

WOLVERHAMPTON CITY LEARNING REGION

Learning and Place: An assessment of the status of Lifelong Learning in the voluntary and community sector in Wolverhampton



Commissioned by



Undertaken in partnership with the Centre for Lifelong Learning



Lifelong Learning is key to both economic development and social cohesion, and whilst governments play a key role in establishing overall strategy, it is at regional and sub-regional level that different sectors (educational agencies, businesses, the third sector) can effectively work together to create a culture of lifelong learning that can help deliver social and economic transformation. That is the core rationale for the **Wolverhampton City Learning Region** initiative that the University of Wolverhampton is actively supporting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The University of Wolverhampton's Education Observatory, which sits in its Institute of Education (IOE), has commissioned this study, working in collaboration with the University's Centre for Lifelong Learning, to support development of the Wolverhampton City Learning Region initiative. Thanks is given to all of the voluntary and community organisations who took part in this study including City of Wolverhampton Council, Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, Wolverhampton Learning Platform - Bilston Resource Centre and the Refugee and Migrant Centre. Additional thanks is given to local adult learners who gave consent to be included in the photographs taken at TLC College, Gatis Community Space and Bilston Resource Centre.

© 2019 University of Wolverhampton

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sheila Collett was commissioned to undertake this study on behalf of the University, she has over 20 years experience of managing multi-million pound regeneration programmes across the West Midlands with a particular focus on complex partnership working within diverse community settings. Sheila has a passion for working with local communities and has worked extensively with community and voluntary sector groups in Wolverhampton whilst Head of Neighbourhood Services with the City of Wolverhampton Council. Throughout her career she has utilised her expertise to support regeneration and community initiatives across the UK and internationally including expert panel visits to Spain, Northern Ireland, Greece and Estonia.

For more information about the Wolverhampton City Learning Region

W: www.wlv.ac.uk/learningregions

E: LearningRegions@wlv.ac.uk

Twitter: @LearningRegions





FOREWORD

In the last decade across the world, cities and city regions have recognised the benefits of bringing together education institutions, businesses, civil society and faith organisations to enrich a culture of learning. Together they create sub-regional partnerships to make a difference to social and economic prosperity and well-being through co-operative learning and skills initiatives. UNESCO's Institute of Lifelong Learning hosts the Global Network of Learning Cities, enabling more than 200 member cities and city regions to share experiences on how best to do this.

In 2017 an initiative hosted by the University of Wolverhampton agreed to create a Wolverhampton City Learning Region to make a difference to the lives and prospects of the people we serve. The initiative includes civic leaders, LEPs, businesses and the voluntary sector across the region. Agreement was reached on the need for the initiative to focus both on where people live and work, rather than local authority boundaries, thus the term city region.

The challenges we face are considerable. Whilst we have some globally recognised high-skill companies, we have above average numbers of adults with no qualifications, above average adult unemployment and above average numbers of low or medium skilled jobs. There are high numbers of people with disabilities and low numbers progressing to higher education. At the same time, there are continued pressures on local government budgets and on voluntary and community sector finances. Nevertheless, there is also much to celebrate in an area with high levels of pride in the region and a willingness to work together. We want to create a city learning region where the full diversity of communities can thrive, aspire and achieve, where we can effectively promote gender equity and inclusion, and where learning leads to secure and well-rewarded jobs and improved quality of life.

The work of the University of Wolverhampton's Education Observatory, which sits in its Institute of Education (IOE) is regional, national and international – but its focus is to bring the benefits of its research to enrich the region.

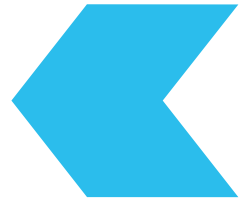
This study of lifelong learning in the voluntary and community organisations in Wolverhampton, is supported by the Education Observatory. It complements national quantitative studies on adult participation in learning, and a range of regionally focused studies working with IOE's academy chain, Education Central Multi Academy Trust (ECMAT), and its local University Technical Colleges (UCTs), as well as evaluation studies on Wolverhampton City HeadStart.

The scale of the challenge in making learning the heart of regeneration is highlighted in this report completed by Sheila Collett. Voluntary, community and faith organisations are of key importance in reaching groups under-represented in education provision, and reaching people who had poor (or no) experience of earlier education. It highlights the strength of the city's voluntary sector, the Learning Platform, but also points to the challenges of short-term funding, common end dates for current funding support and the narrowing of support to labour-market related activities. It also points to the marked shortage of opportunities to learn English for speakers of other languages. It identifies the need for more provision for the rapidly growing number of older people, and calls for better data to capture who is and who isn't served by our current patchwork of services.

We are grateful to Sheila and the Learning Regions team for undertaking the work so efficiently, and would welcome expressions of interest from readers who would be willing to help to develop the work of the Wolverhampton City Learning Region.

Professor Sir Alan Tuckett
University of Wolverhampton IOE, and member Wolverhampton City Learning Region initiative.





CONTENTS

08	Executive Summary
10	Introduction
11	Background
12	Methodology
14	Key findings
15	Learning Provision
19	Learning Experience
22	Learning Participation
24	Key Funding Issues
26	Gaps in Provision
28	Conclusion
29	Recommendations
30	Appendices
32	References





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research has been commissioned by the University of Wolverhampton to inform the development of the Wolverhampton City Learning Region (WCLR) initiative. The report provides a snapshot of the existing lifelong learning offered by the community and voluntary sectors in Wolverhampton for the 18+ age group. This is presented as a broad picture of provision at a fixed point in time, rather than a comprehensive mapping of every provider and their data on learning participants. This has enabled a swift analysis of the patterns of participation, the nature of the learning experience, the funding position and the identification of any gaps that exist in current provision.

The research was undertaken in late 2017 and utilised a methodology of on-line mapping and a small number of interviews with key providers.

The initial analysis of the information demonstrates:

Learning Experience

- The voluntary and community sector provide a rich learning resource for the city offering a **breadth** of formal, informal and non-formal learning.
- The sector has a particularly strong role to play in providing **informal learning and non-formal learning** for the city and its residents and in preparing residents for formal learning.
- The voluntary and community sector provide the city with a wide variety of physical bases for learning within a community setting.
- The sector excels in offering **accessible, non-intimidating and culturally sensitive learning** across a large geographical footprint of the city whilst also providing a base for learning for use by statutory providers.

Patterns of participation

- There is a **geographical focus** of provision within the city centre and its immediate surroundings. Some of the most deprived areas of the city including Whitmore Reans and Bilston also have clusters of provision with a strong focus on learning as a route to employment.
- **Gender** - there is some specific targeted training tailored to females including culturally sensitive training and one example of male specific training. Some variation in take-up by males and females was highlighted where sector specific training is undertaken.

- **Ethnicity** - a number of organisations have a specific focus on BME communities and some funding regimes require this focus. The profile of users also tends to depend upon the diversity of their location. The barrier of language was raised by a number of providers in terms of take-up of learning. ESOL provision takes place within a number of providers as well as specific provision for refugee and migrants and in one case provision specifically for the Polish community.
- In terms of **social class** a large proportion of the learning is targeted exclusively to unemployed and economically inactive residents. This is influenced by both the mission and aims of the organisations delivering the training and the requirements of funding streams. The main exceptions to this are organisations that are largely delivering through volunteering and those delivering to retired residents. It should be noted that most organisations do not collect social class data.
- In terms of **age** the focus of much of the learning provided is on the 18-29 year old age group. This includes the majority of provision through Talent Match and IMPACT. There are a smaller number of programmes aimed at the 30+ age group largely funded through the Lottery/ESF programmes. In both cases the focus of this learning is on unemployed/economically inactive residents.

