

Craigmillar Learning for Community Participation and Action report: Chapter 11- Conclusions for a learning programme

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A 'research group' of local people - to locate key issues and concerns

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A full list of those who wished to be acknowledged is found in the separate Chapter 12: 'Background information (appendices)'.

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Craigmillar Communiversity (see chapters 7 and 9)
The Estate of Bill Douglas (see chapter 7)

Chapter 11: Conclusions for a learning programme

A significant number of people within this community have described the work they do and the training and support they've found useful. This has been described in chapters 2 through to 10, and the implications for a learning programme been discussed within the 'comment on learning' sections.

This final chapter does not review the detail of all that has been learnt but asks some broader questions about what a learning programme should be like – in particular by looking at:

- the pool of community knowledge – key areas of knowledge and skills for people to develop (page 4)
- who should a learning programme be aimed at ? (page 5)
- what helps people learn? (page 6)
- finding the right language (page 7)
- drawing on the experiences of others in Scotland and further afield (page 8)
- feedback on the key research theme of 'the pool of community knowledge' (pages 9-10)
- questions about lifelong learning and community learning and development (pages 11-12)
- further developing participatory research in Craigmillar (page 13)
- the next steps for a learning programme (page 14).

Note: Before reading this chapter it would be useful to look at Chapter 1a. This will give you some background information on lifelong learning, community learning and development, and participatory research.

Key areas for learning – understanding the pool of community knowledge:

By looking at the themes that people raised in their discussions with the researcher, the researcher saw 12 key themes – which follow the lines of chapters 2-10 in this report – these are:

- how communities work
- difference within community (diversity)
- communities and services
- influencing decision-makers and campaigning
- working with people
- organising meetings and events
- running community organisations and developing community initiatives
- lifelong learning for community participation
- community participation and partnership working
- regeneration and the arts (the Craigmillar Festival Society model)
- regeneration - housing, social enterprises and health
- local decision making and the impact of the wider world.

The initial thinking around these themes highlighted a range of knowledge and skill that people in the community have. Different people have a different range of skills and knowledge – everyone has something to learn. A full list of the knowledge and skills from the initial thinking can be found in the additional chapter, *Chapter 12*, which gives background information - which people may find useful but is not necessary to understand the research as a whole.

A different researcher might have seen different key themes as crucial or important. This researcher's interpretation of the key themes in what people said can be understood through the underlying values of the research – a list of the sorts of values influencing the researcher's interpretation can be found too in *Chapter 12*.

The development phase of this project - the development and piloting of a learning programme for people who are active in the community - will need to ask potential users of the programme which areas of learning are most important *at the moment* – which are most current and should be the priority for the programme. A survey is being conducted with local people, which will help the project understand the current demand for different knowledge and skills within the pool of community knowledge.

Further reporting of the second year of work will be carried out in the future. This will describe the results of the survey and the development and piloting work that goes on over the second year of the project –which will refine the learning programme to meet local demand.

Who should a learning programme be aimed at?

What has become clear is the breadth of people who are active in this community and whose work is both sustaining the community now, and either is or should be impacting on the regeneration of this community in the near future.

The different roles that people are playing include working:

- as an activist, volunteer, member, 'helping out', Board Director or Committee member, representative, organiser, and trainer or coach.
- with health, sports, arts, leisure, advice, representing the community, campaigning and sharing learning.

From the experience of doing the first phase of research there are clearly people who are:

- not active at present but who are considering it for the future and/or have been active in the past.
- active in supporting roles – that is supporting community activities and others in contributing to these activities.
- taking leading, organising or teaching roles – that is they are playing key roles in developing community activities and/or coaching others in developing their abilities to take part.
- taking community wide roles – that is they are actively representing the community on community wide bodies or taking a leading role in initiatives that aim to impact strategically across the whole community and on its regeneration.

Often people are active in two or more ways. So can a learning programme work for everyone? For instance, both people who are active within a strategic role, say within the Community Council, and people who are taking supportive roles, say as a member of an organisation or a volunteer supporting others in taking part? Can it be relevant to this breadth of people? It is unlikely that training modules can work for everyone, although more informal learning through stories and sharing learning can be more flexible and potentially relevant to a wide range of people.

Again it will be important then to consider 'demand' as well as 'need' for a learning programme. Who wants to learn more at the moment? Again the survey can support the project to develop an understanding of this. However, presently it is the many people who are members of community groups, volunteers within organisations or who are active in community initiatives who have least access to training and learning to support their community participation. Those in leadership roles on Management Committees and Boards and as Community Representatives generally have more access to such resources, *if not necessarily sufficient resources*. So the balance of formal and informal learning within a programme is likely to tilt towards the former groups.

What helps people learn?

Much of the discussion in Chapters 2-10 highlights the need for flexibility in any learning programme for people active in the community. People spoke of the value of:

- informal learning which involves local people bringing their own knowledge and skills, and accessing further knowledge and advice through local staff and others with expertise
- learning in places and with groups of people that allowed them to feel comfortable and build their confidence to learn and be active
- learning that fits closely with what is actually happening within their community and what they are actually doing as activists and volunteers – purposeful learning
- support from staff and other local people that they know and trust, and who will listen to them and work flexibly.

