



Active  
Learning

# Active Citizenship

A report by the  
Civil Renewal Unit

## Active learning for active citizenship

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The Civil Renewal Unit promotes the ethos of civil renewal and community engagement across Government departments and to partners and stakeholders.

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# Foreword

Active citizens are not born that way. They are made. For many, the experience of frustration when society fails to meet our expectations is a catalyst for social action, but we need to develop understanding and learn new skills if our commitment to action is to be effective. For society to work well we need more people to be active citizens who have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

This report draws on the diverse experience of education for active citizenship within the voluntary and community sector. It shows how we can build on what is already happening and how with government support these initiatives can emerge from the, often hidden, places where they have begun into a national network helping to equip our citizens to build a better society.

As the Home Secretary, David Blunkett MP says, ‘the crucial policy imperatives are clear. We must aim to build strong, empowered and active communities’ (Edith Kahn Memorial Lecture, 2003). We should therefore work to improve the capacity of individuals and communities to relate to the world around them as active, critical, engaged citizens. If we are to have a healthy democracy we need to support each other in identifying the issues that concern us, and develop the confidence and skills to make a difference to the world around us.

This report has been produced by the Civil Renewal Unit, which is part of central Government – but it is self evident that government alone cannot turn the aspirations expressed here into action. It takes partnership and creative collaboration. This is part of the civil renewal ethos of developing ideas in partnership rather than imposing Government solutions on communities: the idea of ‘doing rather than being done to’ and ensuring that the people closest to the issues are central to influencing and determining the outcomes. In this spirit, this report has been produced in partnership with the academic world as well as the voluntary and community sector. We need to turn ideas into policy and then into practice, and this is what this report is about. I’m pleased as well that it continues the work of Sir Bernard Crick who has pressed for education for active citizenship so indefatigably.

I hope this report will provide a boost to some excellent projects which will deliver effective education for active citizenship in the voluntary and community sector. The lessons we learn from this invaluable report and the learning hubs the Home Office is supporting will help everyone involved build sustainable programmes of citizenship education.

Fiona Mactaggart MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary for Race Equality, Community Policy and Civil Renewal

# Acknowledgements

This report was completed as part of a secondment to the Civil Renewal Unit in the Home Office. I wish to acknowledge the invaluable support, help and guidance given to me by far too many people to list. Mainly, I wish to thank everyone who took part in the research and who contributed by talking with me. These people not only provided data, they provided inspiration and confidence.

I wish specifically to recognise the contribution of the following people:

Jerry Hayes from the Active Communities Directorate made the whole experience both enjoyable and feasible. He cares passionately about ‘active citizenship’ and brought a very positive influence to this project.

As the Home Office Government Advisor on active citizenship, Sir Bernard Crick has insisted other people show as much energy and enthusiasm as himself – a difficult thing to do at times, as he has such a long and impressive history of positive work.

Likewise, the Department for Education and Skills Government Advisor for Citizenship, Jan Newton, has given invaluable input and support to this project.

At the same time I have to thank the University of Plymouth, specifically John Lewis, for allowing me to take on this project.

Val Woodward  
June 2004

# Summary

Civil renewal – a revitalised democracy, more responsive public services, more active and sustainable communities, local people engaged in decision making – depends on active citizens. David Blunkett recognised this, as Secretary of State for Education and Skills, when he introduced the citizenship curriculum into schools. Many adults, however, are missing out on appropriate educational opportunities – a fact that is being recognised by the voluntary and community sector and, more recently in a growing number of Government programmes.

This report arose from a growing awareness within Government that its approach could be better co-ordinated, and could build much more creatively on the initiatives already underway within the voluntary and community sector, as well as the formal education sector.