Funding Position

- The sector has become increasingly reliant on **short term funding** which in turn sets fairly narrow outcomes that must be achieved through the learning activities. This in turn has led to an increasing focus on employment related learning with a heavy focus on provision for the unemployed.

- There is a heavy reliance by the majority of providers on a **small number of funding streams**, including specific European funding streams and lottery funds. Many of the funds conclude at a similar time leaving a risk that a wide variety of learning could be lost to the city over a short period if alternative funds are not identified.
- There has been a reduction in some of the earlier **developmental activities** such as capacity building and learning through wider experiences due to the narrower focus of many funding streams.
- **Volunteers** provide a major contribution to lifelong learning in the city. This includes volunteers leading direct learning through organisations such as University of the Third Age and through language cafes at the Light House and volunteers adding extra value to the learning already provided, for example at Bilston Resource Centre and Aspiring Futures.

Key gaps in provision

- Insufficient **ESOL** provision. This has been particularly problematic given the increasing numbers of migrants and refugees in the city. This issue was raised by all interviewees.
- Gaps in provision for **older age groups** including those affected by issues such as redundancy. This was raised as a particular issue for those aged 50+ and for older BME residents. In addition a gap was raised in terms of those not seeking employment in this older age group.
- Insufficient flexibility to offer learning for **smaller groups** within community settings. The restrictions of SFA funding were raised as a particular issue here.
- Support for individuals with **mental health** needs was identified as a key gap.
- Non-employment and **personal development/capacity building** based learning was highlighted as an area that has been lost by some providers.



Recommendations for future research

This research provides a broad snapshot of learning provision and its target groups within Wolverhampton. Further research would be helpful in terms of:

1. Gaining greater data on patterns of participation. This could helpfully include non-employment related learning, where little data is currently collected, as well as social class which is rarely collected by providers. This may require learner surveys.
2. A survey specifically examining the provision of learning through the faith sector may be helpful. This sector is increasingly diversifying its activities to embrace wider learning.
3. Given the proposed focus of WCLR on health and well-being, further research to assess learning provision within health settings may be useful.
4. Research to identify the potential of skill sharing in advancing economic and social development and lifelong learning, including national and international exemplar, may be helpful.

Recommendations to inform future Wolverhampton City Learning Region work

5. The voluntary and community sector faces a precarious funding situation. Identifying ways to embed some of the highest quality provision should be a priority for WCLR.
6. Provision of lifelong learning is not restricted to learning institutions but cuts across arts and cultural venues, faith groups, health providers, unions and many others. It will be important for WCLR to engage across this breadth of providers both in the development stage and in delivery.
7. There are some strong resident facing databases of learning provision already in place in the city. This includes Wolverhampton Information Network and Workbox. The potential to develop these further to represent and promote wider learning could be explored.
8. The sector demonstrates a key strength in terms of its consortia approach as exemplified by Wolverhampton Learning Platform. This is a major asset for the city in terms of securing a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to non-formal and informal learning. This could helpfully be supported by the WCLR initiative.
9. Skill sharing, at all levels, provides a major lifelong learning resource in the city. It is recommended that this concept is considered as a key delivery mechanism across each of the core strands of work.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Wolverhampton, an international expert in lifelong learning, has acted as a catalyst to bring the UNESCO learning city concept to the region and play a key role in developing the Wolverhampton City Learning Region (WCLR) initiative.

The University commissioned this research to provide a study of learning outside of educational institutions and workplace training in Wolverhampton. This report provides an overview of the existing lifelong learning offered by the community and voluntary sector in Wolverhampton. This includes:

- A broad overview of formal, informal and non-formal learning offered by the voluntary and community sector
- Analysis of the key recipients/non-recipients of this learning with particular regard to ethnicity, gender, age and class
- An overview of how participants experience the learning that they engage in, including the nature of the learning environment and the methods of delivery
- An initial assessment of the key funding issues impacting on community and voluntary sector learning provision

The research took place during a six week period in late 2017 and provides a snapshot of provision at that time.

The report concludes with recommendations for future work/research that would support development of the WCLR and some specific recommendations for action to take forward the initiative.



BACKGROUND

The Learning City/Regions concept, as referenced by UNESCO, involves a city which facilitates lifelong learning for all, and therefore helps to realise the universal right to education. In practical terms UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning defines a Learning City as follows:

A Learning City is a city which effectively mobilises its resources in every sector to:

- *promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;*
- *re-vitalise learning in families and communities;*
- *facilitate learning for and in the workplace;*
- *extend the use of modern learning technologies;*
- *enhance quality and excellence in learning; and*
- *foster a culture of learning throughout life.*

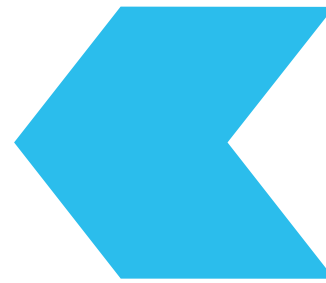
In so doing it will create and reinforce individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development.” (UNESCO 2013).

The University of Wolverhampton has stated its commitment to supporting the development of a City Learning Region in Wolverhampton. This is set out in the partnership ambition for a Learning Region as follows:

Our Partnership Ambition

It is by working in partnership that key sectors can provide and promote learning opportunities to people in the region from all backgrounds. By taking a co-ordinated approach to learning across the region we will be best placed to deliver social and economic transformation. Through partnership working between key sectors, The Wolverhampton City Learning Region seeks to provide a wide range of learning opportunities, both formal and informal, that meet the needs of those that live here and the needs of the wider region...We want to promote the value that learning can bring to the lives of all who live here. Learning Regions partners will be committed to working together to create and promote learning opportunities for everyone, regardless of age, community or background.”

(University of Wolverhampton 2017)



Within this context, alongside the formal learning provided by educational institutions and workplaces, there is a key role for the informal and non-formal learning provided through voluntary and community sector providers as well as through organisations such as the NHS, faith groups, unions, arts and cultural organisations, housing providers and parent support groups.

This research has been commissioned to map this non-educational and workplace learning including patterns of participation, the nature of the learning experience and any gaps in provision that this mapping highlights. This research and its recommendations will form part of the local intelligence informing the development of the Wolverhampton City Learning Region.



METHODOLOGY

The research took a very broad view of provision embracing not only the voluntary and community sector provision but also provision through museums and art galleries, faith groups, unions, health providers, housing providers and parent support initiatives.

A comprehensive mapping of all provision was outside of the scope of this report. The report instead provides a snapshot of lifelong learning activity that is adequately rich and diverse to enable some useful patterns of provision and participation to be identified and some substantiated conclusions to be drawn.

The report examines formal, informal and non-formal learning. For the purposes of this report the following OECD (2005) definitions of these learning types has been used:

Formal learning – this learning can be achieved when a learner follows a programme of instruction in an educational institution or in the workplace. Formal learning is always recognised in a certificate or qualification.

Informal learning – this learning results from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It does not lead to certification.

Non-formal – this learning is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.

The analysis of this learning includes a broad analysis of the reach and nature of this learning specifically in terms of:

- the targeted participants;
- the nature of the learning experience;
- the funding that supports this learning;
- any gaps within current provision;
- the key funding issues currently facing the sector and the impact of recent funding cuts on the learning landscape.