There was a more mixed response towards:

- the use of ICT (computers and film) – some people were excited by its potential, others were more sceptical.
- the value of formal qualifications – some were interested in formal learning and qualifications, others did not raise it as relevant.

The survey, development and piloting work within the second phase of this project will seek to refine this understanding of what people are looking for in a learning programme and to put this into practice – and this will be reported on in a second report.

Finding the right language

The language of *community participation* that is used by policy makers both City wide and nationally – including the phrase ‘community participation’ itself – was not necessarily used widely, even though people usually understood what it was about. Many words and ideas that are commonplace within thinking about community participation are not key parts of the language used by people who are active; words such as:

- active citizenship
- social inclusion
- capacity building
- partnership working
- joint working and planning
- community learning plans
- community planning partnerships.

Some words have gained a wider use within the community, although they are not necessarily frequently used, such as:

- volunteering
- lifelong learning
- regeneration.

Designing a programme that does justice to how people talk about what they are doing is important. Likewise it is equally crucial to design a programme that ensures that the language of policy makers does not remain a mystery to people and which helps people to gain in confidence when talking with and challenging policy makers.

Drawing on the experiences of others in Scotland and further afield

Although the main focus for this research has been the experience and knowledge of local people- 'the pool of community knowledge' – other training and learning programmes and resources outside the area have been 'discovered'. Here are some that are particularly relevant to 'community participation':

- Training courses that build on other areas of people's day to day experiences; for example building on people's experiences as carers¹, and on people's experiences as tenants².
- The Focus Youth Project ³in North Lanarkshire has been running, in partnership with the University of Glasgow, the 'Activate Course' which provides a 'non-assessed' learning in 'community learning and development'; those completing the course are awarded a certificate of achievement and are guaranteed an interview on the part-time Certificate of Community Learning and Development at Glasgow University.
- Active Citizenship courses, for instance, East Lothian Council's Community Economic Development unit has developed, in partnership with Jewel and Esk Valley College ⁴, an Active Citizenship pack containing 11 sessions of learning that include: What is Active Citizenship? Confidence Building, Politics and the Individual, Working with Others, Public Speaking, Campaigning, and Lobbying.
- Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations has produced a toolkit for community participation on their website which gives information, advice and resources for community participation.

These are examples of the wide range of existing resources and examples that the development phase of the research can draw upon. What this learning programme will seek to do is to make itself relevant to Craigmillar by using the knowledge and skills of local people and organisations.

¹ Pilton Partnership and Edinburgh's Telford College have developed a 'Carers Upskilling Programme' – funded by the European Social Fund.

² Link In, Community Mental Health Services, have developed training in Tenancy Management for those who are tenants.

³ See Focus Youth Project at www.focusyouthcentre.org

⁴ Again using the European Social Fund. Go on the internet at: <http://toolkit.slcv.org.uk/toolkit-home.htm>

Feedback on key research theme of 'pool of community knowledge'

Starting the survey work testing 'demand' for a learning programme has created an opportunity for discussion with local active people about one of the key themes of the first part of the research ... *that there is an existing and strong pool of community knowledge for people to draw upon, an existing and potentially increasing learning exchange.* The researcher had discussions with 11 local groups of people – actively involving about 30 people about this. Other people were present but didn't actively take part.

People were open to this theme recognising that their community had many strengths, for instance that you could trust local people. One person spoke of accidentally leaving their car running with the keys in the ignition, and returning at the end of the day to find the battery flat. Others also recognised that Social Inclusion Partnership funding had brought opportunities for learning and training.

However people were also keen to stress that such a theme did not do justice to the difficulties that they face, in particular:

- **Not being heard:** Perhaps the strongest message of all was the sense of not being and not feeling heard. In particular, that services and local government were not hearing them and acting with them – for example on road safety and housing. The same was true within the community - that people were not being heard and their roles were not being recognised and celebrated.
- **This is a hard place to live:** The community could be a hard place to live – there were considerable social problems, for example drugs, lack of opportunities for young people; and there was real poverty for people and making a living was hard.
- **Community divides:** The present 'community divide'⁵, and the loss of trust and strong feelings of anger between those organisations and networks of people connecting to the Community Council and those connecting to the Regeneration Forum creates a *very significant barrier* to local active people and community groups from across the whole community working and learning together. There was also an older 'community divide' which continues to have some *presence*; that is a divide between those who had been part of the Craigmillar Festival Society who felt both sad and angry at its enforced closure, and those who had not been a part of it, who felt separate or distant from it and still felt angry and distrusting towards it and those who had been part of it. It is unclear if this might still get in the way of the whole community 'learning together'. People were open to talking about this issue with the researcher and it felt a more *distant* issue - but nevertheless both positions are still keenly held.

⁵ See Chapter 1, Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 for further information on the consequences of this divide.

