum of £5m limit of indemnities in place regardless of the size of the organisation.

It is necessary as organisations could be held responsible for third party injury and/or property damage, and if they are not insured these liabilities may fall to the County Council. The contract needs to be clear to ensure that each party knows what they are responsible for. Some organisations already have £5m public liability insurance in place; however, it can be a challenge for smaller groups.

Previously, the County Council had required Essex staff to be present at all times and have responsibility for the keys and alarm of premises etc. More recently other options are being considered but it is essential that user organisations have people who are properly trained and competent for these responsibilities to safeguard the County's assets.

Under the County Council's insurance 98% of Essex schools are covered which allows members of the community to use the school buildings for events. It is possible that the Council could approach its insurance brokers and consider covering small, responsible groups under its own insurance. With schools there is an excess of £500 per claim which has to be covered by the school. The school also has to take ownership of the risks and losses.

The costs for hiring out County Council premises were discussed. Susan Carragher outlined some costs for a 100sq m hall which ranged considerably due to various subsidised rates, commercial rates and whether heat was included. However it is reported that the system is being made simpler. If an organisation is delivering outcomes on behalf of the Council they have a subsidised rate.



The Adult Community Learning eligibility criteria for subsidised rates is non profit-making, community groups.

However the difficulty is still with the public liability insurance which can cost an average of £2,000. Established organisations would have this type of insurance already in place. The Honorary Chairman of Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress advised that their members were strongly recommended to have it in place.

The use of school premises is generally a straight-forward agreement for non-commercial and community benefit, where the County Council picks up the risk.

Stephen Pewsey, Honorary Chairman of Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress

Stephen Pewsey, the Honorary Chairman of the Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress, gave the Group a perspective from an organisation within the informal learning network. Stephen gave an introduction to the Congress which is an umbrella organisation for various societies in Essex and London.

There are 105 member organisations in the areas of archaeology, family history and local history. The Congress formed part of the informal learning network. It was explained that the Congress currently holds its two businesses meetings a year at County Hall, but this is being reviewed.

Elaine Woods, Community Information Network Manager

Elaine Woods, Community Information Network Manager, informed the Group about a number of information sources around the community. This work was part of Information Services until recently and now forms part of the Community Planning and Public Engagement team. Two of the services managed from the team are:

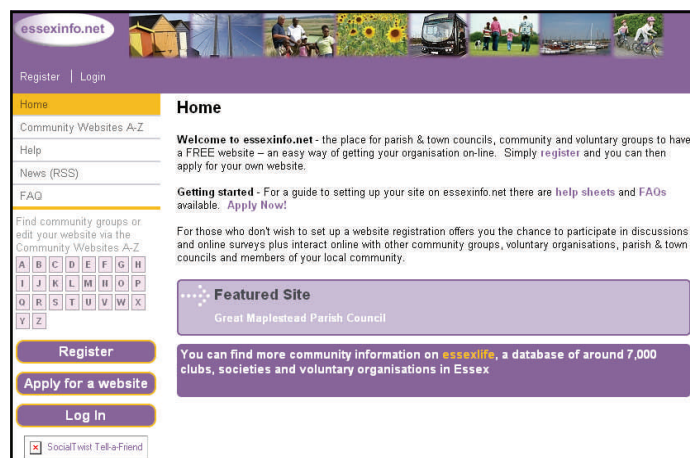
- essexlife.org
- essexinfo.net

The intention with the *Putting People First* Information Gateway is to have one place to access and find information relating to the self-directed support programme.

Providing live information would be very difficult to pull together. It was recognised that some organisations may not wish to advertise if they do not need more members or publicity. It was suggested that reminders were needed to ensure that organisations updated their information on Essex Life. In response it was explained that organisations would be receiving a reminder every 6 months to update. Organisations may find it becomes onerous to keep too many websites updated.

National Women's Register

Written evidence was also received from the National Women's Register (NWR) and this is included as Appendix 4. The NWR is a countrywide network of autonomous groups for lively minded women who enjoy sharing ideas, discussing topics, listening to speakers and sharing social events. As such they would find the recommendations proposed in this report in respect of Open Space useful.



Summary of Evidence

The recommendations in *The Learning Revolution White Paper* are supported by a number of voluntary organisations. This is reflected from the evidence the Group heard.

Voluntary organisations often find themselves stretched when looking for potential venues to hold their informal learning sessions and meetings, therefore *The Learning Revolution White Paper*, which seeks to aid and reduce some of their difficulties, is welcomed and supported by them.

The Group heard evidence from voluntary organisations which stressed the benefits of informal adult learning. It helps to bring a community together and can be particularly beneficial to those who are isolated. Such learning groups enable people with common interests to meet together and participate in an activity they enjoy. This also contributes to well being .