The issue was approached in a number of stages:

- Community Service Volunteers were commissioned to map relevant Government initiatives
- A cross-Government group developed a ‘core curriculum’ for citizenship learning for active citizens and community leaders
- Val Woodward was seconded from the University of Plymouth to map relevant learning programmes and initiatives in the voluntary and community sector, and to review literature sources in order to provide the basis for an expansion in adult learning opportunities
- A cross-sector planning workshop was held (in October 2003) to reflect on Val Woodward’s draft report
- A cross-sector Steering Group brought together representatives from the voluntary and community sector, academics working in this field, and representatives from relevant Government departments to oversee the development and implementation of a programme of Active Learning for Active Citizenship
- The Steering Group agreed a framework within which to consider how best to promote a substantial expansion of the learning opportunities for active citizenship available to adults
- Based on Val Woodward’s report, the Steering Group developed a rolling programme to create sub-regional ‘learning hubs’, diverse enough in their approaches and the partners involved to test out the questions posed by the Framework
- Home Office Ministers in April 2004 approved funding for the programme, and for the first three hubs – in South Yorkshire, West Midlands and Greater Manchester
- The first Active Learning for Active Citizenship conference was held on 11 June 2004 in Sheffield, where this report was launched.

The recommendations of the report, which summarise the basis on which the programme is moving forward, are:

- That voluntary and community sector groups interested and committed to developing active learning for active citizenship be resourced to work within a number of sub-regional ‘learning hubs’
- That a framework steering group be established, led by the voluntary and community sector, and supported by the Home Office’s Civil Renewal Unit
- That lessons learnt during this first phase be evaluated and fed into a more sustainable and widespread programme of action.

# Introduction and context

Active learning for active citizenship as a concept has been ‘stolen’ from various sources already embracing such ideas. The phrase is meant to convey a move away from either learning or citizenship being something participants do passively.

The Home Office Active Community Unit led a cross-government team, with helpful assistance from Sir Bernard Crick, to develop a core curriculum for citizenship training to be provided with community leaders. This work was then extended to the production of this report by Val Woodward, a secondee to the Active Community Unit, who suggested ways forward. As it progressed, the work moved into the Civil Renewal Unit, also part of the Communities Group of the Home Office. This reflects the European Union’s claim that ‘Civil society is the primary site for the development of citizenship knowledge, skills and attitudes’ (Commission of the European Communities, 2001).

## A mapping exercise

At the start of this project an attempt was made to map what is already happening amongst voluntary and community groups in relation to learning for active citizenship, recognising and valuing the knowledge, expertise and understanding of those directly involved in work at local levels.

The results of that exercise are available on the Home Office website alongside this report. The list is not comprehensive, but it offers a ‘snapshot’ of current activity and interested bodies working in the field.

Groups are diverse and diffuse and the information gathered can only touch on the richness and breadth of work happening locally. Mapping of this kind can only be a snapshot in time. The situation is constantly changing.

There is no one approach adopted by the myriad groups who could have been included within the mapping exercise. The ways in which community based activities are designed and carried out can be both a strength and a weakness. This includes the aims of the local activity, the infrastructure exploited and the way activity is organised. Groups come together to work on issues of concern to themselves, their friends, families, and communities they identify with, probably with an underlying desire to make things better for themselves and those around them. They therefore tap into the creative space between the personal and political dimensions of their lives.

While most groups are keen to network with others regionally, nationally, within Europe, and even further worldwide, their established links into frameworks, such as national organisations, and statutory bodies such as government agencies, are very varied.

## The research process

This report is the result of a process of discussion between the Government and the voluntary and community sector about ways to ensure that active learning for active citizenship is developed. An interim version was circulated to groups within the voluntary and community sector who attended a planning workshop in Birmingham (see below). Feedback and discussion on the report were encouraged during that workshop and at all points during production. Overall comments were positive and respondents agreed with a community based approach in an anti-discriminatory framework. Participants at the planning workshop reiterated the need for changes and action within structures of governance as well as in communities themselves.

This report is therefore based on the reality of community and voluntary groups and is informed by critical reflection on the interim findings.

