

Section 8 - Learning

Introduction

In this section we have a mixture of articles about group and individual learning.

The first two articles offer techniques and approaches to working with groups to develop their knowledge and understanding of sustainable development issues.

They are followed by a model for improving the skills and knowledge of community members of partnerships. A model for offering long term mentoring support to community groups is supported by a case study.

Community Development Work in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has a national framework for learning and qualifications which was designed and developed by the field. It is included in here along with an explanation of all the courses currently available. They are accompanied by four 'footsteps' diagrams showing how people can move around within the framework at different points in their community development 'career'. These are followed by an article explaining the different levels of training and qualifications and a step by step approach to determining individual learning and training needs will help people to work out what they do want to do next.

The last two articles explain how people's previous experiences can be used to gain access to higher education programmes and to credits, which count towards qualifications.

Within this manual there are many techniques and ideas for raising people's awareness on different topics that can also be used to support community development learning.

FCDLs resource pack on Reflective Practice has information for running workshops to enable people to learn from reflecting on their own and other peoples experiences, and how to use the Community Development Work National Occupational Standards to determine their own leaning needs.

FCDL produce a wide range of other learningsupport material and this can be found in the resources section.

In the 2001 Skills Manual there is a section on running a training session which is still relevant today and provides a straightforward guide to anyone wanting to put on a workshop or short training course.

Contents - *Learning*

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COMMUNITY LEARNING AND ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Introduction

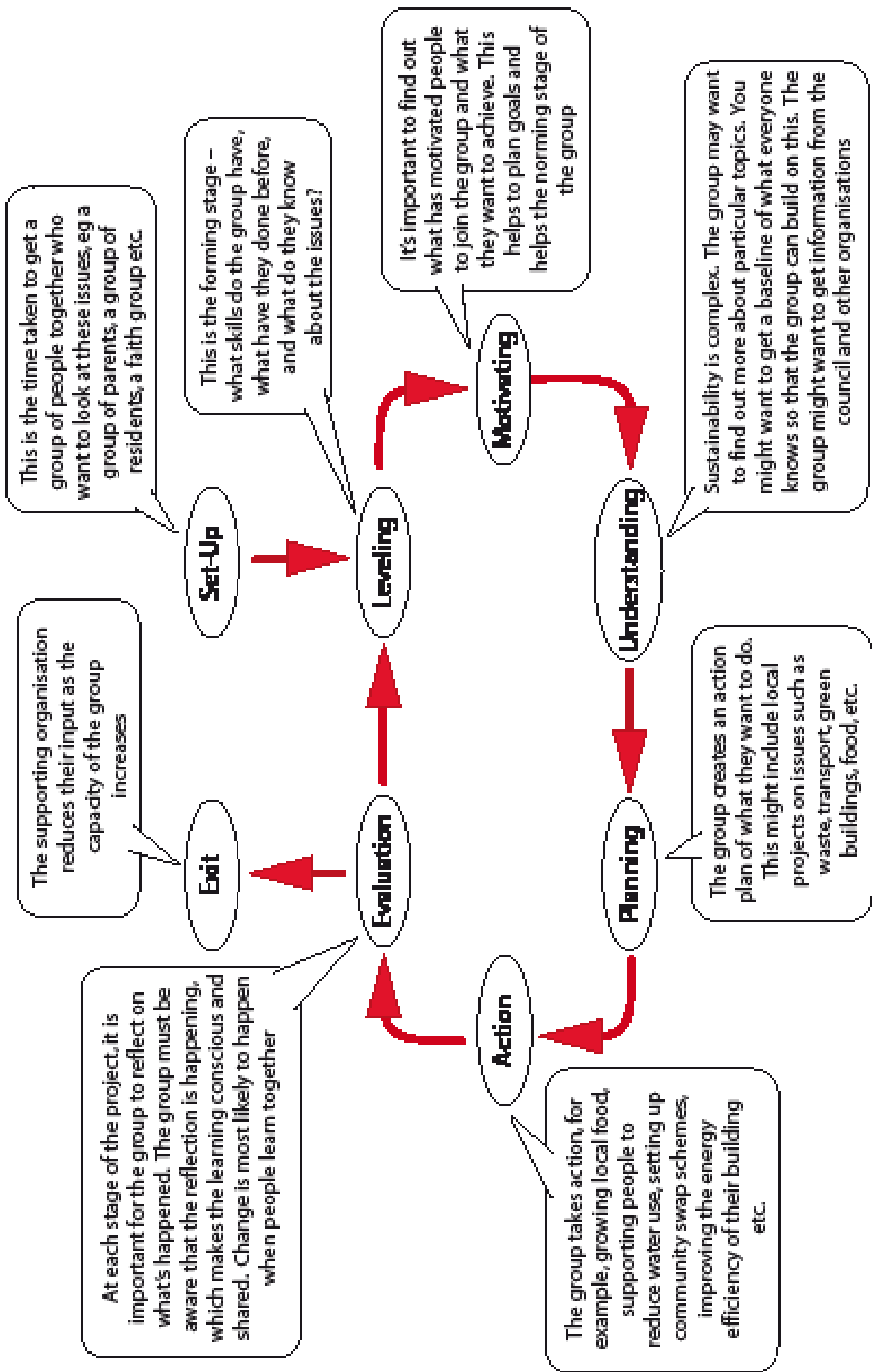
This technique offers a way of working with groups to learn about, identify needs and take action on sustainability.

Sustainability is about taking decisions about how we live and work that don't have negative impacts on society, the environment and the economy. It's also about ensuring that we leave sufficient resources for future generations to have a good quality of life.

We reviewed the current thinking about how we change behaviour in relation to sustainability and found that:

- In general, people are aware about environmental sustainability, although they probably won't use the word.
- The problem for people isn't lack of information about sustainability issues, especially environmental issues.
- Behaviour change is linked to people's underlying values and attitudes.
- The concept of environmental citizenship is key to future work in this area.
- Social learning is an important factor in encouraging behaviour and value change.

We developed a way of using social learning to encourage change and to support groups to take action. The diagram on the following page shows the process we used. A number of different group work techniques could be used at each stage, depending on the preference of the facilitator.



Using the technique

The cycle is a suggested technique. The stages are ones that we think are important to help people learn and make change happen. The cycle might not happen in the order shown above. For example, one group might be really action focused and might want to get started on something straight away. Another group might want to think about the issues more carefully before they start.

Set Up phase

1. Make sure that the group understands why you or your organisation is carrying out this work on sustainability.
2. If you are new to the group, use a person who knows the group well to make introductions.
3. Find out if there is a structure you need to go through before working with a group, for example, the school governors may need to be informed that the project is happening.
4. Give yourself plenty of time to get the group started – if the group is completely new, it will take time to recruit participants. The person who knows the group well may have ideas for the best ways to recruit people.
5. Make sure the group understand how long you can support them for and what they need to think about so that they can continue when the formal support finishes.

Leveling and Motivation phase

It is quite easy to combine these stages, especially with a small group.

The important thing is to enable the group to get to know each other and to think about their motivations for getting involved. This can help to create reasonable goals without building expectations.

Understanding phase

Sustainability is complex, so it is important to include opportunities to increase understanding throughout the project if the group identifies the need.

Examples might be to get people from the local council or other organisations to speak to the group or provide support on specific issues.

Planning phase

1. Use a process for the group to come up with ideas, group them and then decide which ones to take forward.
2. Use a timeline to plot the activities and the stages of each activity.
3. Use a detailed checklist or plan for individual event planning.

Action phase

Sustainability isn't just about the environment, although this might be the focus of any action taken. Support the group in considering whether their action supports any social, economic or governance issues too.

Evaluation

Useful questions to use in evaluating each step of the project are:

- What worked well and why?
- What didn't work so well and why?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What have you learned from the experience?

To increase understanding of sustainability, it is useful to evaluate the actions taken by asking how the action positively impacted on social issues, environmental issues, economic issues and local decision-making or governance issues.

Exit phase

Make sure the group is clear from the start how and when the exit of the support organisation or person will take place. Support the group to plan how it will deal with this.

