





Working in partnership with the Community and Voluntary Sector

The voluntary sector in the UK is complex and dynamic, ever changing to meet the needs of society and growing at a significant rate as an employer and provider of services. For FE or HE education providers there are many benefits of working in partnership with the community and voluntary sector as they often have links with grassroots communities and access to learners and families who are currently under-represented in higher education. This is an important consideration for widening participation to life long learning.

i DfES funded EDuce for a research and development project in Hampshire, Sandwell and Wigan that explored the opportunities and implications for the voluntary sector and the LSC of the new learning and skills agenda. This report is a useful resource for working in partnership.

 EDuce (2001), *Mutual Advantage: Working with the community and voluntary organisations on learning and skills*, available online, accessed 2015:

 For a copy of this report, and details of case studies and resources:
<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/3677>

Where to start?

Making that first step can often be a bewildering prospect in terms of who is the best person to contact. To gain that initial advice there are a number of organisations you can approach:

- i** Council of Voluntary Services (CVS) – they can usually give you an informed idea of which groups you could approach depending on your target group
- i** Racial Equality Council (REC) - they should be able to give you advice about active community groups working with Black and minority ethnic groups

Who belongs to the Community & Voluntary Sector?

The community and voluntary sector tends to be divided under the following headings:

- **Faith groups:** for example, mosques, churches, temples etc
- **Specific communities:** for example, African Caribbean group, Bangladeshi group
- **Issue based groups:** who for example work on women's issues, disability issues, families, specific health issues, political groups etc
- **Local Groups:** serving a local ward / area e.g. community centres, neighbourhood housing groups
- i** Often community groups meet up for Network meetings or form voluntary / community forums, which can be local, or Lancashire wide – contact your local CVS to find out what is in your area.

Key issues for consideration when working in partnership:

- ✓ Community politics – individuals can sometimes act as gatekeepers, ensure you communicate clearly your agenda and the benefits to the community organisation
- ✓ Sharing the power within partnerships – this includes decision making, funding, and development
- ✓ Long-term investment of time and resources are required to develop meaningful trust with community groups – this needs planning into your programme of activities.
- ✓ Building relationships - staff are generally employed on a short term and often on a part-time basis due to funding limitations, this can lead to a high staff turnover – be aware that the steps discussed above may need to be repeated.
- ✓ Be prepared to get involved in community initiatives that may not at first be primarily about access into FE and HE
- ✓ Regularly update community partners. In contrast to the community and voluntary sector, decisions can often take a long time within FE and HE. The community and voluntary sector are not always aware of the processes and systems that your institution is going through, therefore it is important to keep the community group regularly informed to maintain their interest and commitment to working together.

Resources and Further Information:

Lancashire Aimhigher



Briefing Sheet 1: Engaging Families



Briefing Sheet 7: Working with Families in the Community & Voluntary Sector



For further details about Community Access Programme's work with families, see FAHED and LIME projects for further details



<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fss/projects/edres/cap/projects/completed/lime.htm>

Action On Access:



Action on Access is able to provide a summary of all family related activities, some of which are undertaken in partnership with community and voluntary sector that include contact details.



Action on Access (2005) has produced a series of case studies in 10 booklets. The case studies show the impact of Aimhigher projects and activities in England. Two of these booklets include family related activities:



Work with specific widening participation target groups



http://actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files_mf/resources_workwithspecificwidening.doc



Engagement of parents and carers



http://actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files_mf/engagement.pdf accessed 2015



For a summary of Lancashire Aimhigher's Working with Families p 17 – 20 and Families And Higher Education Decision-making FAHED project see pages 32 - 34

Campaign for Learning

- ① Campaign for learning includes a strand of work that relates to families and learning

 <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/index.asp>

- ① Since 1998, Campaign For Learning has co-ordinated family learning festival that takes place in early October. This can provide an excellent focus for working in partnership with the community. For further details:

 <http://familylearningfestival.com/>

National Institute Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE)

- ① NIACE worked with Ofsted to identify a series of good practice examples in family learning

 <http://tinyurl.com/NIACE-OFSTED-Family-Learning>

National Family Learning Network

The National Family Learning Network involves leading family learning organisations and their website hosts resources, funding opportunities and ideas for practitioners and families to encourage learning in the family.

 <http://www.familylearningnetwork.com/>

My Story

This EU funded intergenerational project holds a series of video clips with young people interviewing older people about key events in their lives. A useful resource of history projects and an example of an activity in which to involve families.

 <http://www.mystories.eu/project/>

MiGEN

An intergenerational project based in Lancashire offering opportunities for intergenerational learning and chance for local schools to get involved as well as individual families.

 <http://www.mi-gen.co.uk/> or follow them on Twitter <https://twitter.com/MIGenCIC>

If you have examples of family learning or activities involving families supporting their young people in considering higher education then please get in touch.

Prepared on behalf of Lancashire Aimhigher

For further information about working with families, or copies of other briefing sheets, contact:

 Lancaster University, Department of Educational Research, REAP,
Lancaster, LA1 4YD  01524 592907

 Ann-Marie Houghton: a.houghton@lancaster.ac.uk



Reference for this paper: **Updated 2015**

Sethi, J., Houghton, A. (2007) 'Working in Partnership with the Community and Voluntary Sector' *Aimhigher Lancashire Families Briefing Papers*

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/Documents/Briefing%20Sheet%206.pdf>