The methodology for this study was applied to on-line research to identify the key providers in the city and to assess the scale and nature of their current provision.

The extensive data available on-line enabled data to be collected on a total of 51 learning providers. It should however be noted that whilst this includes the key learning providers within the city, the broad nature of informal and non-formal learning means there will be many other places within which this type of learning occurs including family settings and public meeting spaces.

Whilst this is outside of the scope of this research it remains a vital part of the wider lifelong learning picture and should form part of the City Learning Region delivery route if full lifelong learning opportunities are to be developed.



A concise assessment of each of the 51 organisations was undertaken in terms of their learning provision. This document is available separately to support future work or research along with links to relevant websites and contact details to assist any future networking/analysis. A database has also been developed (available separately) which includes:

- organisation mission, focus and type;
- learning location and target groups;
- how learning is experienced;
- key funding streams

Finally, a number of in-depth face-to-face interviews were undertaken with a small number of key agencies and providers. They provide richer detail and depth to the analysis of local provision and to probe some of the issues around gaps in provision and the funding outlook. The interviewees included:

- key City of Wolverhampton Council officers who have an overview of the VCS and of community learning provision in the city to cross-check the analysis and identify any gaps in the on-line mapping data;
- the infrastructure lead organisation for the city, Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, to assess both their direct provision and to gain an overview of the funding issues facing the sector and the gaps in provision;
- the Community Skills and Employability Co-ordinator, jointly funded by the City of Wolverhampton Council and Wolverhampton Learning Platform;
- a small number of local providers of learning including: a geographically focussed provider; a specialist provider, an organisation supporting refugees and migrants and a larger project/funding specific provider.

A full list of interviewees is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.





KEY FINDINGS

Learning Provision
Learning Experience
Learning Participation
Key Funding Issues
Gaps in Provision



KEY FINDINGS

The city benefits from a robust and resilient voluntary and community sector offering lifelong learning in most corners of the city.

This is further supplemented by some innovative provision by faith groups, housing providers and some local authority services including museums and archives and parent support services via the Strengthening Families Hubs.

The learning which takes place within communities, and which is largely delivered through the voluntary and community sectors, cuts across formal, informal and non-formal learning types.

This includes provision through a plethora of small, medium and large organisations as well as via volunteers and social networks.

The voluntary and community sector has a key strength in terms of its ability to reach into communities.

This results from the geographical accessibility of many of the community premises as well as the informal and multi-use nature of many of the learning spaces. This helps to ensure familiarity and appeal to local people.

Learning provision

Learning provision through the sector is characterised by:

- A strong focus on **support for the unemployed** with almost half of the providers targeting this group in their provision. This enables bespoke provision to be offered which is tailored to the needs of working age unemployed adults who are actively seeking employment. In many cases this will be narrowed further by age group dependent upon the funding stream. This focus allows improved outcomes in terms of meeting the needs of the target group and providing bespoke support. This is a key strength of the sector. It does however unfortunately significantly reduce the opportunities for interaction across the various social classes, ages and between varying life experiences with the added informal learning that this can bring. The contribution of lifelong learning to social cohesion and social connectedness is, as a result, reduced.

- An immense variation in the **scale of providers**. This ranges from national organisations led by a nationally identified mission and with strong back office support such as the YMCA and Age UK through to small localised organisations established primarily to meet specific local needs. The larger organisations have the advantage of greater capacity to bid for funding and to meet the often stringent requirements of commissioners. It should be noted however that in Wolverhampton the VCS infrastructure organisation, Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, has been instrumental in forming various consortia to enable smaller providers to access more complex and substantial funds to provide services whilst not being burdened with the management and bureaucracy involved in many funding schemes. This has been beneficial in providing a range of funding opportunities to these smaller groups whilst also broadening the learning offer available to residents. For example, Talent Match has developed a supply chain that enables smaller organisations to access funds to deliver their bespoke and sometimes highly specialist services. This supply chain, along with others such as the Impact Programme, offer a potentially useful resource for the city as they offer a ready-made catalogue of local providers that could be built upon further for the Wolverhampton City Learning Region.





KEY FINDINGS CONTINUED

Organisations within the sector have also been instrumental in developing their own consortia in order to strengthen delivery and provide a broader offer to residents. **Wolverhampton Learning Platform** is an excellent example of this approach. This consortia of key voluntary and community sector learning providers in the city includes TLC, Job Change, Access 2 Business, Bilston Resource Centre, YMCA, TOPPS Training and Gloucester Street Community Centre. It was initiated by its members demonstrating the degree of joint working and partnership that exists within the sector. As a consortia the Learning Platform has a wide range of expertise that can be shared to benefit learners and to assist in accessing funding including: support for the unemployed, employed and self-employed; culturally sensitive provision within accessible locations including language support; holistic support; intensive one-to-one mentoring and coaching; supported progression routes onto formal training support and a wide understanding of specific neighbourhoods via its constituent membership. The Learning Platform has plans to further extend this reach to embrace a wider range of delivery partners as well as small grass roots networks such as job clubs. The Learning Platform is a relatively new entity and offers a lot of potential to build on lifelong learning in the city.

It is recommended Wolverhampton Learning Platform be an integral part of development of the WCLR initiative and could usefully form a model for future partnership practice and delivery.



- The sector has a wide range in terms of the **scale of its learning provision**. This ranges from multi-million pound Black Country wide programmes such as Talent Match with a budget of £34 million and an entire supply chain of smaller suppliers to deliver against the programme (led by WVSC) serving residents over a five year period through to small scale, highly targeted, neighbourhood based volunteer led programmes such as the Life Spring Church programmes

providing small scale intensive programmes for small groups of individuals on short term programmes. This enables the sector to deliver against a wide range of needs from complex long term interventions to short term small scale interventions for those requiring a less intensive programme of activity.

The flexibility of the sector to gear itself to these differing needs and scales of interventions coupled with their aptitude for partnership working is a key strength in providing a responsive learning offer. It has also been key to resilience of the sector as has enabled a fast and effective response to the changed funding landscape;



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE OF LARGE SCALE LEARNING PROVISION: TALENT MATCH

Talent Match is funded by the BIG Lottery. Black Country Impact – This project is receiving up to £34million of funding made up of £17 million from European Social Fund and £17 million from Youth Employment Initiative, plus match funding of up to £8 million from Big Lottery Fund and funding from partners. Black Country Talent Match is a five year project supporting Young Adults ages 18-29 who have been out of work, training or education for at least six months and who require additional support to overcome specific barriers to employment. Working throughout the Black Country with Hubs based in each of the 5 Talent Match zones, the project across the 5 years will work with 2017 Young Adults who have been NEET for 6 months or more. This includes 212 (10%) Young Adults who are classed as ‘hidden’ (not signing on).

- The learning providers in the sector often provide learning as part of a far wider offer and mission. This is demonstrated by looking at various mission statements across the 51 organisations. The core mission for the providers include employment, family support, arts and culture, housing, health, community support and education. This is important when considering lifelong learning in the city as it is vital to **go beyond learning organisations** to capture these wider providers.

It is recommended that partnership working within the WCLR embraces the full breadth of learning providers to maximise lifelong learning opportunities.