Useful website and contact details:

More information www.wwf.org.uk/localmatters or contact:

Niamh Carey

WWF-UK

Panda House

Weyside Park

Godalming

GU7 1XR

Tel 01483 412474

Email ncarey@wwf.org.uk

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY: HOW TO RAISE THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHAOS WITH GROUPS

The aims of this exercise:

- To help people think about the stages we might go through with increasing numbers of extreme weather events
- To introduce people to planning skills
- To make people think about the principles and values that motivate them

How to run the exercise:

1. You need to copy and cut up the slips on the next 3 pages; enough sets for each group to have one. You will need large sheets of paper, glue or blutack and some blank slips.
2. This exercise is best done in groups of three or four people, so ask them to get into small groups.
3. Explain that each group will be given a number of strips of paper which have written on them some of the things that might happen in the life of a group. Read out a couple of examples.
4. Ask each small group to think about the effects climate change is having and will continue to have on human relationships and to make a note of these.
5. Give out the strips to each group and ask them to arrange them to tell a possible story of what might happen in the next 50-100 years. You can offer the following suggestions for arranging the slips to get them started:
 - As a linear timeline
 - As a cycle
 - As a plus, minus, interesting
 - As a mind map

It can also help to use images you have brought along, or drawings done by the group, to illustrate aspects of the story.

6. Ask the groups to present their work after 20 minutes; they should stick their slips to a larger sheet of paper.
7. Lead a whole group discussion – using the following questions:
 - How useful was that exercise?
 - Does it offer any ideas for how we might cope with and challenge climate chaos, and challenge those causing it?
 - What information and support can help communities decide themselves what actions would work best for their predicted situations?
 - Within your small groups, what roles did you take on? (perhaps discuss this in small groups)
 - Which slips did your groups throw out, add in?

Variations:

- Allow people to add their own ideas on blank strips
- Withhold some of the slips and introduce them at stages while the small groups are working
- Make up your own versions of the strips to make them more relevant to the communities you are working with
- See www.marklynas.org/sixdegrees for discussion on the impacts of each degree rise in global warming

Slips for copying and cutting up

.....
Large parts of the country are on power rationing following the government cap on emissions emitted from power stations.
.....

You try and find out what people in your area would be most interested in and motivated to take action on, in terms of sustainability issues.
.....

With over 75% of the UK's food crop failing this year due to the excessive flooding, food prices are set to increase dramatically, while food supplies themselves are affected in poorer countries that had a good growing season as richer countries pay premium rates for the produce.
.....

You decide to set up a bulk-buy cost-price weekly food coop, using your spare room as the storage area and 'shop'.
.....

You, and a couple of neighbours, organise a community day to promote residents' involvement in healthy eating and composting with the aim of setting up a community allotment.
.....

Work out ways of maintaining contact between group members.
.....

As an established group with experiences to share, you offer talks to newer groups to share best practice ideas.
.....

Produce some publicity about actions being taken locally.
.....

You have a large public meeting to discuss local reactions to an extreme weather event in your region.
.....

Your small group is attracting more members and interest. You develop some basic rules about how you run the group and make decisions, and develop some aims.
.....

Power cuts became more regular as electricity companies struggle to maintain national grid in the face of extreme weather events.
.....

There is an air of panic among people.

Petrol prices reach £10.00 a litre.

Your group makes contact with like-minded community groups in the area to develop a network that can ensure a louder 'voice' on sustainability issues

The Government announces that it can no longer afford to cover the costs of damage caused by extreme weather.

You decide who should be involved in the group and actively work on attracting them.

There is no sun block left in the shops – panic buying followed the huge rise in the sun index used by the Met. Office in weather forecasts.

Start giving talks about climate chaos to other local groups.

Talk with friends in the pub / café about your ideas to take action around an issue.

1000s of motorists abandon their cars after a 36 hour gridlock grinds London to a halt.

The first case is brought before the International Court of Justice in The Hague of "environmental crimes against humanity". Among those accused include most of the Chief Executives of the oil, now solar, companies. Former US President, George W Bush, has been called as primary witness for the accused.

Your group works together for a day to plan what it wants to achieve in the next year, and what information and resources are needed to get there.

Due to the steep rise in fuel prices, flying once again becomes a form of transport only available to the wealthy.

Energy rationing introduced by the Scottish Parliament, provoking political turmoil in Westminster.

Your group applies for a substantial grant to fund a climate outreach project over the next three years

A "Climate Referendum" is announced for people to vote on what % reduction in carbon emissions Britain should commit itself to. The "Climate Referendum" results in a commitment to ...% reduction in carbon emissions over the next ... years. Fill in the % reduction and the time-frame aimed at that you believe would be passed in law.

Towns affected by rising sea levels twin with similarly affected areas from the global south, to increase solidarity and support during weather crises.

Arrange a video night to provoke ideas for action on climate chaos.

Petrol prices reach £5.00 a litre.

You take time as a group to reflect on your activities and to think about what has worked best and why, as well as what didn't work so well.

You apply for a start up grant to cover your meeting room costs, publicity and some travel fares.

Declare a car-free day for your town. Explicitly link this to the need for a reduction in carbon emissions.

Set up a phone tree to co-ordinate the group's members.

Research climate responses of high-contributing activities – for example airports, oil refineries, car dealerships.

Make links between asylum seekers and climate change – work out ways to communicate the idea of "environmental refugees".

Discuss and plan what action(s) you could take in solidarity with people affected by extreme weather events in the global south.

Work out ways in which people can visualise emissions which fuel climate change.

Evacuation of residents from Hull, following repeated flooding.

An action to take locally (fill in the details)

Political international events (fill in the details)

Extreme weather event (fill in the details)

An action to take locally (fill in the details)

Political international events (fill in the details)

Extreme weather event (fill in the details)

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TRAINING AUDIT FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

The Community Partnership Team wanted to help Community Partnership Members achieve the most from their involvement with Community Partnerships and so we aimed to carry out an annual training audit to ascertain what individual and group training would be of interest and benefit to members. This allows us to identify appropriate training courses and secure funding where necessary.

1. We devised a form which asked people to provide details of any previous training they had completed

Date	Course	Duration

2. We produced a checklist based on the training available in our area and asked people to tick. We used main headings for the topics and then broke them down into more detail, for example

Subject		Tick
Meetings	Committee Skills	
	Successful meetings	
	Minute taking	
	Bookkeeping	
	Public speaking	
	Developing confidence and assertiveness	

The topics we included in this checklist were:

- IT
- Project management
- Events organising
- Legislation and policies (equality, food hygiene, child protection etc)
- Personal skills (time management, leadership etc)

We also asked for details about their

- Role in the group
- Availability for training (times, days)
- Child and dependent care requirements
- Other support they might need

3. Once the results were received we collated the information and looked at addressing the most requested training needs by checking what local providers had available. Many of the CVS courses are free for volunteers. If other partnerships have had similar results, we could join up and that would make it cheaper. Advice on funding for training if needed is often available from the local CVS and they can help if you don't know who to apply to. Allow 6 months to get funding in.

4. We aim to review the training audit on an annual basis, especially after the AGM when we may have new committee members.

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MENTORING FAITH-RELATED COMMUNITY GROUPS

Introduction

This approach to mentoring faith related community groups has been developed from the direct experience of the Active Faith Communities Programme (AFC) in undertaking development work with faith-related groups in West Yorkshire.

It is focused on developing a two-way relationship between a Mentor and Mentee(s) through the following stages:

1. Identifying the need for mentoring support and matching a mentor and a mentee / mentees.
2. Setting the support plan, the timescale, agreeing the support framework, defining roles and responsibilities
3. Building rapport and developing a trusting relationship
4. Evaluating the progress

The key is to develop a comprehensive, longer term mentoring relationship whereby a worker who first meets with a group and undertakes an analysis of its support needs remains the key contact throughout the mentoring relationship.

The framework of support should be flexible at all times; ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reflections are essential to make sure that both the mentor and the mentee(s) benefit from the process.