## The planning workshop

The workshop (see list of participants at Appendix 3) was held so that participants could:

- Receive information about the Home Office initiative
- Consider the draft interim report and suggest changes to it
- Discuss relevant activity they are already involved in
- Discuss relevant activity they would like to see happen
- Discuss barriers to that action
- Discuss support and funding that would overcome those barriers
- Suggest outlines for a group of projects to be considered for funding by the Home Office.

Numbers were restricted to ensure all participants were able to engage in constructive deliberation within groups. Attendance was by invitation and those invited were drawn from among those involved in the earlier mapping of existing provision. Those attending did not represent all individuals, groups or organisations interested or involved in work relevant to this research project. Priority was given to those who had expressed interest in taking forward project work. New initiatives were sought to allow evaluation of added value to be gained by Government intervention in education for active citizenship within the voluntary and community sector.

The participants welcomed the creation of positive partnership working strategies, and noted that effective modelling and best practice were demonstrated during the planning workshop. Participants found it very helpful to learn from each other about what was happening across England. The day enabled constructive networking and the subsequent sharing of experience, enthusiasm, commitment and learning. Outcomes from these sessions have been integrated into the report.

# Active learning hubs

It is recommended that a series of hubs are supported by the Home Office Civil Renewal Unit and that these link into a consultative learning process building sustainable activity across the voluntary and community sector. This will go some way to counteracting current under-resourcing of citizenship education in civil society.

The regional 'hubs' are proposed where it is known that community based groups in partnership with others are able and willing to initiate new work on active learning for active citizenship once resources are made available. There are a myriad other possible projects but it is recommended those link in with the monitoring of progress of the first 'hubs' and the subsequent development of future action. Two potential 'hubs' based in different parts of the South West, for example, decided they were not yet ready to develop learning partnerships, but very much wished to do so in the future. Different groups are able and willing to participate in practice and policy development at differing times and speeds, and the sheer volume of voluntary and community organisations makes it impossible to involve everyone at all times.

The first 'hubs' will be 'trailblazers' to allow the voluntary and community sector to firm up on what they can and wish to do, but also for the Government to ascertain the best form of sustained support and involvement. A suggested framework for expansion, which the hubs will help to test out, can be found in Appendix 2.

Those who suffer the greatest from short term funding are already most vulnerable to social exclusion and least likely to become active citizens in any context. Therefore sustainability is crucial, as is evaluation of the potential demand for active learning for active citizenship. People already active in civil society might find it difficult to dedicate yet more of their time to education, while the relatively inactive might find the idea of such participation unattractive.

According to another research report for ODPM the 'policies on community involvement...need to be rationalised and consolidated, because they have shown a tendency to evaporate again when programmes are implemented' (Searching for Solid Foundations, Gabriel Chanan, ODPM 2003).

A steering group drawing membership from the community and voluntary sector but supported by specialist agencies involved in community, adult and continuing education and working in partnership with the Civil Renewal Unit and other relevant Government agencies, will therefore provide a national framework. The group will work closely with the Active Citizenship Centre, to develop advice and examples of citizenship skills that local groups can use.

Local groups will network in 'learning partnerships', or 'hubs', and therefore dialogue between all the different scales of operation will be crucial. This is specifically recognising a central theme of this report that local expertise, knowledge and experience should be valued and recognised at all times. Such networks are characterised by diversity, autonomy, voluntary choices and risk; therefore the national framework will rely on the steering group constructively managing the process. Members need to be excited, rather than daunted, by the challenges this involves.

While the Home Office is an appropriate location for this project, the work clearly overlaps with neighbourhood renewal and learning promoted by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, as well as varied work by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). An exchange and sharing of expertise must be a positive way forward. Indeed, it is specifically noted in *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998), that lifelong learning ‘enables people to play a full part in their community’ and ‘promotes active citizenship’ (p7). Further, pilot projects on community leadership were funded by the DfES and embraced a model of locally specific training within a national framework similar to that suggested in this report. Further still, the DfES has recommended the establishment of Neighbourhood Learning Centres explaining that ‘There is no single model for a Neighbourhood Learning Centre (an ‘NLC’ for short). They are all different, because they meet the needs of their own local communities - and these are different’ (DfES, 2003).