• Linked to this diversity of organisational aims and objectives is the immense diversity of learning provision within some organisations. This ranges from health related provision through to sports courses, language classes, music, arts programmes, healthy eating and food courses and environmental learning opportunities. The University of the Third Age, Lifespring Church and Gatis Community Space are all examples of this diverse learning provision. In many cases this diversity of learning opportunities is possible as a result of volunteer input and the approach of **skill sharing** between members.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE OF SMALL SCALE LEARNING PROVISION: LIFESPRIING CHURCH



Lifespring Church provides a range of activities including a weekly job club. The Job Club is managed by volunteers and provides an informal and friendly place for local people to receive support and practical help to seek employment. This includes identifying individual skills and also helping to develop skills further. The provision makes use of the open access café on-site to provide individual support and networking opportunities. The Church also has a range of Connect groups led by members of the Church and offering cycling, dog walking, sewing, crafts, mother and toddler and a wide variety of other learning opportunities.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE OF SKILL SHARING – GATIS COMMUNITY SPACE



Gatis Community Space is a local initiative run by a group of committed volunteers. Their aim is to bring people together in Whitmore Reans to bring about the opportunity for local people to engage with each other. To achieve this they use the skills of their volunteers to offer a wide range of learning opportunities ranging from horticulture to arts and crafts. The group secured a local adventure playground as their base and now run a café on site and undertake family play days and community gardening initiatives. A specific aim of the organisation is to share their skills and to learn new things.





KEY FINDINGS CONTINUED

- There are numerous examples of provision within the sector that provides a more **holistic approach** to learning. Whilst this is becoming more difficult in light of the requirements of the funding streams a number of highly innovative approaches have been taken which look at the needs of the individual in the round and assess what barriers an individual may face to maximise their potential including health barriers, language issues, family issues, housing issues etc. This holistic approach is a major strength of the sector particularly when dealing with complex needs as it can provide services that are flexible enough to respond to each individual rather than being overly prescriptive and target led. This approach will be key to learning in the city if complex issues such as mental health are to be tackled. The network of VCS organisations in the city also means that this flexibility and tailored approach can be further enhanced through cross-referral should an individual requires specialist support e.g. drug and alcohol services or language support. This networked approach would work well for wider lifelong learning.

It is recommended that this approach should be both encouraged and further developed on both a wider geographic footprint and on a cross-sector basis through the WCLR.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE OF HOLISTIC PROVISION: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CENTRE

The centre takes a holistic approach to the learning needs of the refugee and migrants that it supports. The offer provided by the Centre includes English Language classes, IT literacy classes, on-line courses, confidence building, pre-tenancy workshops, life in the UK tuition as well as employment support. Delivery is tailored to the individual's needs with the over-arching aim of assisting refugees and migrants by removing barriers to their integration and enabling them to become equal citizens.

This holistic support tends to engender the development of trust enabling wider issues to be identified and addressed before they impact on other services; for example one initiative at the centre ensures that health issues can be picked up as part of the holistic support and dealt with at the right level avoiding costly A & E hospital visits.

As detailed, the learning offer through the sector is incredibly diverse. It should be noted that this exists in addition to the learning offer through statutory agencies, national providers, on-line providers and a host of other agencies. This can potentially create a confusing picture for potential learners. There are some current examples of gateways to learning through Wolves Work Box and the Wolverhampton Information Network.

It is recommended that these access points are built upon to provide a single gateway for lifelong learning that covers lifelong learning in its broadest sense. This would also provide an excellent resource base for the WCLR.



LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The voluntary and community sector provide a rich learning resource for the city offering learning across the full breadth of formal, informal and non-formal learning. The sector has a particularly strong role to play in providing **informal learning and non-formal learning** for the city and its residents and in preparing residents for formal learning. This role has been explicitly recognised with the cross-partner development of a continuum of learning for ESOL. This strategic model for delivery of ESOL has been developed by the City Council and partners and recognises a key role for the sector in addressing pre-entry needs. This type of strategic model would work well for all lifelong learning and could embrace a wide range of social and economic outcomes/priorities. Such a model would provide clarity within the City Learning Region partnership on the various roles that partners play and on the varying types of learning provision that can contribute to meeting the outcomes. For example, the development of social capital as an outcome would potentially focus more heavily on informal and non formal learning engaging heavily with community and voluntary sector, whilst employment outcomes are likely to have a greater focus on formal learning alongside less formal methods at pre-entry stages. A copy of the model developed by the City Council is attached in Appendix 2.

The sector is particularly strong in its **direct provision of informal learning and in its opportunities for non-formal learning**. The sector has been proactive in developing strong partnerships both within its own membership and with statutory providers in order to extend the breadth of provision and streamline access.



As a result, a number of community bases within the city are able to offer learning opportunities inclusive of formal, informal and non-formal learning. This has been recently strengthened further by the funding of a joint post by the City Council and voluntary and community sector groups.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO SHARE RESOURCES - COMMUNITY SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY CO-ORDINATOR

The post of Community Skills and Employability Co-ordinator is responsible for providing the interface and relationship support between the City Council and the Wolverhampton Learning Platform/wider sector. This post also supports the network of over 30 work clubs across the city, which provides an extensive network of grass roots support to those seeking employment, focussed in many cases on volunteer resources.

The partnership approach demonstrated by the good practice example above is one that could offer a great deal of potential for the development of the City Learning Region. It is a useful demonstration of skills sharing between strategic players in the city as well as indicating a high level of mutual trust and shared agendas. These will be key ingredients in the development of the City Learning Region and in its levels of success.

The sector excels in offering **accessible, non-intimidating and culturally sensitive learning** across a large geographical footprint of the city. This has also provided a range of bases for learning for the statutory sector who make use of these centres to provide more formal training within communities. This includes Wolverhampton College and Adult Education.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO EXTEND OFFER - BILSTON RESOURCE CENTRE

Bilston Resource Centre provides a wide spectrum of learning. This includes formally accredited qualifications delivered both through staff employed by BRC and through tutors from statutory providers, including Wolverhampton College and AES, who come into the centre to deliver training. This enables local people to access a broader range of provision from a single local base and maximises retention of learners. This localised provision can also be very helpful in reaching learners who may experience language and other barriers in terms of accessing more formal provision.



LEARNING EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

This is greatly facilitated by the setting within locally based, accessible community buildings which enable a far more relaxed and informal approach to learning. This in turn avoids intimidating potential learners who in many cases may have had negative experiences of learning in the past. These environments in many cases also provide opportunities for relaxed settings for one-to-one mentoring and coaching as well as for more formal learning. These community settings also have the informality, location and flexibility to offer culturally sensitive learning providing bespoke training that meets the needs of diverse local communities. This is particularly important in a diverse city, such as Wolverhampton, where a wide range of languages are spoken and new arrival numbers are increasing.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE PROVISION - ASPIRING FUTURES

Aspiring Futures provide tailored courses for women whose first language is not English. It provides a culturally sensitive setting within which women can develop their confidence and skills within a supportive environment whilst also increasing their social networks within the local community. Aspiring Futures has identified the added benefit this has in terms of addressing wider issues providing activities to develop social connectedness and health and well-being as well as training, employability and ESOL provision.

The voluntary and community sector provide the city with a **wide variety of physical bases for learning** within a community setting. This includes faith centres, community centres within neighbourhoods, volunteers own homes (U3A) and housing offices. As previously noted this is a key strength in terms of the reach of the sector within neighbourhoods.