Findings and Recommendations

Based on their consideration of the White Paper and evidence received from the various witnesses, the Group identified a number of findings and recommendations.

Hiring of venues

A number of issues were raised by witnesses associated with finding and paying for suitable venues. Not only is there a shortage of suitable premises, but many of the organisations involved in informal learning have only limited financial resources available to them.

Whilst some of the organisations have their own public liability insurance, others do not and the cost of meeting ECC's indemnity may be a deterrent to their use of the Authority's premises.

The Group appreciate there is no easy solution to this but would ask that consideration be given to maximising access for providers of informal learning to a range of community buildings.

Finding 1

Voluntary organisations have a lack of available venues.

Finding 2

Many voluntary organisations are small and/or charities and have limited funds available for venues.

Finding 3

At present, any organisation using Essex County Council premises must have public liability insurance with indemnity of £5 million, regardless of the size of the organisation.

Recommendation 1

Consideration should be given to maximising access for informal learning providers to community buildings including schools, libraries and adult community colleges.

Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Libraries are also required to charge voluntary organisations £26 per hour for a member of staff to be present when their building is hired outside normal opening times.

The situation is even more complicated by the ability of schools to decide on their own charging arrangements with the result that providers are faced with a range of charging rates.

These issues are covered in more depth on pages 19 - 21 of this report and the Group were pleased to learn that a number of potential solutions are currently under consideration. Members do however feel there is a need for a simpler and fairer system of charging rates for providers of informal learning and their recommendations in respect of this are detailed at the top of the next page.

Finding 4

Library staff charge £26 per hour to staff a library when hosting external organisations. This is a considerable amount for many voluntary organisations.

Finding 5

At present, there are separate rates for schools.

Recommendation 2

There needs to be greater transparency in respect of charging facilities as the current system is complex, and a fairer system for smaller groups.

Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Recommendation 3

There should be more uniform charging standards and criteria, with greater clarity regarding the eligibility criteria for subsidised rates.

Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

From the evidence given by the representative from U3A, there is clearly a greater demand for membership than can currently be met. One of the causes of this is their inability to find venues that are affordable or large enough.

As explained elsewhere in this section of the report, it is a problem shared by other providers of informal learning. This problem could be addressed by public organisations making venues available at lower costs.

There are however a number of other solutions including helping to increase their awareness of and the best way to access existing funding opportunities.

Other low cost initiatives could also be considered, such as assistance with publicity and the provision of small grants to help such groups get started.

Displaying Information

Libraries provide a useful venue for displaying information about informal learning opportunities. Members were told this was particularly well done within the Wickford Library.

Members also appreciated that libraries receive large volumes of publicity material and that it may not be possible for them to display all this at any one time. They would however commend the

Finding 6

More people would like to join U3A and other similar organisations but finding venues that are affordable or large enough is a problem.

Recommendation 4

Consideration should be given to helping the expansion of U3A and supporting other informal learning organisations in Essex by:

- Provision of inexpensive venues
- Knowledge of how to access existing funding opportunities
- Small seed planting start up grants in the region of £100
- Assistance with publicity

Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Finding 7

The Wickford Library has an excellent display of information in respect of WEA and other organisations .

approach adopted within the Wickford Library.

Finding 8

Libraries receive a large volume of leaflets. Some libraries display them, others choose not to.

Recommendation 5

Where practicable, other libraries should be encouraged to adopt a similar approach to the Wickford Library in displaying information .

Owner: Director of Adult Learning and Libraries

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Developing a web portal

Having examined the opportunities available for informal learning within Essex, Members of the Group concluded that it is not easy for residents to find out about them.

Whilst one of the routes to identify such opportunities is through their local library it would be much easier and place less pressure on library staff if information were to be more accessible to enquirers.

The most effective solution would therefore appear to be the establishment of a pan-Essex directory introduced as part of part of the ongoing development of the ECC website.

Finding 9

There are a number of learning opportunities within the county. At present, there is no central resource.

Finding 10

It is not easy for Essex residents to find out about learning opportunities in Essex. One of the routes is through the library. Library staff can access information about learning opportunities, but a clear and comprehensive way to find the information needs to be available to all library enquirers and home web users.

Recommendation 6

A Directory of Learning Opportunities should be developed (including the main providers and specialist ones, such as historical and genealogical societies) detailing all the learning opportunities across Essex and available on an information web portal.

Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Recommendation 7

The development of a Learning Opportunities web portal should be part of the ongoing improvements to the Essex County Council website.

Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

The proposed directory should be as easy as possible for users to search to find out about the informal learning opportunities open to them. To this end it is suggested that this requirement be built into any contract for developing the portal.