They have a number of features in common, however:

- Local people play a key role. They are involved in a variety of ways, as learners, volunteers, staff and trustees. In short, it is *their* NLC, not one parachuted in from outside
- They are based in accessible, local premises. NLCs will always be on the estate or in the suburb or in the village. Local people will not be expected to travel to larger, less personal institutions (such as colleges) elsewhere
- They have a variety of learning programmes, most of which require no entry qualification at all. Local people will be actively involved in deciding what courses and activities will be set up
- Learning and teaching styles are very different from traditional approaches. The emphasis is on learning being flexible, useful, and fun.

Curriculum and delivery mechanisms are inextricably linked. The Home Secretary approved an outline curriculum for citizenship education within the voluntary and community sector in February 2003 (see Appendix 1). It was established that the curriculum should provide a ‘light touch’ approach within a national framework so as to allow local control and design of locally appropriate materials and approaches. Whilst strongly welcoming the ‘light-touch’ approach, participants at the planning workshop in Birmingham (Appendix 3), specifically requested that the draft curriculum, circulated as an attachment to the draft report and discussed on that day, be expanded and further clarified. This will be an early task of the national steering group.

However, that clarification can proceed simultaneously with the initial development of projects promoting active learning for active citizenship. Consortia in a number of areas have displayed commitment and enthusiasm to develop a ‘hub’ similar to Neighbourhood Learning Centres, but specifically encouraging active learning for active citizenship. These hubs are being developed deliberately within differing locations, adopting different approaches to active citizenship education within the parameters laid out in this report and also within differing social and economic contexts so as to facilitate comparative evaluation between varying and contrasting settings.

The first three regional hubs have been confirmed and others are in development. The three confirmed hubs are:

## South Yorkshire

The South Yorkshire Hub, based in Scotia Works Sheffield, will provide a space to develop mini citizenship projects, community based courses, centre based work, materials development and publications. The Workers Education Association will organise the hub overall and deliver educational packages on active citizenship, but will work with Northern College, a well established community based educational provider, expert at devising ways to sustain positive educational programmes.

The WEA currently serves 11,500 individual learners in South Yorkshire each year. By strengthening their resources to encourage active learning for active citizenship their work will be further extended and strengthened by setting up a citizenship support unit, servicing local community needs through outreach, on-line developments and conventional tutoring and mentoring. WEA has had citizenship as a founding principle in its mission since 1903 and is therefore well placed to provide the lead. Other hubs will be encouraged to consider working with the WEA in some way, as it is a national organisation with a well developed infrastructure in every region.

Northern College will run a seminar programme on active learning for active citizenship to further percolate and disseminate expertise. Northern College has successfully designed and delivered community courses as part of a DfES funded pilot project on community leadership, which they have rolled out into a more general programme of empowering education for those wanting to become more active in their own lives, the lives of their communities and influencing public policy and outcomes.

## West Midlands

This hub will provide deliberative space, training courses, support and mentoring for people in the West Midlands, focusing on those currently least likely to be engaged in public life. Those setting up the hub want to work primarily with women, encouraging, equipping and supporting people to become active citizens in the Black Country so as to ensure they know about, understand and can access places where decisions are made and priorities set. While personal development work and confidence building is a key component, it is recognised that this is not enough to create real and lasting change. Women need to be equally involved in decision making that affects themselves, their families and their communities, as well as accessing existing services and resources. Currently it is widely accepted, for example by Government Office West Midlands, and documented in research by organisations such as Oxfam, that women are involved in urban regeneration but in less influential positions, and that women are disproportionately disillusioned and disengaged with wider political systems and public life. The experience in Scotland, for example, is that local action and active learning for active citizenship can create positive outcomes for women and democracy.