The learning experience within the voluntary and community sector as detailed above varies greatly but there are a number of common key strengths:

- In a number of cases, particularly in smaller scale organisations, a more **tailored approach is taken to learning**. For example, individuals accessing centres such as Gloucester Street Community

Centre; Refugee and Migrant Centre; Aspiring Futures and Hope Community Project will generally have access to individual mentoring and support and in turn services geared to their individual needs.

This approach is particularly strong in organisations established to meet the needs of a specific group within the population or a specific neighbourhood, such as provision at St Georges Hub which focuses on homeless people. This person-centred, neighbourhood focussed approach is particularly strong within faith led organisations where the approach seems to take the individual or family in the round with learning opportunities such as lunch clubs, days out, job clubs, toddler groups with parent activities etc. occurring within the same faith venue and meeting family and inter-generational needs. This tailored approach has some resonance with issues such as mental health and well-being for which learning may be just one of the ingredients in a whole range of interventions. The Five Ways to Well-Being (New Economics Foundation 2008) provides a useful framework for this identifying the five key areas of:

- Connect,
- Keep Learning,
- Be active,
- Take Notice and
- Give

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE TAILORED PROVISION - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

This church within one of the most deprived areas of Wolverhampton provides a range of weekly activities including a Job Club (held at Ellerton House), toddler's activities, Walking for Health and a Lunch Club. The activities span across age groups and have been developed to meet the specific needs of the neighbourhood.

All of which have learning elements but which take a very broad view of personal development and personal health. This would provide a helpful framework within which to consider the contribution of learning to mental health and well-being.

- **Volunteers** form a core part of the learning provided by the sector. Almost 50% of providers identify volunteers as one of their key resources enabling delivery. In a number of cases the entire organisation is run by volunteers with no paid staff. Ashmore Park



Community Hub is an excellent example of the strength of volunteering and its impact of learning within localities. The Hub, whilst housing a range of City Council services, relies heavily upon volunteers to organise and in some cases deliver activities ranging from supper clubs to festive events. Gatis Community Space is another good example of this volunteer-led activity providing an innovative approach to local learning and social cohesion within a highly diverse area of the city by providing opportunities for local people to learn and develop with minimal funding. These volunteer-led learning opportunities offer some of the most inclusive and innovative of all learning in the city.

These models also offer some useful learning for other providers in terms of their ability, within very small budgets, to bring together diverse groups in terms of age, social class, gender and ethnicity whilst also strengthening communities through proactive improvements to the physical, economic and social fabric of neighbourhoods.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE VOLUNTEERING - ASHMORE PARK COMMUNITY HUB

Located at the heart of Ashmore Park, The Hub is home to a Community Centre, Library and Fitness Centre and offers a wide range of facilities to local people. Owned by Wolverhampton City Council, the building is managed by volunteers from Ashmore Park Community Association, a registered charity. As well as the purpose built library, The Hub has a café a community hall, five multi-purpose meeting rooms, an IT suite, a gym, a sports hall, changing rooms and showers. There is free public Wi-Fi throughout.

The Hub has activities daily including health and fitness classes, toddler classes, supper clubs, art, photography, taster classes and carer support sitting alongside a community library, gym and sports hall.

This provides a vibrant community venue with plenty of opportunities for people of diverse ages, ethnicity, class, gender and socio-economic groups to come together.

One of the key ingredients in this model is the commitment of a small number of volunteers who manage the centre and provide the vision for its future development.

- The sector, whilst in many cases highly specific in terms of the groups targeted, largely as a result of the funding requirements to concentrate on unemployed residents, do in some cases provide opportunities for individuals from different age groups, cultural backgrounds and learning backgrounds to come together within a single setting enabling **social connections and cohesion** to be developed. The community centres owned by the City Council offer some good examples of accessible centres that attract a wide variety of participants.

The most active of these centres have more recently become self-managed by the local community directly. This approach is also seen in some statutory sector provision, for example, Strengthening Families Hubs run a wide variety of training and support for parents within their local neighbourhood whilst also providing a range of early years activities for their children. This has a wider benefit of bringing parents together within their neighbourhood enhancing social connectedness and wider cohesion.

The potential contribution of learning to social cohesion could usefully be explored further particularly within the context of the diversity within the city.





LEARNING PARTICIPATION

Gender

In terms of gender the vast majority of learning provision is non-gender specific. There is a small amount of specific targeted training tailored to females with 16% of organisations providing some women only training. The main example of this is Aspiring Futures, an organisation specifically targeting women in all of its service provision. In contrast just one example exists of male specific training. Some variation in take-up by males and females was highlighted where sector specific training is undertaken but generally gender take-up of learning was not highlighted as an issue of particular concern.

Ethnicity

In terms of ethnicity, the majority of learning provision has no targeting to specific ethnic groups. There are however 20% of organisations which have a degree of focus on BME communities. There is also some specific provision for refugee and migrants and in one case provision specifically for the Polish community. Some funding regimes require this focus. Some organisations also make specific efforts to meet the needs of BME communities as part of wider programmes through initiatives such as the provision of culturally sensitive food at Gloucester Street and through provision of women only learning at Aspiring Futures. The profile of users also tends to depend upon the diversity of the location. The barrier of language was raised by a number of providers in terms of take-up of learning. ESOL provision takes place within a number of providers but remains too limited to meet demand. This is a key issue that needs to be addressed if all communities are to benefit from lifelong learning and if social cohesion is to be achieved.

Social Class

Forty five per cent of the learning providers have a degree of focus on unemployed and economically inactive (Social Class 8 – never worked and long-term unemployed). This is influenced by both the mission and aims of the organisations delivering the training (16% of providers have a mission geared to employment outcomes with others focused on delivering services to vulnerable adults) and the requirements of funding streams. The main exceptions to this are organisations who receive minimal external funding such as faith organisations and community centres and those organisations delivering to retired residents. Anecdotally, it tends to be felt that much of the learning and provision for retired residents reaches largely the higher social

classes and takes place in wealthier parts of the city. This is likely to be a result of the location of the volunteers who deliver the learning programmes as most of this learning relies upon volunteer delivery and often also uses member's homes as a meeting space.

It should be noted that most organisations do not collect social class data beyond recording employment status as working or unemployed. Further data on this would require a specific user survey across delivery organisations to assess learning take-up by social class. This could potentially be a future commitment from the City Learning Region partner organisations to enable learning by social class to be monitored.

Age

In terms of age, 33% of the learning provided specifically targets those of working age. Within this broad age range there is some targeting to the 18-29 year old age group. This includes the majority of provision through Talent Match and IMPACT. There are a smaller number of programmes aimed at the 30+ age group largely funded through the Lottery/ESF programmes. In both cases the focus of this learning is on unemployed/economically inactive residents.

Four per cent of organisations provide services exclusively for retired residents with a wide variety of other organisations having some specific provision for older people within a wider community offer. The provision through University of the Third Age, with its focus on learning for older people, provides a useful model for delivery as it delivers a wide range of learning opportunities at minimal costs through members sharing their skills with each other. This now extends to over 37 subject areas in Wolverhampton providing learning opportunities for 300 local residents with no reliance on external funding and accessible member fees of £12 per annum. This model of learning would be worth exploring further within community settings to assess whether there is the potential for similar approaches across wider age groups and social classes. Given that all individuals will hold a unique skill set this is a model that could be considered in all neighbourhoods and that may also have an inter-generational element with various age groups sharing their skills with other age groups e.g. Digital technology skills shared from young to old; budgeting skills shared from old to young.