- **Regeneration - will it work?** People had ongoing concerns about the present regeneration of housing in the area. Would it work and generate good housing and neighbourhoods, or just recreate the same problems that local people and neighbourhoods already face?
- **Do people want to learn more?** Although local people were really interested in learning, they tended to do it without thinking about it as learning. They learnt 'informally' while doing things. Would a learning programme be able to reach them and interest them?

These remain, then, key challenges for a learning programme for community participation to work with, and to support local people in exploring and moving forward.

Thinking about lifelong learning and community learning and development

In Chapter 1b, the introductory chapter, 3 different views on the value of both lifelong learning and community learning and development to community regeneration were described:

- A *mainstream view*, supported by the Scottish Executive that both these types of learning are critical to successful community regeneration because they improve the social and economic capacity of the community.
- A *sceptical view*, provided by Jane Thomson⁶, that challenges the view that learning and regeneration are always positive experiences for communities and neighbourhoods, and so need to be considered carefully by local people to work out what is really making a difference to them.
- An *alternative view*, provided by John Kretzmann and John McKnight⁷, that sees the starting point for any community as recognising and using its existing strengths and knowledge ... rather than starting by bringing in more services to provide, amongst other things, yet more learning and training (Asset-Based Community Development).

The emphasis in this research has not been to look systematically at which of these views is 'right' or 'most useful' but instead to start from the assumption that the alternative view of John Kretzmann and John McKnight has some kernel of truth, that within communities there is the knowledge necessary for developing a learning programme. Indeed, there is a very substantial pool of community knowledge, as is detailed in this report,.

From this assumption, in each chapter the researcher has continually asked the question 'Can a learning programme support a 'committed dialogue', the idea put forward by Jane Thompson⁸ and discussed in Chapter 1b, within communities, and between communities, government and services?' Again there is, of course, potential for this because of this extensive pool of knowledge and experience, and because of signs that it is already happening – see some of the examples in Chapter 8. But there are clear examples of the barriers too in Chapters 3, 8, 9 and 10 and it needs:

⁶ See Jane Thompson's (2001) report, 'Rerooting lifelong learning: resourcing neighbourhood renewal.' Details from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education on the Internet at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/>.

⁷ See John P. Kretzmann and John McKnight (1993) 'Building Communities from the Inside Out: a path toward finding and mobilizing a community's asset'. Go on the internet to: www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html

⁸ See Chapter 1b pages 12-13 and 17, and also Jane Thompson's (2001) report, 'Rerooting lifelong learning: resourcing neighbourhood renewal.' Details from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education on the Internet at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/>.

- a commitment within a community to work with its full diversity of peoples;
- a commitment from government and services to work with a community on its terms, rather than on an existing agenda.

This leads us back to the mainstream view that lifelong learning and community learning and development are key parts of a strategy for community regeneration. These are murky waters beyond the scope of this report, for there are underlying assumptions here. These are firstly, that by simply investing in lifelong learning and community learning and development within a community, and by government and services planning for regeneration of a community, the former will support the latter. Secondly there is an assumption that the community will have a clear voice in planning for regeneration. Chapter 8, in particular, casts doubt on these assumptions, with some examples of the difficulties that communities find in getting heard by government and services. The researcher is left wondering if lifelong learning and community learning and development are in reality to be considered key parts of community regeneration.

This report is not going to provide a comprehensive answer to such questions, but does at least provide some thinking for local people and others to consider.

Further developing participatory research in Craigmillar

In Chapter 1b, the idea of participatory research was discussed: that is research that works with people themselves in the situations in which they find themselves.

This research has aimed to be participative, supporting people in expressing their views and getting heard. It has increased the number of people who have taken part in such work locally, and who have the confidence to do more of this sort of work.

Other chapters show the wider use of surveys and participatory appraisal within Craigmillar and illustrate the considerable experience that is held locally of doing participative research.

Participative approaches could be one of the key ingredients in any learning programme, and there is local experience to support this. One area that can be further developed is that of involving local people in the thinking about, or 'the analysis of', what the information collected means and what action should follow from this.

Within 'cooperative inquiry' (see chapter 1b) the aim is to get people thinking together about a situation, then acting to make a difference, before reflecting on what has happened because of that action; and to repeat this cycle as long as it proves useful.

This pattern of cooperative inquiry could be used within a learning programme. People who are active in the community could learn to work with it to gain more control over what they are learning, to ask the important questions that are important to them right now, to think what they can do about it, and then to look at what happens – what difference it makes.

And finally ... the next steps.

This research report, and what people say within it, provides a resource for developing a learning programme: a learning programme that includes:

- training sessions and modules
- opportunities for informal learning and sharing of knowledge (a learning exchange)
- information on how to access other resources.

In the next development phase of the learning programme over the next 12 months, the project will:

- carry out a short survey to confirm priorities and demand for different areas of knowledge and skill, and different types of support, for a learning programme
- work to establish an advisory group of local active people and local organisations concerned with lifelong and community learning to advise on the development phase
- develop and pilot a learning programme with local people and groups.
- explore the use of the web for other informal learning opportunities.

It will be important to also consider the ongoing development of the programme over future years, once the development phase is completed, so that the programme remains 'current' and feels relevant to local people.