It is therefore planned to provide locally based courses; organise trips to decision making bodies; encourage deliberation, reflection and networking; set up a mentoring system and develop sustainability.

Working for Change will operate in partnership with educational and community groups such as the local Regional Equalities Steering Group, Fircroft College, Wolverhampton Asian Women and Diabetes Group, Sandwell Women's Enterprise Development Agency, Black Country Women's Development Network, Regional Action West Midlands and West Midlands Constitutional Convention.

## **Greater Manchester**

This hub is based on the premise that active citizenship should be learnt through actual participation. It will provide accredited education for community members to carry out an audit and evaluation of a group or community of their choice. Community Based Audits and Evaluations have been a successful tool used by student youth and community workers while studying at Manchester Metropolitan University. Access to this tool and educational process will be made available to community members to enable them to strengthen their knowledge, understanding and ability to effect change in their own lives, those of their communities and policy more generally. Community auditing and the finding of local solutions for local issues means that there is a greater potential for effective and sustainable strategies to be implemented.

The hub forms part of outreach and widening participation work at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), which includes positive community based action. A taught module from MMU will provide participants with a framework for their practice and help them identify ways forward. Those who choose to be accredited for the module can use the credit towards a professional qualification in youth and community work at various levels, provided by MMU. The outcomes and model can inform work elsewhere in England and active learning for active citizenship more generally.

There are over 500 voluntary organisations affiliated to Voluntary Action Manchester who work with the Community Audit and Evaluation Centre at MMU and Community Pride. Existing work focuses on partnership working with agencies such as Connexions, New Deal, Employment Zones and Millennium Volunteers. The proposed locations and partner agencies for the hub include Hattersley Regeneration Partnership, Tameside and Manchester Groundwork, Blackburn and Darwen Neighbourhood Planning Groups and Wigan and Leigh Organic Growers and/or Health Visitors, Whalley Range Forum, Manchester, residents groups in Salford, Greater Manchester Young Lesbian, Gay and Bi-sexual Peer Support Project, and Manchester Homelessness Peer Researcher Project.

# Community based learning

The experiences and expertise of voluntary and community based groups was complimented by reference to relevant academic and policy literature. These are listed in the bibliography which can be found alongside this report on the Home Office website, along with some useful website links. Much literature has been published relating to active citizenship during the past few years reflecting policy developments by the Government. Earlier literature is not listed although such work may well have had strong influences on contemporary thinking, policy and practice.

Sir Bernard Crick has made an important contribution to this area of work, and to policy development more generally. The Home Secretary, David Blunkett, has also written extensively on active citizenship. These works provide the understanding and definition of active citizenship used in this report.

Lessons from this academic literature inform the suggestions for positive ways forward, embracing values of social justice, participation, equality and diversity, plus co-operation and taking into account issues of gender, race and other aspects of marginalisation in such work. Following on from the work of Sir Bernard Crick and David Blunkett the focus is on citizenship as a capacity within people rather than citizenship as something people do or do not possess at any one time, in any one place. The suggested projects working within hubs will therefore embrace ideas of community based, empowering learning which enhances people's capacity in a context of working to counter inequalities and improve democracy.

## Improving democracy

Opportunities for reflective education and citizenship, participation and deliberative democracy are key features of 'governance' that entails widespread active involvement rather than 'top-down' government. We should therefore work to improve the capacity of individuals and communities to relate to the world around them as active, critical, reflective citizens.

As David Blunkett has said, 'Democracy is not just an association of individuals determined to protect the private sphere, but a realm of active freedom in which citizens come together to shape the world around them' (Edith Kahn Memorial Lecture, 2003).