Tips and points to consider when mentoring faith-related community groups

At first it could be expected that the support would be focused particularly on faith-related issues while more general support would be gained through signposting to more 'mainstream' bodies. In practice, this might not be the best approach. Many small faith groups lack the confidence to make best use of mainstream provision or engage with its language. Groups have multiple support needs rather than just their presenting query.

It is important to develop a comprehensive, longer term mentoring approach. A worker who first meets with a group and undertakes an analysis of its support needs should remain as the key worker throughout the mentoring relationship.

It is important to remember that whatever the expertise of the worker, the relationship is the key link throughout the duration of the work.

Whilst in most cases the link will be between a mentor and one mentee, sometimes the group supported will feel more confident and better equipped to make use of the support if the relationship is with two or more people.

Where to use this approach?

This approach could be used when supporting small groups with multiple support needs, who are not well connected to wider voluntary and community sector structures, lack awareness of these support agencies or confidence to access them.

Using this method has several advantages:

- It provides continuity to the group supported
- It retains their access to specialised support and advice and does justice to the complexity of needs in developing an organisation
- It ensures a comprehensive approach where the user determines not just the nature of the work but also the pace at which it happens
- Because it is relationship-based it builds confidence and trust and facilitates the transfer of skills.
- It builds up a range of skills within the supporting organisation, too.
- This approach also helps to develop a more integral partnership with mainstream infrastructure support organisations.

Further information:

Information on work that AFC does and the mentoring approach it uses could be found on:
www.activefaiths.org.uk.

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Case Study

MENTORING FAITH-RELATED COMMUNITY GROUPS: A CASE STUDY OF LUDDENDENFOOT UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Introduction

The issue for the Active Faith Communities Programme was how to provide effective mentoring support for faith-related groups. For Luddendenfoot URC there were several issues, including securing a community building for the village, for use by the church and other groups; developing skills in fundraising, dealing with professionals such as architects, and business planning; and seeking to involve a wide range of local residents in the activities of the Community Association that has been formed by the church and other groups.

The Context

Luddendenfoot, in Calderdale West Yorkshire, is an area that has become increasingly popular as a place to live, with new housing developments, but alongside this, there has been a decline in community facilities, culminating in the current proposed closure by the local authority of the civic centre, a building that is used by Luddendenfoot URC (which does not have its own building) and various other organisations such as a playgroup.

What did people choose to do

The church got together with other community groups and local residents to form Luddendenfoot Community Association to seek either to retain and improve the current building – the civic centre – or develop a new community building for the village; to raise the profile of the current building locally; and to seek local residents' views on the facilities and activities they would like to see. Alongside this there have been various activities, such as a Gala, intended to help with some of these things by contributing to fundraising and by providing a fun way of getting more residents involved.

The helpful elements of the mentoring role

The mentoring provided by the Active Faith Communities Programme through this process has included several elements.

One is advising on making the best use of consultants and professionals such as architects. This aspect of the mentoring role seems to have been appreciated. As the church secretary put it, 'I believe it was through [AFCP] that Luddendenfoot Community Association got the services of a consultant (for free) for several weeks and that allowed us to assess the impact we are making ... on the community'.

Another aspect of AFCP's involvement has been signposting and helping the church and community association to be aware of activities, other organisations, initiatives and funding sources. To quote the church secretary again: 'It has been useful to hear from [AFCP] about the support available to organisations such as ourselves...it is good to know these things'.

Quite importantly there has been the role of 'independent outsider' to challenge, to question, to provide a perspective which is different while at the same time being sympathetic to the faith basis of the

church's work. This also seems to have been valued: 'Your support has been very important to us (and particularly to myself as church secretary) – comments from you as almost an independent third party have been very valuable.'

The technique applied to this Case Study

1. Identifying need

In the case of the work in Luddendenfoot, the identification of need arose from the initial request for us to work with Luddendenfoot United Reformed Church, and this was refined in subsequent conversations, especially with the church secretary. Alongside, and complementing, the process of identifying needs was the process of identifying assets – for example people, skills, local knowledge, and informal networks¹

2. Setting the plan, timescale and support framework

At an initial meeting, a workplan was agreed, based on what the church wanted to achieve and on what AFCP could offer. The offer of assistance from AFCP was based on the understanding that we would adopt this mentoring approach.

3. Building rapport

Building rapport inevitably takes time. As Ian Owers has observed in the preceding article describing the mentoring technique, 'it is important to develop a comprehensive, longer term mentoring approach.' AFCP's work in Luddendenfoot has gone on for some time and has seen the work develop through a number of phases and key developments such as the formation of the community association. Trusting relationships have developed gradually as this work has progressed.

4. Evaluating progress

This is partly a matter of evaluating the contribution of the AFCP member of staff, which is carried out internally and also through the work of an external evaluator. It is also partly about evaluating the work of the Community Association, especially the outcomes and impacts of the Community Association's activities. Involvement in the Change Check programme² has contributed to this. Such evaluation is essential – to learn from experience, to motivate those involved, and, where appropriate, in order to engage with policy initiatives such as local area agreements.

Further Information

J Kretzmann and J McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, Northwestern University, 1993
See also www.northwestern.edu/ipr

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¹ see for example Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993.

² The impact assessment work referred to in the case study was part of BASSAC's Change Check programme. www.bassac.org.uk

LEARNING AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Why do we need a community development work learning and qualifications framework?

There are many different people engaged in community development, from local residents active in community groups to paid Community Development Workers supporting community groups and professionals who use a community development approach in part of their work. They will have come into community development work through many different routes and they may need to change their roles over time. They will need to learn about different aspects of community development to be effective. Some people will need qualifications to gain employment or to access other courses, while others will want to improve their skills and knowledge for their own development.

As community development work has become recognised in its own right, with its own national occupational standards, so training and qualifications in community development have been devised. The increasing expectation on people in communities to become engaged with government policies and initiatives, and the subsequent growth in jobs requiring community development work skills and knowledge, has fuelled demand for training.

Courses, qualifications and workshops have been created to meet this demand. However, not all of them are appropriate for community development practitioners as they are based on a misconception of what community development work is and are unrelated to the community development national occupational standards.

With such a plethora of provision, employers of Community Development Workers often find it difficult to know what qualifications and training would equip their existing and potential staff to be effective in their practice, or how the qualifications affect terms and conditions of employment. People who have gained qualifications and completed courses need to know that these are recognised and relevant and will help them find employment.

The community development work field wanted to bring some order to this situation and so in 2004 a conference was organised entitled Roots and Routes. The outcome was an embryonic framework map of the existing range of community development work learning and qualifications.

Since then work has continued to fill in some of the gaps to meet the different and wide-ranging learning, training and qualification needs of all those engaged in community development work.