The portal should encapsulate a Google-type search facility that makes it easy for them to identify the nearest provider of the type of learning they are seeking to access.

Members were aware that in addition to its development there would be a need to find appropriate resources to keep information up to date. The ideal would be for providers to have access to do this themselves but even if this were possible some additional resources may be required for the continued management of the website.

The County Council does provide assistance to organisations who by registering on essexinfo.net can:

- Create a website
- Be listed in the essexinfo.net directory
- Be included in the essexlife database
- Participate in discussions and online surveys
- Interact online with other community groups, voluntary organisations, parish and town councils and members of their local community

Support is also offered to organisations via email and telephone by ECC's Community Planning and Regeneration team.

However, not all organisations seem to be aware of this and Members consider more should be done to publicise these arrangements.

Recommendation 8

Built into any new website contract should be the availability of more complex search facilities. A "Find my nearest" Google-type search facility for informal learning opportunities near the user is needed.

Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Finding 11

A web portal needs cross county resources, people and funding. Whilst providers should ideally be responsible for updating information, there are resource implications providing such a portal and consideration needs to be given to making adequate resources available. Ideally, to help border areas of Essex, there should be a link to neighbouring authorities.

Finding 12

essexinfo.net provides a free web service for community groups, voluntary organisations and parish/town councils but this provision is not universally known.

Recommendation 9

More should be done to make organisations aware of the existence of and the opportunities afforded by essexinfo.net

Owner: Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Lead Accountable Body

In April 2010 the Learning and Skills Council will be abolished and the successor body will be called the Skills Funding Agency. Local authorities will be invited to become Lead Accountable Bodies (LAB).

LABs will be responsible for bringing together all the partners in the area and will manage all funding for informal adult learning.

Finding 13

The proposed abolition of the Learning and Skills Council will provide an opportunity for the County Council to become a Lead Accountable Body, with the potential to build even stronger relationships with its partners.

Recommendation 10

It is recommended that Essex County Council becomes a Lead Accountable Body and develops strong relationships with its partners eg: providers such as voluntary organisations and colleges of FE.

Owner: Leader of the Council

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Members of the Group consider that, if the Council becomes a Lead Accountable Body, consideration should be given to appointing both an elected member and a chief officer to discharge the lead role and act as IAL Champions.

This would demonstrate clear ownership at both a political and officer level and mirror other areas of the Council's responsibilities whereby the Cabinet Member is supported by a 'Member Champion'.

Recommendation 11

Essex County Council appoints an elected member and a chief officer to discharge the lead role as IAL Champion.

Owner: Leader of the Council

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Promoting informal adult learning

A number of witnesses indicated that their attendance at the Group's meetings had provided them with a very useful forum for learning from others and sharing information with them.

Both Members of the Group and some of the witnesses had experienced similar benefits from participating in events such as the National Festival of Learning. Similar opportunities could be provided

Finding 14

An annual informal adult learning forum would provide opportunities for learning organisations to meet together, like the Learning Revolution witness session where ideas were shared.

through pan-Essex Festivals of Learning but it is not envisaged that these should be held annually.

What would be advantageous is for there to be an annual informal learning forum which, if held in different parts of the county each year, would spread this networking opportunity more widely.

Conclusion

Whilst this was a fairly rapid review of the ways in which Essex County Council can respond to the proposals in *The Learning Revolution White Paper*, the Group feel their report contains a number of important recommendations which have been well researched and evidence based from the responses given by the various witnesses.

They wish to thank all those who gave evidence together with the officers who supported their work and commend this report for serious consideration.

Recommendation 12

An informal adult learning forum should be held annually in different parts of the county.

Owner: Leader of the Council

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Recommendation 13

The informal adult learning forum should give consideration to holding periodic Festivals of Learning to celebrate and make known learning opportunities to Essex residents

Owner: Leader of the Council

Implementation Review Date: April 2011

Impact Review Date: October 2011

Appendix 1 - Scoping document

EssexWorks.