When people are alienated from politics, this leads to a reduction in 'critical literacy', whereby people are encouraged to debate, argue, disagree, challenge, evaluate and resist. Active learning for active citizenship therefore links into a core characteristic of parliamentary democracy by increasing access to opportunities for deliberation. At the same time, community activity is essentially autonomous and therefore complementary to more systematic, democratic systems. Increased democratic activity should lead to changes within democratic structures but will not replace them entirely. While government agencies, such as the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit, are developing exciting initiatives, there needs to be a more general reconsideration of government structures and practices in order to accommodate a healthier democracy. For example, government at all levels needs political will and training to cope with active, empowered, sometimes dissenting citizens. Active learning for active citizenship projects will therefore be encouraged to develop

educational opportunities for those serving in local and central government agencies as elected members or officials, encouraging and enabling them to work in positive partnership with the voluntary and community sector to contribute to a more active and healthy democracy.

While partnership working can be very difficult, especially if power inequalities between different participants are ignored, it can facilitate positive ways forward. Stronger partnerships reflecting 'joined up' thinking are still needed between different Government agencies, as well as between Government agencies and the voluntary and community sector. Each project involved in active learning for active citizenship plans to support this way of working.

The hubs therefore embrace projects working towards extending democratic activities within civil society as well as offering educational and partnership opportunities for government agencies.

## **Empowering education**

The hubs also incorporate community based empowering approaches to learning. Empowerment is not something that is done to participants, rather it is a more subtle process whereby people come to recognise their own situation and develop the ability to do something about it. Indeed, power inequalities abound, even in the way some forms of knowledge are more valued than others. Learning about active citizenship will therefore focus on the hidden inequalities in power surrounding everyone and affecting their life chances, as well as on personal abilities and skills.

In order to participate and have their voice heard, citizens need to understand power and how to have an impact. Because citizens act together, they need to know and understand something of the conditions of other citizens, to support collective action. Active citizenship education will involve participants in social learning where the educational focus is on collective, innovative, problem-solving processes of action, reflection, communication and co-operation.

Learning for citizenship is dependent on a feeling of belonging and collective experience and practice. Indeed, Vincent Nichols, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham in 2000, suggested at that time that 'solidarity is the Christian name for citizenship'. Acquiring skills is therefore not enough and indeed may even obscure and exacerbate issues of inequality. Knowledge is needed to make judgements, but underlying this there needs to be an understanding of possibilities and restrictions in the world in which we live. To bring about social change, knowledge must be translated into social capital. As participants reflect on, and review, their learning in active citizenship, their individual social capital will increase and thereby their confidence and ability to contribute to the social capital of the communities with which they identify. This directly links into the Home Office's community capacity building review, which itself relates to a range of Government policy objectives, including social capital, lifelong learning, governance and regeneration.

As part of community capacity building, community leadership, like governance, should be seen to embrace and celebrate leadership from the 'bottom-up'. Many people grow into leadership after becoming active citizens. There are also many different forms of leadership, including that provided by people working quietly at the grassroots to encourage active citizenship without taking

on the mantle of positions traditionally associated with hierarchical leadership. Indeed, sometimes the confidence of those in positions of leadership can seem intimidating to others.

Discussion and deliberation is central to such an educational process. While technology, when used well, can cascade amazing facts, these need to be understood in context. This is a major way for this project to link in with the new Active Citizenship Centre. Web based resources could provide material that is easy to access if designed well especially if based on ‘acting locally but thinking globally’. However, learning resources can only *support* reflection and interactive learning between *people*.

This has been recognised for a long time within the voluntary and community sector where there is a long and diverse history of educational work with people of all ages, including young people outside formal education. Inequalities in society create barriers for most people that community education and development workers are experienced and skilled in enabling those joining in community based activities to overcome. Community settings are less threatening than schools and colleges and provide a variety of learning opportunities which people can select to suit their immediate needs or preferences. Community based approaches stress that people learn most effectively from their peers and through involvement in doing something rather than through abstraction in the classroom. The majority of participants in community based learning may not associate their participation as part of educational processes. Those hosting hubs recognise that people are much more likely to become engaged in learning if they are enjoying themselves. Learning should also be flexible and based in settings attractive to those lacking confidence to take part in formal educational establishments.