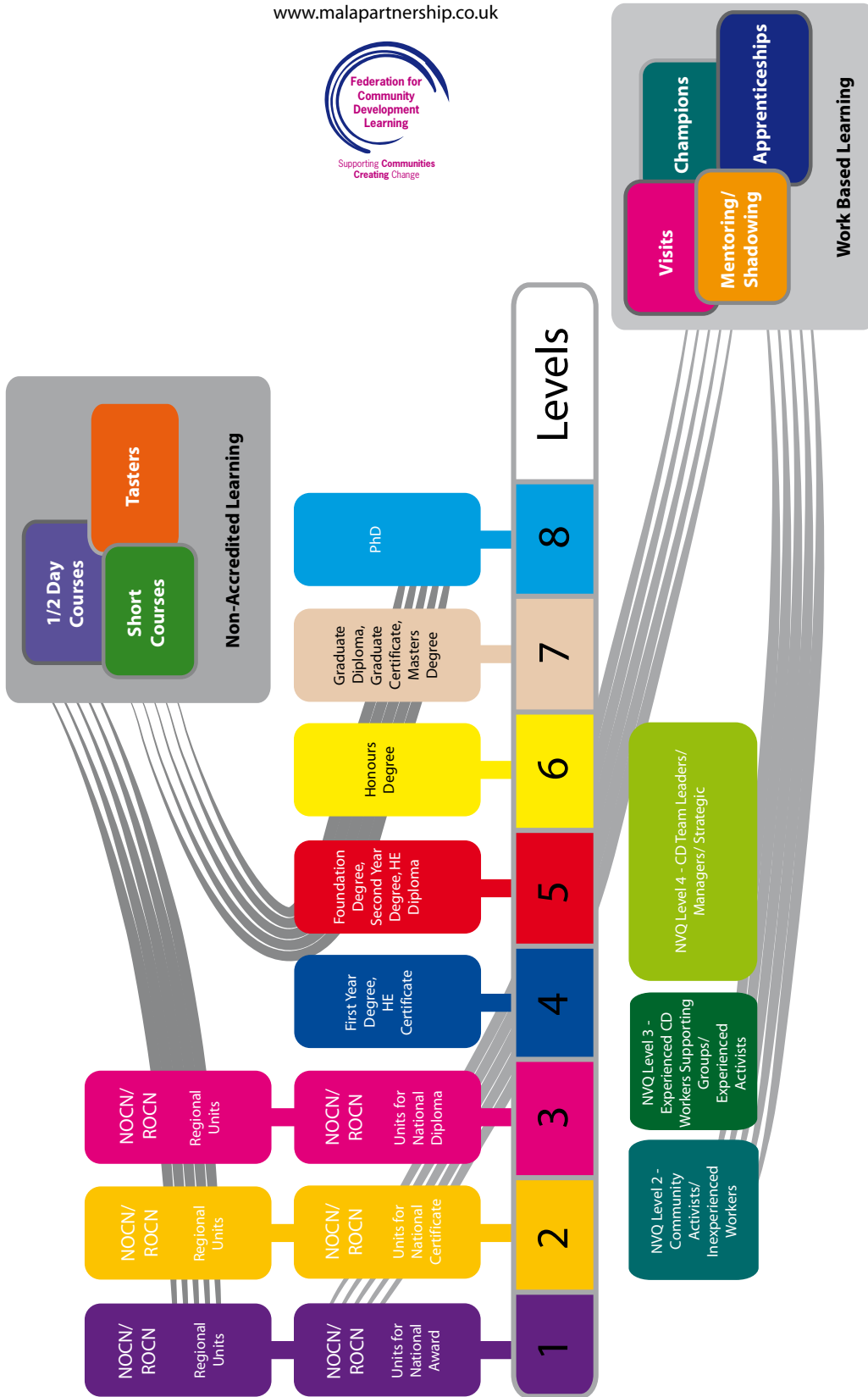
The aim of the framework map is to enable people who come into community development from varied backgrounds, with different levels of expertise in community work, to work out what their learning needs are and how best to meet them. The framework can be thought of as a climbing frame rather than a ladder, as it enables people to work out their own pathways and progression routes to suit their individual learning needs at a particular point in their lives.

in this section there are examples of progression routes in health, sustainable development and sustainable communities.

The map on the next page relates to the different CDW learning and qualification opportunities to the national qualifications framework for England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Community Development Work Learning and Qualifications Framework

Framework



Concept and design by Mala Partnership 2006
www.malpartnership.co.uk



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DETAILS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK COURSES

Tasters are usually short sessions and they can be delivered at different levels to suit different needs. They are often 2-3 hours in duration and aim to introduce a particular topic. The Federation for Community Development Learning has a number of resource packs for 3-hour tasters. See www.fcdl.org.uk for more details.



Day Courses often cover topics in greater depth than tasters. They are either open courses or sessions tailored for particular organisations

Short Courses There are many different non-accredited short courses available, often about capacity building of organisations but sometimes about working in the community. Some of these will be using a community development approach.

Workplace learning and learning through doing

There is a growing array of different ways to encourage people to develop their skills and knowledge in community development. These can run from apprenticeship schemes, through to mentoring, action learning sets, visits to other projects to shadowing an experienced worker. These can be organised in-house or between organisations. They may have some links to qualifications - some apprenticeships schemes link to NVQ's while others link to postgraduate diplomas provided by colleges.



National Open College Network (NOCN) Programmes

The National Open College Network provide nationally recognised awards in community development at levels 1, 2 and 3 with prescribed mandatory and optional units that participants need to complete in order to gain their award, certificate or diploma.

Level 1 Award:

Mandatory Units:

- Understanding Community Development Work
- Community Development Work Skills
- Reflective Community Work Practice

Plus one option from:

Policy and Decision Making, Understanding Meetings, Government and Community, Community Group Work Skills

Level 2 Certificate and Level 3 Certificate:

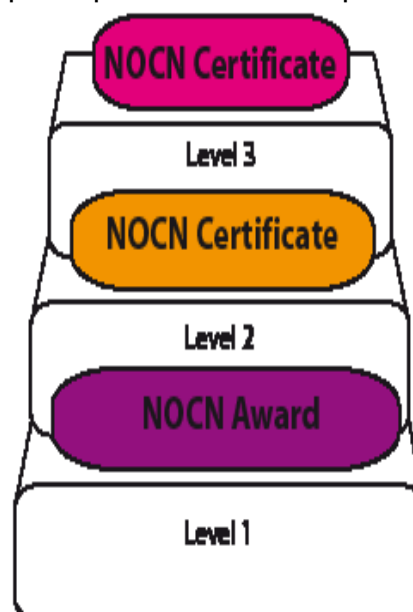
Mandatory Units:

- Reflective Community Development Work Practice
- Practice and Principles in Community Development Work
- Social Justice

Plus 3 optional units at level 2 and 4 optional units at level 3 from the following list:

Effective Partnership Working, Monitoring and Evaluation, Publicity Skills, Involving People in CD, Planning for Community Groups, Group Work Skills, Developing Community Organisations, Identifying Needs in Communities, Neighbourhood Regeneration, Representing a Community of Interest or Identity, Sustainable Environmental Development, Sustainable Communities, Engaging Communities - Improving Health, Health Inequalities.

The units can be taken individually or as part of a regional programme as well.



NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications)

These offer people already engaged in community development an opportunity to gain a qualification on the basis of their paid or voluntary work. In community development there are 3 Levels for NVQs which relate to the roles that people undertake:

Level 2: For people who have become active in their community, whether that is defined as a community of interest or a geographical area. They are working within a community or group in an assisting or supporting role.

Level 3: For people experienced in community development work, with more than one network or group, working in neighbourhood and/or issues-based groups or communities of interest, on their own initiative and providing support for other paid or unpaid workers.

Level 4: For people with many years experience of working with communities; responsible for a team or project; involved with district and sub-regional level or working regionally and nationally; responsible for monitoring and evaluation of policy development and implementation.

Higher Education

The courses given on this diagram are examples and are not intended as a comprehensive guide to what individual courses are available.

Level 8 - PhD

Level 7 - Masters Degree: MA in Community Development, MSC in Organisation and Community Development, MSC in Health and Community Development

Level 6 - Honours Degree: BA in Community Development; BA in Education and Community Development

Level 5 - Foundation Degree: Urban Regeneration and Community Development; Individual & Community Empowerment