For a better quality of life

Policy and Scrutiny Scoping Document

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Committee | Community Wellbeing and Older Peoples Policy and Scrutiny Committee | |
| Topic | The Learning Revolution White Paper | Ref: CWOP-SCR-22-01 |
| Objective | To consider whether Essex County Council is responding to the Government White Paper effectively. | |
| Reasons for undertaking review | To bring the White Paper to the attention of the Committee, highlight the main issues and determine what the County Council is doing to respond to the requirements of the White Paper. | |
| Method <i>Initial briefing to define scope</i> <i>Task & Finish Group</i> <i>Commission</i> <i>Full Committee</i> | Full Committee – for detailed scoping and background information, and thereafter by a Task & Finish Group. | |
| Membership <i>Only complete if Task and Finish Group or Commission</i> | Councillor Janet Whitehouse (Chairman) Councillor Chris Pond Councillor Elizabeth Webster | |
| Issues to be addressed | <p>The following issues were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival of Learning • Funding of Informal Adult Learning • Accessibility to informal adult learning venues and information • Open Space | |
| Sources of Evidence and witnesses | <p>Officers within Adult Community Learning</p> <p>Lynsi Hayward-Smith – Principal Officer ACL</p> <p>Providers of informal adult learning within the voluntary sector</p> | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Work Programme | <p>1st Meeting – Full Committee 10th September 2009 Background information on the White Paper (and Executive Summary) and the County Council response to aid with scoping.</p> <p>2nd Meeting – Witness session One 4th December 2009</p> <p>3rd Meeting – Witness Session Two 27th January 2010</p> <p>4th Meeting – Feedback and report to CWOP 11th March 2010</p> | | |
| Indicators of Success | <p>Members of CWOP to be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully informed of the proposals of The Learning Revolution White Paper and the ways in which ECC can respond Satisfied with responses given by the relevant Cabinet members to the recommendations made by the Group | | |
| Meeting the CfPS Objectives <i>Critical Friend Challenge to Executive Reflect Public voice and concerns Own the scrutiny process Impact on service delivery</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give a forum to public concern about the need for informal adult learning. Impact on Service Delivery – Consideration of the provision and accessibility of informal adult learning in the context of the Government White Paper. Own the Scrutiny Process – To consider the County Council's response to The Learning Revolution Government White Paper and be fully informed on the provision of informal adult learning in Essex. | | |
| Diversity and Equality <i>Diversity and Equality issues are to be considered and addressed.</i> | Consideration of the accessibility of all residents in Essex to informal adult learning. | | |
| Date agreed by Committee | Thursday 9 th July 2009 | | |
| Future Action | Further scoping and background information at the Committee meeting on 10 th September 2009. | | |
| Governance Officer | Tanya Elcock | Committee Officer | Sophie Campion/ Graham Hughes |
| Service Lead Officer(s) | Lynsi Hayward-Smith - Principal Officer, Adult Community Learning | | |

Appendix 2 - The Informal Learning Pledge

Definition of the pledge

The pledge is a commitment by organisations signalling their intent to play a role in bringing the vision for informal learning to life. They will be important ambassadors and advocates for learning and a key driver for change and innovation on the ground.

Why have a pledge?

- informal adult learning helps to build communities of confident, curious, critical and creative people
- in pledging, your organisation becomes part of a wider movement and an ambassador for informal adult learning

What does the pledge involve?

There are seven overarching commitments. Organisations signing up to the pledge agree to:

- support the core principles of informal learning and encourage others to sign up
- advocate wider participation, especially for those who have benefited least from learning
- find flexible ways of using our existing spaces, or opening up new spaces, for learning
- encourage and support learning organised by people for themselves
- embrace new ways of learning, including the use of technology and broadcasting
- find and work with new partners to increase learning opportunities
- celebrate our successes

For more information visit: http://www.dius.gov.uk/skills/engaging_learners/informal_adult_learning

Appendix 3 - The Learning Revolution Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Learning Revolution

The boom in book clubs, on-line research and blogging, together with the continuing popularity of museums, public lectures and adult education classes, all demonstrate that people in this country have a passion for learning. They may not call it education, but this informal adult learning makes a huge contribution to the well-being of the nation. It is a revolution this Government is proud to foster and encourage.

Informal adult learning is taken up for its own intrinsic value. It encompasses a huge variety of activities: it could be a dance class at a church hall, a book group at a local library, cookery skills learnt in a community centre, a guided visit to a nature reserve or stately home, researching the National Gallery collection on-line, writing a Wikipedia entry or taking part in a volunteer project to record the living history of particular community.

Although informal learning can support the development of work-related skills, this movement is made up of a kaleidoscope of part-time, non-vocational learning where the primary purpose isn't to gain a qualification. People participate for enjoyment and are driven by their desire for personal fulfilment or intellectual, creative and physical stimulation.

Such activity also contributes to the health and well-being of communities by building the confidence and resilience of the individuals involved. The social relationships that develop as a result of this informal learning can provide networks of support and solidarity. For the low-skilled and under-confident, informal learning can be an important stepping stone to further learning and a more skilled future.