It is recommended that the WCLR explores skills sharing as a key tool to achieving lifelong learning in the region.



Geography

There is a geographical focus of provision within the city centre and its immediate surroundings with 20% of learning provision within WV1 and a further 12% in WV2. Given the good connections in the city particularly from the neighbourhoods into the city centre, there exists good access to these central resources.

Some of the most deprived areas of the city including Whitmore Reans (10%) and Bilston (8%) do however also have clusters of provision with a strong focus on learning as a route to employment. The city benefits from a range of City Council buildings based within the city Neighbourhoods. This includes an infrastructure of 19 community centres, 16 libraries, eight strengthening family hubs, three museums and art galleries and three leisure centres.

These facilities are fairly evenly distributed throughout the city and provide a real opportunity to further develop lifelong learning provision within localities particularly around skills sharing and networking within neighbourhoods. This could contribute significantly to social connectedness and social cohesion.

It would be helpful to consider further research across all sectors including statutory providers, businesses, voluntary and community sector and informal networks to assess more fully the actual take up of learning by various groups and the wider learning facilities that are available. In this way it would be possible to identify any gaps in the round rather than purely for one sector. It would also be possible to assess what physical facilities are available in the city within which further learning and skill sharing could take place to fill the gaps identified.



19
COMMUNITY
CENTRES



16
LIBRARIES



8
STRENGTHENING
FAMILY HUBS



3
MUSEUMS AND
ART GALLERIES



3
THREE LEISURE
CENTRES





KEY FUNDING ISSUES

There has been a significant **shift in the funding streams** accessed by the voluntary and community sector in terms of provision of learning. Historically organisations relied quite heavily upon the statutory sector to provide grant funding. For example, the City Council historically provided grant funding to 71 organisations through its Community Initiatives Team funding. This approach has recently been altered to a commissioning process in which all organisations have the option to submit proposals to meet clear specifications.

This provides a far more outcome focussed approach and addresses some of the previous concerns in terms of ensuring an open process. It also provides secure funding for a period of five years. This is a major step forward from the previous annually agreed funding as it provides the groups who receive the funds with a level of stability and financial certainty that enables far greater strategic planning. The commissioning approach does however also reflect a reduction in available resources. This voluntary and community sector funding now funds a total of 8 organisations of which two provide infrastructure support to the sector (WVSC and Volunteering Service) whilst three have a strong focus on learning provision and specifically routes to employment. Other funding streams from statutory agencies have similarly been reduced as public sector funding has been reduced.

The voluntary and community sector in the city has been highly resilient in dealing with this new funding situation. In general it has been **highly proactive in identifying new funding streams** to enable activity to continue. There has at the same time been a shift in the requirements of funding bodies which place a greater emphasis on the voluntary and community sector as an applicant which has assisted this shift. This includes major strands of European and Lottery funding which have specified the role of the sector. Local organisations have been highly adept at then accessing these new and revised funding streams. They have also developed their business models to charge for services or for hire out of the venues that they own to provide a more sustainable income stream. There is the potential for statutory and business sector learning providers to support this model by making use of these community resources for their own training, meetings etc. to enable some of these smaller organisations to survive.

The position is currently one in which a large number of the organisations have accessed a **small number of major funding streams** which help to fund their core costs as well as providing the specific activities to meet the funding outcomes required. The key funding streams identified by groups in Wolverhampton are European Social Fund and Lottery funding as well as a wide variety of grant giving Trusts.

The City Council was also mentioned by a number of groups as a key funder. The ESF and Lottery funds have been combined to deliver a number of major programmes including IMPACT and the Building Better Opportunities Fund. These funds are being accessed by many learning providers and form the core funds for a large number of organisations. This inevitably creates a degree of vulnerability as these funds come to an end as a large number of the learning providers in the city currently rely on these funds for their delivery.

It is recommended that this issue is given some consideration by the WCLR to ensure that the breadth of informal and non-formal learning in the city is, if possible, maintained.



This will require a clear strategic steer on the learning that the city requires and some focus on sustaining priority learning provision as funding streams end.

A number of groups highlighted that the **reliance on employment focused funding streams** has created a far more outcome focussed approach with activities geared solely to delivery of the funding providers requirements. In terms of learning provision the key funding regimes are focussed on employment and specifically on moving those furthest from the labour market towards employment.

The delivery by the voluntary and community sector has therefore become highly focussed on preparing unemployed and economically inactive individuals for work. This has resulted in some of the **wider activities undertaken by local groups being lost**. In particular groups raised the concern that some of the capacity building and social cohesion that they previously undertook with individuals and communities is more difficult to justify or fund and some of the softer skill development such as exposing individuals to new experiences can no longer be met from the funds available. In contrast, employment focussed activity is fairly extensive due to the funds available.

Organisations raised that, as a result of the complexity of funding streams, only those organisations with extremely skilled workers or volunteers are able to secure funds for non-employment related learning activity. Some of the most innovative approaches to non-employment related learning rely upon funds from more flexible funding bodies such as Barrow Cadbury Trust and to stitching together a wide range of funding streams in a complicated picture of funding. This can take up an enormous amount of the organisation's capacity in simply chasing short term funding. One organisation estimated that up to 80% of the managerial capacity was used in this way. This can work against smaller providers and demonstrates the vital role of the consortia approach to securing funding in protecting these small but highly innovative organisations and their delivery.

A number of providers pointed to the **limitations of many funding streams** in terms of requiring minimum class sizes which do not reflect either the intensive one-to-one support required by some of their clients or the informality that they require to reach those who have not been involved in learning for many years or who require a multitude of interventions to meet complex needs.

A number of providers have started to develop **income generation strategies**. This includes providing in-work training for employers alongside renting out spaces within buildings for other uses. This provides an income source for the sector as well as meeting employer's needs within a less formal, community setting. Examples of this approach are Aladdin Education and Heart and Soul. Given that employer training of their workforce has been raised as an issue in the city, this **collaboration with the business sector may be worth further exploration as a way to support the continued diversity of the sector whilst up-skilling employees**.

Additionally, in the light of funding pressures, some highly innovative volunteering practice is developing which directly provides small scale learning opportunities to local people at minimal cost.

The emergence of groups such as Gatis Community Space, reflect the passion and commitment of a small number of local people who are keen to share their skills and help their local community.

The Contact Groups within LifeSpring Church provide a similar model but in this case built upon church membership whilst Bromford Housing's programme, Bromford Deal, utilises volunteering

to help to build connections within its estates. Volunteering has the potential to develop the skills of both the volunteer and of the recipient of their support and as such offers a major opportunity for lifelong learning. It is particularly strong in supporting social cohesion and social connectedness and in developing softer life skills through practical skills such as community gardening.

It is recommended that volunteering opportunities form a key element of the lifelong learning development by the WCLR.





GAPS IN PROVISION

The analysis of current provision along with insight from key strategic organisations has identified a number of key gaps in current learning provision in the city:

- Insufficient **ESOL** provision. This has been particularly problematic given the increasing numbers of migrants and refugees in the city. This issue was raised by all interviewees. Whilst there is ESOL provision through a number of providers this cannot keep up with the demand. The issue was raised that without sufficient ESOL provision and wider language support it is almost impossible to move forward in terms of integrated communities and social cohesion.
- There are gaps in provision for **older age groups** including those affected by issues such as redundancy. This was raised as a particular issue for those aged 50+ and for older BME residents. There was particular concern for those unskilled in digital technology as they find it very difficult to access on-line employment opportunities and to make job applications. The level of support required by this group is fairly intensive as one-to-one support is often more beneficial. The current funding schemes largely focus on the longer term unemployed or younger unemployed leaving a gap in this older age groups support. There is potentially a role here for the Wolverhampton City Learning Region in exploring support for older working age individuals who may face challenges with digital technology.
- There is minimal **in-work learning** available through the sector.