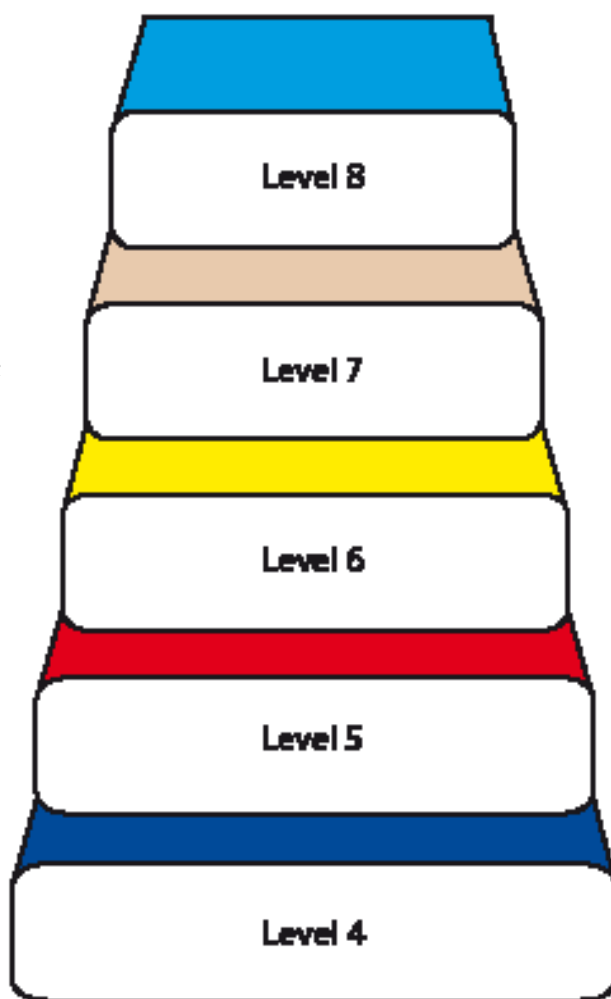
Level 4 - HE Certificate: in Community Development City and Guilds Level 4 - higher level professional diploma*
This programme contains 21 units within 3 categories - mandatory, options A and options B. Candidates take 6 mandatory units and 3 from each of the options list.

Mandatory List:

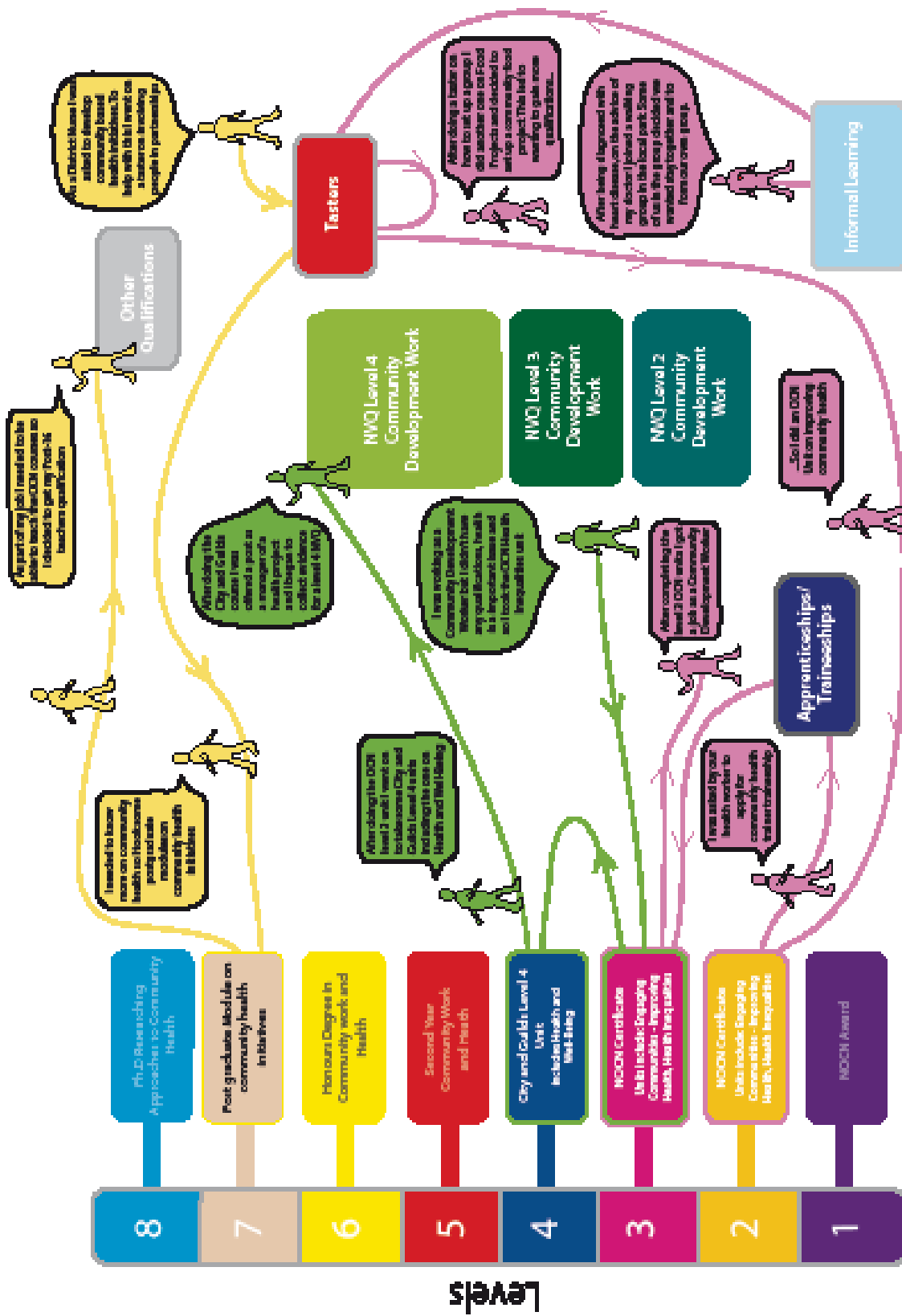
Reflective Practice
Values and Principles
Understanding Community Work
Welfare and Social Policy
Working Collectively
Research and Evaluation

The optional units available are:

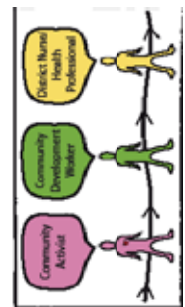
Managing a Community Development Project, Funding and Resources, Financial Management, Organisational Capacity Building, Legal Frameworks, Marketing and Publicity, Sustainable Communities, Government Working, Diversity and Equality, Neighbourhood Regeneration, Informal Learning, Health and Well-Being, CD Work with Families and Young People, CD and Globalisation, Partnership Working, Involving People Through Creative Techniques, Health Inequalities, Community Development and Environmental Action, Engaging Communities – Improving Health, Participatory budgeting.



USING THE FRAMEWORK - HEALTH



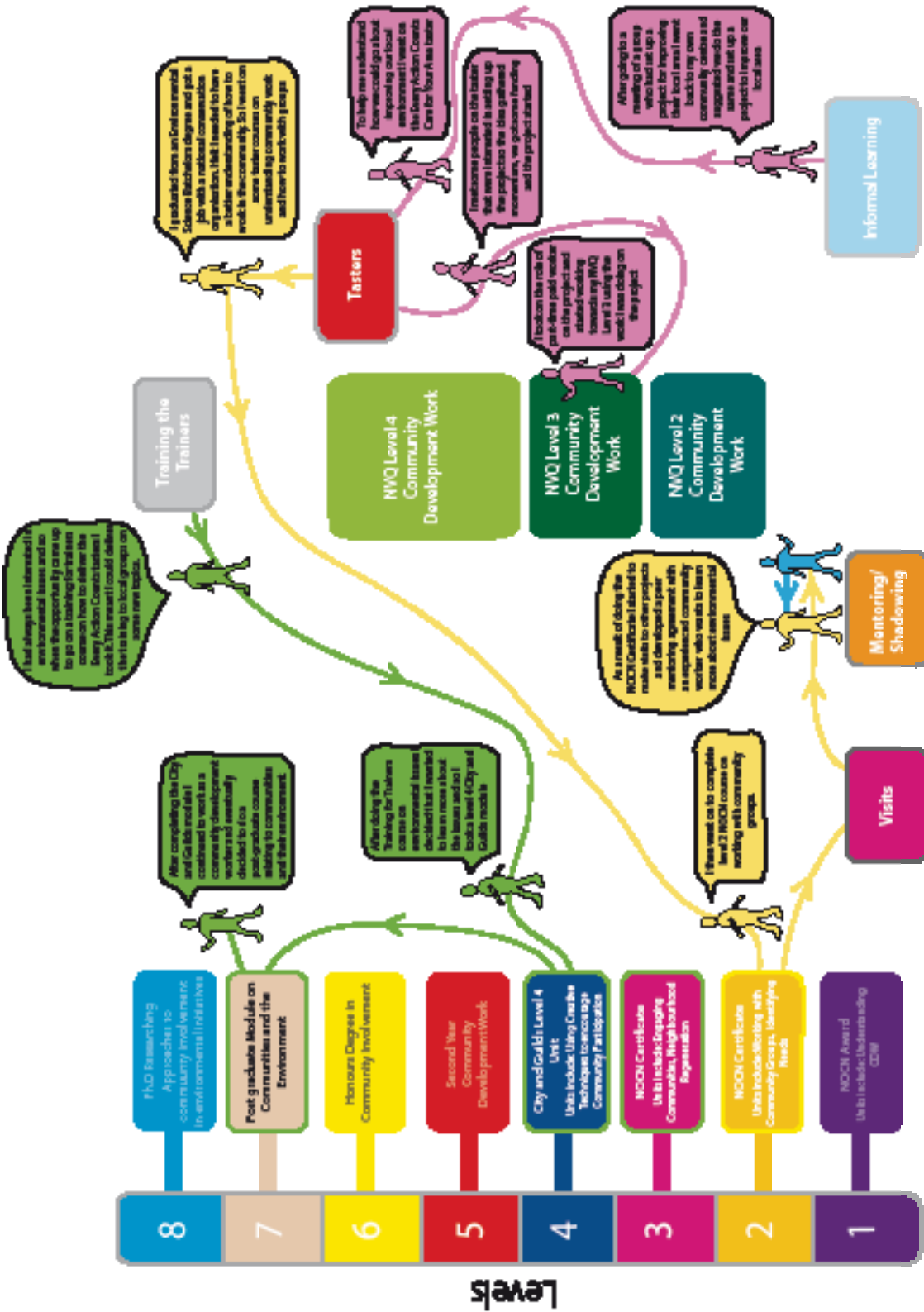
Community Development Work Learning and Qualifications Framework
Progression Routes - Health Examples