1. **A profound contribution.** The Government recognises that informal adult learning can transform individual lives and boost our nation's well-being. At its best, it can bring people and communities together, challenge stereotypes and contribute to community cohesion. It can unite the generations and help people remain active and independent into old age. At its simplest, informal learning can help build people's confidence and add to their personal fulfilment. For the low-skilled and those with a bad personal experience of formal education, an informal approach can provide a way back. In some cases it can be an important stepping stone to further learning, qualifications and more rewarding work.
2. **Making a virtue out of necessity.** Informal learning is important at any time. But during an economic downturn it is essential. Our top priority is, of course, the practical training which can help get people back to work quickly. This country has faced recession before and it has always bounced back because of its capacity for innovation, invention and creativity. In these tough economic times, informal learning can also make its contribution. No one would choose to face our current challenges. However, in the circumstances, there is a moral imperative to find activity with purpose for those affected by the recession. Opportunities must be seized. In a downturn new resources become available. These resources may come in

the shape of premises vacated in shopping centres. With firms on short-time working there may be more time to learn. People on reduced hours or looking for work may have the capacity to teach or volunteer, as well as more time to devote to learning. There may be people who want to put something back into their communities, to share knowledge, or to gain new skills. This is not the time to delay, but to increase support for informal learning and to harness the enthusiasm and commitment it brings with it.

3. **A consistent and on-going pledge.** This strategy reaffirms the commitment to informal adult learning across Government. It sets out how we will support a learning revolution by building capacity within individuals and communities and connecting the people who can make this happen. We recognise we can do more to ensure there is a wide choice of inspiring opportunities in every community, accessible to everyone.
4. **Inspired about learning.** Departments across Government do, and will, play an active part in supporting a flourishing landscape of informal learning:
 - The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) through its sponsorship of sporting, cultural and creative sectors, all of which can reach out to people, spark new interests and fuel existing ones
 - Communities and Local Government (CLG) through its work on active citizenship and community empowerment – ensuring that adults use their voice to shape the opportunities that are right for them
 - The Department of Health (DH) through its work to build health literacy and support active living
 - The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) through its leadership of the extended services programme, which opens schools as community resources and engages parents in learning
 - The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) through the forthcoming strategy for an ageing society which will set out how to better engage and communicate opportunities to older people
 - The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) through direct funding to help support a core infrastructure of adult and family learning in each locality.
5. **Inspired about life.** Government cannot do this alone. Our role is to be a catalyst for innovation and change. We can provide the framework to support individuals, communities, the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to create opportunities for informal learning. To make the learning revolution a reality, we will need our partners in all sectors to play a role. We will work across Government, together with these partners to:
 - Build a culture which values informal adult learning in all its forms, with a wide range of organisations promoting it.
 - Support people to drive their own learning, in particular by making it easier for people who want to start 'self-organised' groups.
 - Link up the learning provided by the public, private and third sectors to broaden choice and clarify the opportunities for learners.
 - Make better use of technology to support learning and inform people about what's on offer.
 - Ensure there is a wide choice of high-quality learning opportunities for everyone.

- Increase access to informal learning for disadvantaged groups.
- Recognise the leadership role of local authorities in securing a broad range of opportunities for people across the country.

1: Building a culture of learning

6. Although there is a rich tapestry of informal adult learning, more can be done to help some adults overcome the barriers they face. We need to help these adults navigate through the choices on offer to identify and access the learning opportunities they want. We will need to build a strong and diverse coalition of organisations to promote learning and point adults to new opportunities. This will help unlock choice, connect learning and develop awareness of the benefits informal learning can bring. We will do this with the help of four initiatives: an Informal Adult Learning Pledge; a Festival of Learning; an Open Space Movement and a Transformation Fund.

7. **Informal Adult Learning Pledge.** We will invite organisations to show their commitment by signing the IAL 'pledge,' kick-starting a movement owned by people and organisations that promote learning for its own sake. Organisations signing the pledge will be ambassadors for informal learning, actively promoting participation and finding new ways to get more people involved. The pledge is the first step to fostering change on the ground.
8. **A Festival of Learning.** Building on the success of Adult Learners' Week in engaging new audiences, we will support a Festival of Learning in Autumn 2009. The festival will host a wide range of events, reaching out to people who already enjoy informal adult learning and to new groups of learners. It will be supported by a national campaign to promote the benefits of informal learning for individuals, organisations and wider society. This will reinforce the message that informal learning builds communities of confident,

The pledge's founding members include:

Becta, British Library, BT, BUPA, Business in the Community, Campaign for Learning, Channel 4, Cheshire County Council, Church of England, Citizens Advice Bureau, City Lit, Civil Service Pensioners Association, Communities and Local Government, Community Media Association, Croydon Council, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, Department for Work and Pensions, Digital Unite, Derbyshire County Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Educational Centres Association, Engage, English Heritage, First Bus, First Taste, Ginsters, Global Digital Broadcast, Gloucestershire County Council, HOLEX, Homeless Link, Kent County Council, Kew Gardens, LEAFEA, Life Academy, Local Government Association, Mars, Merseytravel, Microsoft, Museums Association, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, National Association for Voluntary & Community Action, National Federation of Women's Institutes, National Literacy Trust, National Trust, NIACE, Norfolk County Council, Open University, Royal Horticultural Society, RSPB, RWE nPower, Scottish & Southern Energy, Southern Railway, Sport England, SS Great Britain, Stockton Borough Council, The Age and Employment Network, The Association of Science and Discovery Centres, U3A, UK Online, Unionlearn, UNISON, UNITE, Voluntary Arts Network, Westminster City Council, Workers Educational Association.