This is an area of recommended future development by the WCLR given the high level of employees in the city with no/few qualifications along with productivity issues.



- There is insufficient flexibility to offer learning for **smaller groups** within community settings. The restrictions of SFA funding was raised as a particular issue here. This is a particular issue when dealing with individuals with complex needs or who have not undertaken learning for a long period of time. Given the issues in the city of high levels of people with no qualifications, language barriers and increasing issue of mental health problems the provision of smaller group learning is of increasing importance and should be integral to any lifelong learning plan.

- Support for individuals with **mental health** needs was identified as a key gap. Providers noted an increased level of mental health issues amongst learners/potential learners. Concerns were raised about individuals accessing learning provision who are clearly affected by mental health issues but with insufficient services to either signpost their learners to or to integrate within the learning offer. Given the clear potential for learning to support mental health improvements as identified by the Five Ways to Well-Being (New Economics Foundation 2008) there is an opportunity for the City Learning Region to make a real improvement to mental health in the city whilst also ensuring effective mechanisms for referrals and mental health support within learning provision.
- There is minimal current focus by the sector upon on-line learning and this may be a future opportunity. There is evidence of some areas of increased on-line support particularly for programmes led by national providers such as NHS health programmes and trades union member training. Given the increased use of digital technology it would be helpful to examine the potential for a wider use of on-line learning programmes as a means to reach those who may prefer this method of access. It would also be helpful to include on-line learning opportunities on existing public facing learning gateways such as Wolves Work Box to ensure that the full range of available learning can be identified and accessed through a single point.



- Non-employment and **personal development/capacity building** based learning was highlighted by some providers as an area that has been lost. The focus of much of the funding available on employment outcomes has resulted in some of the wider work to develop the broader skills of individuals or to build community capacity being lost. This has implications for both engaging learners who are not currently seeking employment and for providing comprehensive learning opportunities that contribute to social cohesion and to individual health and well-being. This is an area that would benefit from greater exploration within the context of a lifelong learning focus.

There are some strong exemplars in the city that could perhaps be built upon. This includes provision by housing providers such as Bromford Housing Group with their Bromford Deal. This initiative provides neighbourhood coaches to support residents to develop and fully use their skills to help the wider community. This incorporates a capacity building element for community activities.

The Healthy Lifestyles team within the City Council provide an example of learning that focuses on wider personal development and social connections. In this example, individuals receive support and training to deliver walking groups within their neighbourhoods. There are also some excellent initiatives managed through community volunteers. The sharing of skills within the community is fundamental to their provision. This skill sharing approach provides a useful mechanism for consideration by the Wolverhampton City Learning Region as a way to embed lifelong learning within local communities by supporting grass roots learning initiatives in which the skills held by individuals within communities are shared whilst social cohesion is enhanced.

“

Concerns were raised about individuals accessing learning provision who are clearly affected by mental health issues but with insufficient services to either signpost their learners to or to integrate within the learning offer.

”





CONCLUSION

The research demonstrates a rich and diverse learning picture across the city. The voluntary and community sector provision, whilst focusing in many cases on moving people closer or into employment, also includes some highly innovative learning contributing to personal and community development. This makes a major contribution to the development of social capital in the city.

The voluntary and community sector provision is supplemented by organisations including the City Council, NHS, faith centres, arts and cultural venues, housing providers and trades unions who whilst not providing learning as their core activities/mission offer a variety of lifelong learning opportunities.

In all cases, whilst resources are limited, partnership and consortia approaches are already working to maximise the impact of the remaining resources whilst the input of volunteers is greatly enhancing this provision enabling some community and social connectedness work to flourish.

As a result of this wide variety of providers lifelong learning takes place in a rich variety of settings ranging from community centres and hubs through to churches and housing offices. This is a key strength for the city since learning is highly accessible and has a good reach within communities catering for a wide variety of groups and individuals.

There is potential for this current picture to be greatly enhanced through the Wolverhampton City Learning Region. Partnership working in the city is already strong with initiatives such as consortia of providers via the Wolverhampton Learning Platform, joint posts across the voluntary and community sector and on-line partnership resources such as the Wolves Work Box demonstrating robust partnership working. Additionally the strong network of community facing buildings within neighbourhoods could be further utilised to provide a range of learning activities. Whilst clearly there are funding challenges there are opportunities to explore the potential for far greater skills sharing both within communities and between strategic partners to maximise lifelong learning through joint working and a collective spirit to sharing the resources that the City Learning Region has available to it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for future research

This research provides a broad snapshot of learning provision and its target groups within Wolverhampton. Further research would be helpful in terms of:

1. Gaining greater data on patterns of participation. This could helpfully include non-employment related learning, where little data is currently collected, as well as social class which is rarely collected by providers. This may require learner surveys.
2. A survey specifically examining the provision of learning through the faith sector may be helpful. This sector is increasingly diversifying its activities to embrace wider learning and to develop social cohesion based programmes.
3. Given the proposed focus of the WCLR on health and well-being, further research could helpfully be carried out to assess any learning provision currently taking place through GP surgeries, health centres, health visitors, social workers and care workers and the opportunities to extend this further, using examples of good practice nationally and internationally.
4. Identifying the potential of skills sharing initiatives as a means of extending lifelong learning in the city region whilst also contributing to partnership working, social cohesion and social capital. This would usefully include exploring national and international examples.
5. Given the increased use of digital technology it would be helpful to examine the potential for a wider use of on-line learning programmes as a means to reach those who may prefer this method of access.

Recommendations to inform future Wolverhampton City Learning Region work

6. The voluntary and community sector faces a precarious funding situation. This is particularly acute given current Brexit negotiations and the uncertainty regarding European funding streams. Identifying ways to embed some of the highest quality provision within the sector should be a priority for the WCLR.
7. Provision of lifelong learning activity is not restricted to learning institutions. It will be important to engage the breadth of learning providers in the Wolverhampton City Learning Region development including cultural and arts organisations, faith communities, health providers, community centres, family support providers and sports clubs.

In this way lifelong learning can be embedded in the city region whilst also addressing wider social cohesion outcomes.

8. Collaboration between the voluntary and community sector and small businesses should be explored in terms of making use of informal local learning bases and resources as part of training and up-skilling employees.
9. The current access points for residents to partnership learning including Telford Job Box and Wolverhampton Job Box offer excellent models of providing a single point of access for partner activity related to employment. The potential to build upon these models to provide a single access point for all learning, including non-employment related learning, could be explored. The key outcome for this could be to provide a single, easy to navigate route/portal for residents, partners, employers and providers to access information (and ideally joining details) for the full range of cross-partner learning on offer in the city.
10. The sector demonstrates a key strength in terms of its consortia approach as exemplified by the Wolverhampton Learning Platform. This is a major asset for the city in terms of securing a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to non-formal and informal learning. This could helpfully be supported and potentially by the WCLR Initiative.
11. Given the issues in the city of high levels of people with no qualifications, language barriers and increasing issue of mental health problems the provision of smaller group learning and one-to-one holistic support is of increasing importance and should be integral to any lifelong learning plan.
12. The Five Ways to Well-Being (New Economics Foundation 2008) is recommended as a useful framework within which to consider and further develop the contribution of learning to mental health and well-being.
13. The potential of skills sharing at all levels provides a major lifelong learning opportunity. Skills sharing could run through the entire WCLR Initiative and may even form a useful branding tool. This skills sharing could include resource and knowledge sharing by strategic partners in the region to maximise impact and reduce duplication. It could also include skills sharing by individuals within and between communities of geography and of interest to residents whilst also building social connectedness and cohesion.