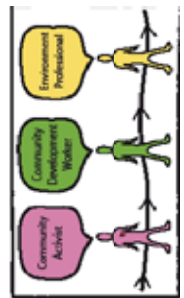
Concept and Design By Mala Partnership
www.malapartnership.co.uk



USING THE FRAMEWORK – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



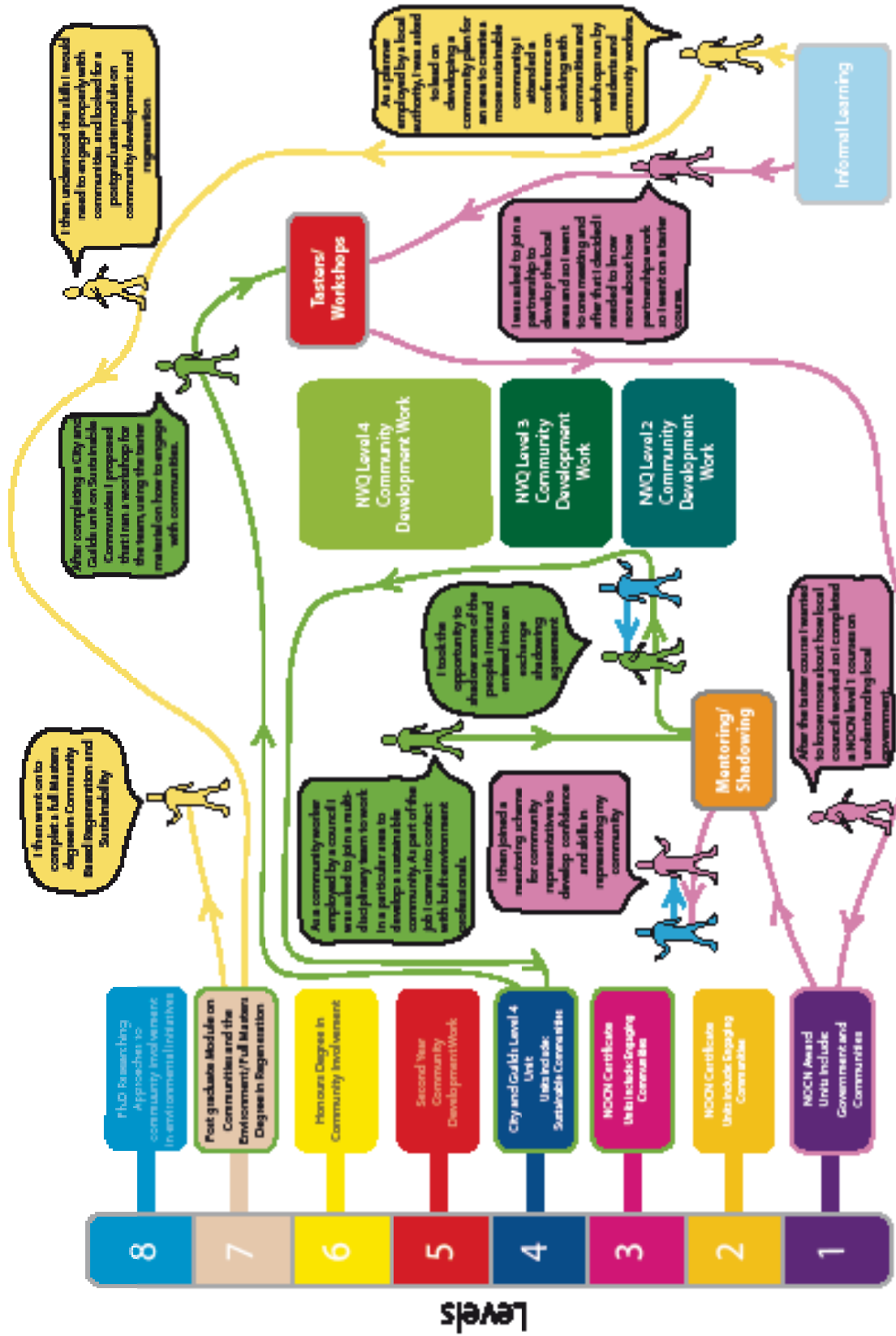
Community Development Work Learning and Qualifications Framework
Progression Routes - Sustainable Development Examples



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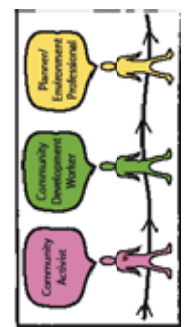