We will work across Government and with our stakeholders to expand this list.

curious and creative people. It will also champion choice in informal learning, bring together new and innovative partnerships to support learning and create new connections.

9. **An 'Open Space' Movement.** We want a broad choice of learning options to be available, including traditional classes, activities in museums, libraries and other settings, as well as opportunities to learn online. Self-organised learning is an important part of the mix. Many people are already doing this. We want to empower more people to organise themselves to learn, with opportunities designed by communities for communities. But we know that starting a group can be difficult: it can be particularly hard to find low cost space locally, and people need more expertise and tips on how to build a successful learning group.
10. We want to sow the seeds of an 'open space' movement where organisations throw open their facilities for informal learning at low or no cost. DIUS, DCSE, CLG, DH, and DCMS will work together with partners to open up spaces for informal learning in schools, colleges, libraries, community centres and healthy living centres, whether this learning is provided by the public, voluntary or self-organised sector. We will also develop a toolkit on how to set up, support and maintain a self-organised group.
11. **Transformation Fund.** Seizing the opportunity to connect organisations involved in informal adult learning could have a transformational effect on people's lives. Partnerships between institutions with exciting content, such as broadcasters and galleries, and groups with credibility within communities, can open up learning for whole new audiences. We want to do more to capitalise on these opportunities

for innovation to increase the ways in which adults can learn. We will invest in creative new approaches to reach and engage new learners through a £20m transformation fund. Bids to the fund will need to demonstrate how innovative ideas and new connections will address the barriers to learning some adults currently face.

2. Increasing access to Informal Adult Learning

12. Our ambition is for every adult to be able to access and benefit from a wide choice of informal adult learning. Like many services and opportunities available today, some people find them easier to access than others.
13. **Making learning accessible.** People who suffer socio-economic disadvantage may feel that learning isn't for them, or struggle to find out what is available. We will establish a national support package for Community Learning Champions to help them reach out to new learners, prioritising the most deprived areas. We will also take targeted action nationally and through our local partners to improve informal learning for older people and for families, and to increase informal learning in the workplace.
14. **Older People.** Older people can find it harder to access learning. But with an ageing population, we know that learning for leisure in later life can maintain mental and physical health, and contribute to people's sense of wellbeing. The Government's forthcoming strategy for an ageing society will ensure that older people are able to make the most of learning. In addition we will work with NIACE, BUPA and First Taste, and in partnership with the Department of Health and key sector bodies to increase opportunities for informal learning in care homes.

15. **Learning at Work.** The best employers already support informal adult learning for their staff, because they recognise the benefits it offers their employees and the organisation. Traditionally, however, learning at work is used to increase vocational skills and earning power. We believe learning through the workplace – not necessarily in work time – should be encouraged, not least because of the opportunities for teambuilding and increased productivity it provides. We want to encourage other employers to follow their lead and will work with Business in the Community to provide practical examples of successful employer approaches to informal learning.
 16. The Government funds more than 20,000 ‘union learning reps’ who make a huge contribution by encouraging people to increase their formal work skills under the Unionlearn banner. But they could also play a bigger role in encouraging informal learning. So we will work with Unionlearn to develop targeted action via the workplace, including opening 50 union learning centres to the wider community.
- 3: Transforming the way people learn through technology**
17. Digital technology is becoming central to our daily lives. The Government recently published the interim report of *Digital Britain* which sets out a plan to secure Britain’s place at the forefront of the digital world. New technologies are changing the way people learn and interact with each other. The internet allows people to come together so that distance is no barrier. Technology will continue to offer innovative new ways to learn, and bring learning opportunities to people who would otherwise not have access to them.
 18. **Digital Mentors.** We will use the transformation fund to encourage the use of broadcasting and technology to enrich learning and reach people who would otherwise not have access. We will only gain the maximum benefit if everyone can access new technologies and has the skills to use them. So tackling digital exclusion is key. We will ask UK Online to take a new role in championing informal learning as well as digital inclusion, and work with CLG to establish a network of Digital Mentors, aligning this with wider action to implement *Digital Britain* and CLG’s Digital Inclusion Plan.
 19. **The Learning Revolution: The Web Portal.** We want people to learn and engage on their own terms. Joining a group or finding out about opportunities can be difficult, because there is no single online point of access where people can find out what is available. Often people simply don’t know opportunities exist or where to go to find out about them. To help people who are looking for opportunities, we will facilitate the creation of an online bank, listing opportunities for individuals and flagging up free or low cost spaces and facilities as they become available. These sites must be owned and promoted by users and organisations themselves if they are to be successful, so Government will make available all the information it can, and run a competition (building on the Cabinet Office’s ‘show us a better way’) to get the best people to design and build solutions.
 20. **Broadcasting Forum.** We want to extend the development, use and sharing of exciting, inspirational content to open the doors to learning. But we know the rules on intellectual property are complex. We will set up a broadcasting forum to find solutions to these problems, with a view to encouraging