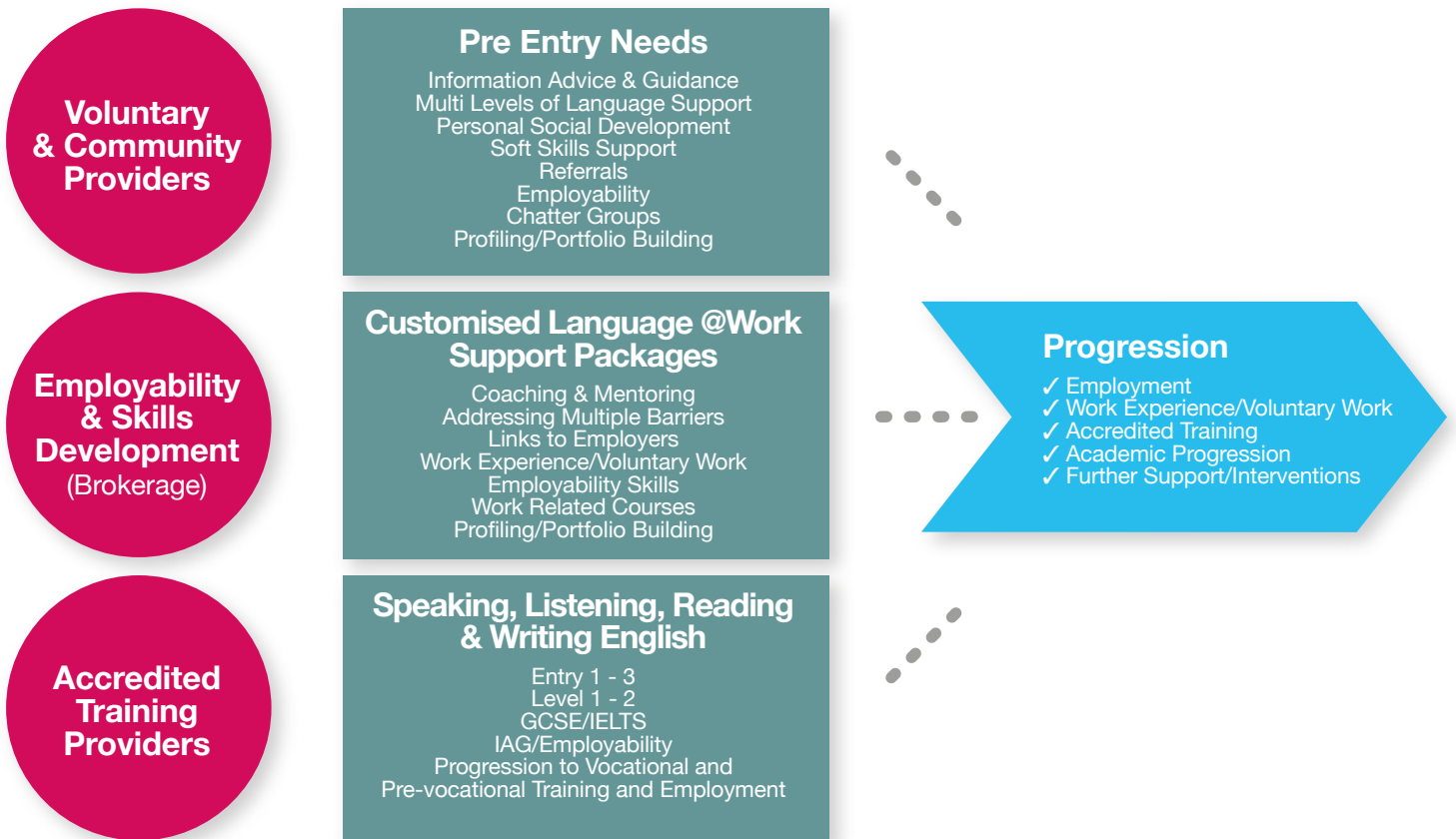
APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Interviewees

NAME	ORGANISATION	JOB ROLE	DATE INTERVIEWED
Sue Lindup	City of Wolverhampton Council	Skills and Employability Manager (Unemployed and Under Employed Adults)	19th September 2017 and 2nd October 2017
Martha Cummings	City of Wolverhampton Council	Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator	19th September 2017
Ian Darch	Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council	Chief Executive	3rd October 2017
Adam Bhardwaj	Bilston Resource Centre	Business Development Manager	3rd October 2017
Karen Sahota	City of Wolverhampton Council	Community skills and Employability Co-ordinator	3rd October 2017
Arten Llazari	Refugee and Migrant Centre	Chief Executive Officer	5th October 2017

Appendix 2

Wolverhampton Citywide ESOL Provision A Strategic Model for Delivery



A group of people, including a man with a beard and two women, are seated at a table in what appears to be a meeting or workshop. They are looking towards the right side of the frame. A large, bright pink arrow points from the left towards the word 'REFERENCES', which is written in white, bold, uppercase letters. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

City of Wolverhampton Council (2017) Strategic Model for Delivery ESOL. City of Wolverhampton Council

National Economics Foundation (2008) Five Ways to Well-Being. A paper presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being. Written by Akers J, Marks N, Cordon C, and Thompson S. New Economics Foundation

OECD (2005) The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning, Report from Thematic Group 2: Standards and quality assurance in qualifications with special reference to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. OECD

UNESCO (2013) International Conference on Learning Cities Beijing 2013
University of Wolverhampton (2017) University of Wolverhampton Learning Regions Website content. <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/internal-departments/centre-for-lifelong-learning/learning-regions/> Downloaded 30.10.2017

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Collett S (2017) Individual providers of Lifelong Learning. Prepared as background evidence to 'Lifelong Learning within the Voluntary and Community Sector' Research paper. University of Wolverhampton

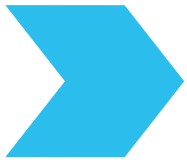
Collett S (2017) Database of Lifelong Learning providers in Wolverhampton. Prepared as background evidence to 'Lifelong Learning within the Voluntary and Community Sector' Research paper. University of Wolverhampton

DfES (2003) The Future of Higher Education. London: HMSO. Available from: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100210151716/dcsf.gov.uk/hegateway/strategy/strategy/foreword.shtml> [last accessed 11/10/2017].

Osborne, M (2012) Mapping the UK Landscape of Tertiary Lifelong Learning, THEMP – Discussion paper 2012/4.8 Barcelona/Oldenburg

Werquin, P. (2007), "Terms, Concepts and Models for Analysing the Value of Recognition Programmes", paper prepared for the OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning, EDU/EDPC(2007)24, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/58/41834711.pdf.

Werquin, P (2010) "Recognising non-formal and Informal Learning : Outcomes, Policies and Practices" OECD



WOLVERHAMPTON CITY LEARNING REGION



Commissioned by

WWW.WLV.AC.UK/LEARNINGREGIONS