USING THE FRAMEWORK - SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

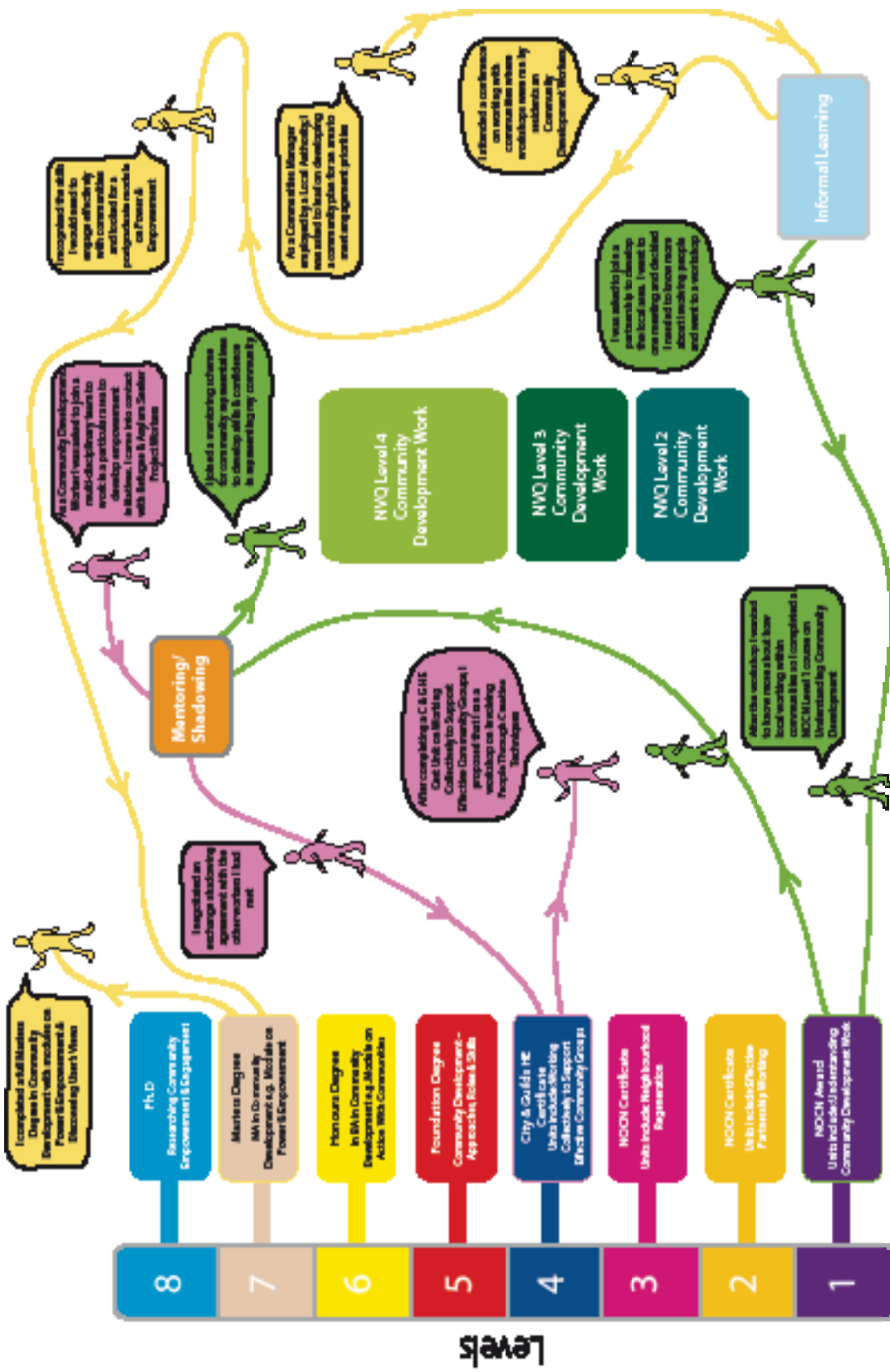


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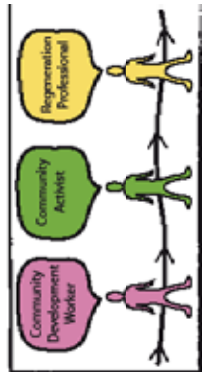
Community Development Work Learning and Qualifications Framework Progression Routes - Sustainable Communities Examples



USING THE FRAMEWORK – COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community Development Work Learning and Qualifications Framework
Progression Routes - Community Empowerment & Community Engagement



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UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT LEVELS WITHIN EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Community development workers, whether employed or activists, are often unsure about what kind of training and qualifications would suit them best. One of the points that people need to think about is what level they want to aim for in their courses or award programmes. All education in England (and Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland) have grouped all the kinds of learning and qualifications into levels. Each level has a description to explain it. The following level descriptors are taken from 'The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland' QCA 2004. In Scotland there is a different set of levels.

Entry

Entry-level qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building basic knowledge and skills and is not geared towards specific occupations.

Qualifications are offered at Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3, in a range of subjects, such as confidence building, listening skills, assertiveness; some of the community work taster would fit into here (see the list in the resource section)

Level 1

Level 1 qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision. Learning at this level is about activities which mostly relate to everyday situations and may be linked to job competence.

Example Qualifications– the NOCN award¹ in Community Development Work; regional OCN units in appropriate subjects such as working in a group

Level 2

'Level 2 qualifications recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of a subject area of work or study, and to perform varied tasks with some guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building knowledge and/or skills in relation to an area of work or a subject area and is appropriate for many job roles.'

Example Qualifications– the NOCN certificate in Community Development Work; regional OCN units in appropriate subjects such as Understanding Community Groups

Level 3

'Level 3 qualifications recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant apply, a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills. It is appropriate for people wishing to go to university, people working independently or in some areas, supervising and training others in their field of work.'

Example Qualifications– the NOCN certificate in Community Development Work; regional OCN units in appropriate subjects such as involving people in communities

Level 4

'Level 4 qualifications recognise specialist learning and involve detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study. Learning at this level is appropriate for people working in technical and professional jobs, and/or managing and developing others.'

Example Qualifications– the City and Guilds Higher level Diploma in Community Development Work.

¹ Full details of the NOCN awards and certificates are found earlier in this section

Level 5

Level 5 qualifications recognise the ability to increase the depth of knowledge and understanding of an area of work or study to enable the formulation of solutions and responses to complex problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the demonstration of high levels of knowledge, a high level of work expertise in job roles and competence in managing and training others. Qualifications at this level are appropriate for people working as higher grade technicians, professionals or managers. Level 5 qualifications are at a level equivalent to intermediate Higher Education qualifications such as Diplomas of Higher Education, Foundation and other degrees that do not typically provide access to postgraduate programmes.

Example Qualifications - Diploma in Community Work and Regeneration.

Level 6

Level 6 qualifications recognise a specialist high level knowledge of an area of work or study to enable the use of an individual's own ideas and research in response to complex problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the achievement of a high level of professional knowledge and is appropriate for people working as knowledge-based professionals or in professional management positions. Level 6 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Bachelors degrees with honours, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas.

Example Qualifications – Community Work and Health degree

Level 7

Level 7 qualifications recognise highly developed and complex levels of knowledge which enable the development of in-depth and original responses to complicated and unpredictable problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the demonstration of high level specialist professional knowledge and is appropriate for senior professionals and managers. Level 7 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.

Example Qualifications - Diploma in Community Work. MA in Community Development.

Level 8 Level 8 qualifications recognise leading experts or practitioners in a particular field. Learning at this level involves the development of new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.

Example Qualifications – Doctorate in a specialist area of community development work

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IDENTIFYING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - USING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

There are many different courses run by college and universities, workshops, work based learning, vocational awards, and informal learning through visits and mentoring. How is a Community Development Worker to sort out what they need to be better at doing their work?

The Community Development Work National Occupational Standards - CDW NOS for short! can be used to support Community Development Workers and practitioners to identify their learning and development needs. Using the standards as a good practice reference can help improve practice within current work roles and support career progression.

Step 1: Identify area for development

Consider:

- The Community Development Work key roles and values that are core to the post holder's role.
- Other work that is important to the post, (e.g. local or regional issues affecting communities).
- Policy or other objectives, which the post contributes to.
- The future plans or strategies for the wider organisation.

Step 2: Identify relevant parts of the CDW NOS that the role may relate to

Identify the units relevant to the tasks performed in the post:

- For the CDW NOS go through the list of key roles, A - F, using them as a checklist. Choose the key role areas (example F) and units (F4) relevant to the functions of the job.
- Check whether any other sets of NOS are also relevant to the role. A list of all available NOS is available from www.ukstandards.org
- Consider whether any generic standards such as management and leadership are relevant to the job.
- Use supervision or appraisal sessions between the worker and manager to consider the general development needs of the post. Are there any areas skills, knowledge or competences that have been identified by the worker as areas they would like to develop in order to build their career?

Step 3: Assess competence

- Consider the main roles of the current work and see if any of the units can be used as references to help to assess how confident or competent the worker feels in each area. The following categories could be used.
- Very confident - Confident - Some experience - No experience
- In the areas you would like to develop look through the performance standards for the relevant unit. Use this to support the worker to identify any specific areas where they need to develop competences. Keep a record of the options for how the worker can be supported in achieving this.

- Look at the underpinning knowledge criteria for the unit. Are there particular areas where you could support the development of the workers knowledge and skills?

Step 4: Plan ways to meet learning and development needs

A key step in developing learning and development plans is to establish a process that can cater for the different needs of individual workers bringing in specific strengths and needs. The process needs to be responsive to the varied learning needs and preferred development strategies of individual workers.