broadcasters to make materials free to access and open to share.

4: Making it happen in Government and on the ground

21. The publication of this White Paper is the start of a journey. Bringing our vision for informal learning to life will take concerted and sustained effort from all partners at national and local level. To guide implementation and advise on future development, we will establish a National Advisory Group with high-level representation from our partners and Government departments. The group will have a remit to use their expertise and networks to champion informal learning and identify opportunities for new connections. The Cabinet Champion for Informal Learning, John Denham, will chair the group.
22. A national vision for informal learning needs to be translated into action that genuinely affects people's lives. We need innovative local partnerships to facilitate the provision of diverse learning opportunities. To make this happen more effectively we will expect local authorities to show clear leadership and give them the remit to do so. This will allow them to secure a broad range of opportunities for people in local areas, working with local partners to reach out to more people.
23. We expect local authorities to invest public funds smartly to complement private and third sector activity effectively, and make the most of more flexible funding. We will look to local authorities to co-ordinate related streams of funding, particularly those for areas of activity such as libraries, galleries and neighbourhood renewal. We will also empower people and communities to use their voice to influence how this money is spent. The Government will consider a new

National Indicator for Informal learning within the Local Government performance framework and encourage direct community representation on local informal adult learning partnerships.

Our continuing commitment to invest in adult learning across Government

24. We are spending unprecedented amounts on adult learning – £3.3bn next year, helping over 3 million learners. Overall public investment in the FE system has increased by a record 53% in real terms between 1997/1998 and 2007/2008. The Government has taken the decision to re-prioritise LSC funding on longer, more valuable accredited courses that provide real help for people to get on in work and to earn higher wages, making a real difference to individuals, to their families and their communities.
25. The priority given to vocational learning has led to an expected reduction in shorter courses funded by the LSC. Many were in areas like health and safety at work or food hygiene which are properly the responsibility of employers. Some have been in areas which, while popular, would not attract the highest priority, or where learners are willing to pay full fees. Recreational language classes used to be one of the short courses most heavily-subsidised by the LSC and many still take place, but in a different form. The Floodlight prospectus lists more than 1,100 courses in Spanish in London alone.
26. ICT courses are clearly important to prevent digital exclusion. Free courses are widely available through UK Online and over 2 million people regularly use the centres, supported by around £10m funding each year from Government. But at present we are unclear about the extent to which we

are meeting the need for basic ICT skills. We have asked Baroness Estelle Morris to review provision in this important area.

27. Support from Government for informal adult learning is substantial and in many areas has increased significantly over the past ten years. DIUS has ring-fenced £210m for informal adult learning. In addition, we have continued to protect funding for specialist adult colleges and institutions such as the Workers' Education Association, Ruskin, Northern and Morley colleges and the Mary Ward Centre and City Lit to a total of around £40m in 2008/09. Funding for Unionlearn and Union Learning Representatives has increased to £21.5 million per year (a tenfold increase from 1998).
28. LSC-funded learning is just one part of the vast array of informal learning opportunities available through the private, public, voluntary and self-organised sectors and should be seen in that context. Investment from other Government departments helps secure an infrastructure which enables learning to thrive. Museums and galleries receive around £360m per year of DCMS funding. Free access has led to a public renaissance, with visits doubling since its introduction in 2001. Along with the National Lottery, DCMS will have contributed over £1 billion to the development of over 4,000 public sports facilities. Local authorities invest over £1 billion per annum in library services.
29. And learning opportunities without direct Government support continue to flourish. For example, membership organisations such as the National Trust and the RSPB offer professionally organised courses and events with experts in their chosen fields. The University of the Third Age (U3A) movement is expanding rapidly with over 700 local U3A branches established and total membership already rising to over 209,000.
30. In drafting this strategy we have been driven by what learners themselves are choosing to do. In future we need to be smarter in the use of public funds to support informal learning by joining up the different strands of Government activity, and complementing private and third sector activity more effectively. DIUS will provide an additional £30m¹ of funding in 2009–10 to support the innovation we want to see. We want to use this funding to support new ways of working and new approaches, strengthening the 'wiring' that needs to be in place for a learning revolution. We will invest it in promoting the benefits of learning, facilitating new partnerships and in funding innovative approaches to reach new and different learners. This will create a new momentum which will allow the informal adult learning revolution to blossom.