Once you have decided which areas of the CDW NOS the worker (s) would like to meet you can begin think about how to meet their learning and development needs. Together you may need to research a number of options in meeting these needs. You may need to research a number of options in meeting these needs. Learning and development needs are likely to fall into two categories:

- Knowledge
- Skills

Knowledge

Ways to develop knowledge could include:

- Shadowing experienced practitioners, receiving coaching,
- Attending training courses¹ / workshops / seminars
- Exchange visits to other projects / organisations or networks in similar or contrasting community settings.
- Mentoring making contact with workers or activist with experiences that can help fill gaps in knowledge.
- Attending networking events and conferences linking community development to emerging policy areas. Look out for events organised by:
 - The Federation for Community Development Learning FCDL 0114 273 9391 www.fcdl.org.uk
 - The Community Development Exchange (CDX) 0114 2701 1718 www.cdx.org.uk
 - Community Development Foundation (CDF) 020 7833 1772 www.cdf.org.uk

Skills

Ways to develop professional competence in community development practice could include:

- Specific project or development work aimed at introducing new areas of practice and experience.
- Identifying work that provides opportunities to explore new ways of working, which can be applied to a wider variety of situations.
- Identifying opportunities to reflect on and share what others do as Community Development workers in order to learn more about themselves and the work itself. This will involve opportunities for challenge and change.

Step 5: Learning and Development Plan

Once you have assessed the learning and development needs for each worker and identified ways of meeting them you should have the ingredients for a plan.

¹ See diagram in this section for the range of training courses in the national framework

A learning and development plan can include the following:

- Learning and development activity. What specific learning and development is needed in order to support improved skills and knowledge for effective community development practice?
- Performance standard to be met. What are the outcomes needed in terms of reflecting the CDW NOS key roles and practice principles?
- Resources. In identifying strategies to support development it's important to remember to commit money, time and organisational policies and procedures to support this. Have a budget to establish realistic boundaries within the plan.
- Timescales. Negotiate and set a realistic timeframe to support the achievement of stated learning development targets or outcomes.
- Evaluation. Think about how to monitor and evaluate progress. Use knowledge and understanding criteria's as a reference for setting indicators of achievement.

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LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE – WHAT'S IT WORTH?

Introduction

Accreditation of Prior [Experiential] Learning (AP[E]L) is based on the principles of lifelong and life-wide education, which recognises that people learn in a variety of ways, in formal, non-formal and informal settings throughout their lifetimes and that credits should be awarded for learning that is demonstrated as relevant and appropriate.

I have put the (E) for Experiential in brackets, because sometimes applicants wish to seek accreditation for Prior Certificated Learning (sometimes referred to APCL) and other times they look for accreditation for learning from experience.

Accreditation for Certificated, Non-Certificated and Experiential Learning will depend upon the relevance of the topic to the course against which accreditation is sought. Applicants for a course will need to demonstrate that their learning is at a level similar to that of the course against which they are seeking an AP[E]L claim.

AP[E]L is becoming increasingly recognised and accepted by formal educational institutions. It is appropriate for any accredited course, but is restricted to those who have already gained some experience in the area.

AP[E]L and Community Development

Whilst it is not restricted to Community Development education and training, it endorses similar values to those of Community Development work and hence could be more widely adopted by the awarding bodies of Community Development work training and education programmes.

AP[E]L can make an important contribution to community development education and training as it is firmly rooted in Freirian principles of 'starting where the learner is' and 'recognising and valuing learners' experiences'.

It can significantly enhance reflective practice (another Community Development practice principle), through encouraging participants to reflect on their practice and the learning that they have gained through it.

For many Community Development workers, it has potential to short-circuit the meandering and often circular paths of training and education, by using knowledge that they have gained through experience or other courses, to gain credits towards or exemption from all or part of a current course. The emphasis is on the learner to produce evidence of learning that is relevant and appropriate to the level at which they are currently studying. However, course tutors, formal education providers and awarding bodies need to ensure that policies and practices of their organisations allow for and indeed encourage applicants to make AP[E]L claims.

Developing AP[E]L structures

In order to devise an AP[E]L approach to a course, trainers and educators must decide what is it that they want participants to know or understand by the end of the course. This is often called 'learning outcomes' or 'objectives'. (Here you can be as restrictive and specific as you need to be).

However, if the course you are devising requires you to specify the evidence to demonstrate this learning outcome, you are advised to be more creative in your approach. (Think 'how might a student demonstrate this?' as opposed to 'what makes my life simpler as a tutor, for marking and ensuring that the majority of students complete?' Remember, you don't have to restrict evidence to written work; it could be oral, practical, etc).

It is at this point in the design of a course, that you need to be quite broad, in order to facilitate learners to make use of various work experiences that they might have. For example, if your course is Project Management, and one of the learning outcomes is to demonstrate an understanding of one project management tool, an AP[E]L applicant might submit as evidence a SWOT analysis that they had carried out for their organisation/team.

The evidence should be accompanied by a written account, which will help:

1. Establish its validity i.e. that the applicant is actually the person who has carried out the SWOT analysis;
2. Demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the process.

The downside of AP[E]L is that it can be more time-consuming for tutor and student, than the typical taught course.

- Participants often need time to understand that they're really in the driving seat – they have the knowledge and experience required.
- It can sometimes be difficult for them to figure out what they have actually learnt from a particular experience and how to put together the AP[E]L evidence and claim.
- It requires tutors to come out of their comfort zone and be more open-minded about the range of evidence for learning and be more creative in designing courses. They need to have a reasonable understanding of how credits and levels of learning are awarded to your programme.
- If a student wants to make a claim for prior certificated learning (APL), tutors will need to be familiar with the broad range of courses available in the field. However, they do not need to know the content and level of each and every course – the onus is on the student to provide this information, against which the tutor can judge whether it is appropriate and relevant to the claim. For an example of how this works in practice, go to the case-study following this article.

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Case Study

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE – CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE!

Introduction

Negotiating a pathway through Community Development education and training courses has, for a long time, been a difficult and often circular process for many paid and non-paid community workers. Whilst many courses welcome and draw upon the experiences that participants bring to these courses, they are generally unable to give credit for this learning (certificated and non-certificated).

The BSc (Hons) Community Development in the University of Ulster

This is a part-time degree for those engaged in community and voluntary work practice. Level One of the programme has been franchised out to several colleges of Further and Higher Education throughout the province. Participants who complete the Level One Programme (Certificate in Higher Education in Community Development and Education / Leadership) are eligible to gain a place on the Bsc (Hons) Community Development at the University. The Level One programme normally takes two years (one day per week study) to complete and then a further three years (one day per week study) is required to complete the degree.

The Community Development Team at the University of Ulster were faced several years ago with a number of community development workers and activists seeking application directly onto the BSc (Hons) Community Development Degree (Level Two). These applicants had completed a plethora of community-based courses, often at Open College Network Level Three or similar and had many years experience working in the sector. Having had some experience in running AP(E)L (Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning) courses, I was keen to give these applicants the opportunity to gain credits for the learning that they have gained from their experience of working in the community and voluntary sector.

I therefore designed an AP(E)L taught module within the university, which enables participants to develop an understanding of how to build a portfolio, how to critically reflect on their learning experiences in the community and voluntary sector and how their previously acquired certificated learning can contribute towards their portfolio.

The course has been run over ten weeks (one evening per week) as well as an intensive one week full-time programme. Both modes have been successful, each creating their own dynamics. As every participant has a very individualised profile, space is made within the programme for one-to-one advice with tutors.

All participants must demonstrate that they have met the core learning outcomes of the Level One Programme, either through certificated or experiential learning. In addition, participants must demonstrate learning in three other areas of Community Development education and training. The National Occupational Standards in Community Development Work (Level Four) are taken as guidelines for participants to detail their experiential learning in the occupation.

Since September 2005, sixty participants have successfully completed the AP(E)L module and portfolio and in September 2006, twenty-two participants entered the BSc (Hons) Community Development through this route. There are currently approximately eighteen participants completing this year and whom we are expecting to enrol onto the degree in September 2007.

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