Appendix 4 - Written evidence from the National Women's Register (NWR)

2010 is the 50th anniversary of the organisation.

NWR Groups generally meet in the homes of members, enjoying the informality that this provides. A few Groups have always met in outside venues and others have reluctantly resorted to doing so due to increased membership. This is not a common problem! NWR, like so many such organisations has a much smaller membership than in its heyday - 20000 in 1980 and 7300 now. However, membership has been steady over the past few years. The age range of the membership is 25 - 90 but most of our members are in the 50 - 70 age range and the average age of the membership is 55.

Learning is promoted through research, discussion and debate and most Groups include an occasional speaker meeting in their programmes. We have a full diary of events which includes day conferences and workshops. These are organised by Groups and are self-funding. However we do receive funding from BIS (formerly DIUS) and this contributes to the cost of workshops, publicity and our Research Bank facility. Unfortunately this funding has been reducing year-on-year and we are waiting to see what we will be allocated for the coming year.

NWR has therefore been providing the opportunities which the Learning Revolution promotes for many years. As you state that your focus in Essex is on the recommendations for Open Space and the web portal, this could be of use for any group looking for an alternative venue to meet.

The Groups in our Essex Area are:

Basildon
Bishops Stortford
Buckhurst Hill
Burnham on Crouch
Galleywood
Hadleigh
Ilford
Shenfield/Hutton
Upminster
Wickford

The largest of these Groups is Upminster with 20 members.

If an online bank is set up as a result of your Task and Finish panel, the information can be forwarded to these Groups.

Kathryn Buckman
NWR Membership Coordinator
NWR Office
23 Vulcan House
Vulcan Road North
NORWICH NR6 6AQ

Registered Charity 295198

Appendix 5 - Contact Details for Witnesses

| Witness name | Position | Work address | Work telephone number |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Lynsi Hayward-Smith | <i>Principal Officer, Adult Community Learning, Essex County Council</i> | County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1LX | 01245 436595 |
| Elaine Adams | <i>Libraries Service Development Manager, Essex County Council</i> | Strategic Director , Digital Citizenship, St Martin's Square, Basildon, Essex SS14 1EE | 01268 288533 |
| Susan Carragher | <i>Director of Adult Learning and Libraries, Essex County Council</i> | County Hall, Chelmsford Essex CM1 1LX | 01245 434105 |
| Jenny Coates | <i>Strategic Manager for Partnerships, Essex County Council Learning Services</i> | Chelmsford ACC Beeches Close Chelmsford Essex CM1 2SB | 01245 435705 |
| Barbara Lewis | <i>University of the Third Age (U3A)</i> | The Old Municipal Buildings, 19 East Street, Bromley BR1 1QE | 020 8466 6139 |
| Carl Livermore | <i>Risk and Insurance Manager, Essex County Council</i> | County Hall, Chelmsford Essex CM1 1LX | 01245 431480 |
| Ron Marks | <i>Workers Educational Association: Eastern Region</i> | 18 Arcadian Gardens, Hadleigh, Benfleet SS7 2RP | 01702 389137 |
| Tina Nay | <i>Workers Educational Association: Eastern Region</i> | 18 Arcadian Gardens, Hadleigh, Benfleet SS7 2RP | 01702 389137 |

Appendix 5 continued

Contact Details for Witnesses

| Witness name | Position | Work address | Work telephone number |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Stephen Pewsey | <i>Honorary Chairman of Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress</i> | S Birds Hill Ho 59 Wroths Path Loughton IG10 1SH | |
| Elaine Woods | Community Information Network Manager <i>Essex County Council</i> | County Hall, Chelmsford Essex CM1 1LX | 01245 435270 |
| National Women's Register | Kathryn Buckman, Membership Coordinator | 23 Vulcan House, Vulcan Road North, Norwich NR6 6AQ | 0845 4500287 |

This report is issued by

Essex County Council – Members Support & Governance Services

You can contact us in the following ways:

By Post:

**C328
County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1LX**

By telephone:

01245 430306

By email:

scrutiny@essexcc.gov.uk

Website:

comad.essexcc.gov.uk