As stated in Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal (DfEE Publications 1999): ‘The kind of learning that is on offer can therefore have a critical effect on whether people who are not learners are willing to give it a try. Among the approaches that work best are those where learning is organised around activities that are familiar and enjoyable and which engage people’s interests; or where adults can see in the learning that is on offer an obvious benefit that they can apply in their daily lives.’

People learn through everyday activities and interactions, so active citizens must be supported and encouraged to link lessons from every aspect of their lives, whether at home, in the workplace, in civil society, engaging in sporting or leisure pursuits, consuming public services such as health services, or in the more public sphere of politics. Education for active citizenship within the hubs will link into opportunities for actual participation and engagement and ensure learning is relevant, purposeful and accessible to people as part of their everyday lives. It will also be important to link into wider networks encouraging participants to contextualise their individual experiences in relation to those of people across Britain, Europe and the world. A helpful framework for this will be offered by the declaration of 2005 as European Year of Citizenship Education.

## **Fighting inequalities**

As the Reiffers Report (Commission of the European Communities, 1997) suggests, citizenship is closely related to the kind of society and polity we want to live in. Key values for this work are therefore social justice, participation, equality and diversity and co-operation. People learn

differently and face different barriers. Barriers can be related to impairment, ethnicity, religion and faith, gender, age, class, nationality, place of residence, sexuality or wealth for example, and often lead to inequalities. The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance already insists this is acknowledged in educational developments.

Sir Bernard Crick has explained: 'In the political tradition stemming from the Greek city states and the Roman republic, citizenship has meant involvement in public affairs' (1999), although as David Blunkett also points out, '...citizenship did not extend to foreigners or slaves, and women were excluded from the exercise of political power' (2003), in these ancient civic states.

Providers of educational experiences and opportunities within the hubs will ensure barriers to effective learning be at least minimised, although preferably eliminated. Practicalities, such as need for child-care, will therefore be built into the projects. However, for example, if black people and groups are to be asked to help white people understand racism, they need adequate resourcing to do this. This is also true for other marginalised groups contributing to, and enriching, policy development and practice.

Providing education for and encouraging active citizenship needs to actively challenge exclusionary attitudes and practices, not just guard against excluding groups of people. Reflection and critical consciousness must be encouraged at all times to instigate challenges to the unacceptable nature of some political activity associated with extremist groups such as the British National Party. The Home Secretary, David Blunkett, has said, 'I do not mind being challenged day in and day out, and I think that, if the challenge is taken up by people who have underpinned their ability to cope with differences by having already learnt how to solve problems sensibly, how to develop differences equally, how to treat each other fairly, then we will have a society that is worth living in' (1999).

## **Qualifications framework**

As well as learning for its own sake, many participants in the hubs will wish some recognition for their educational achievements. Whilst accreditation is not necessarily needed for the work to have an impact on levels of community involvement and capacity, students often welcome the recognition that learning accreditation provides. Credit transfer schemes recognising education within all educational sectors could help build individual confidence to continue within learning processes and monitor achievements. However, people need support to make the leap from non-accredited to accredited learning and qualifications should not be imposed on learners. There are lots of barriers for many people to overcome before they have the confidence to access more formal education.

The national steering group on active learning for active citizenship will therefore further negotiate a nationally accredited framework along with further details about the curriculum. These will be flexible enough to allow people to base their own learning plans on their specific experiences and circumstances. Such work will link with the Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council currently being suggested as the body to take forward standards within community development and learning; employment and workplace learning; libraries, information and archive services; further education and higher education. This builds on previous work completed by the Federation for Community

Development Learning (2001) (previously the Federation for Community Work Training Groups) and Paulo, a national training organisation with responsibility for ensuring community education, development and youth work.

The quality of educational provision in the hubs will be evaluated by the national steering group in partnership with existing relevant agencies, and this will mesh with possibilities for accredited learning. For example, the Open College Network (OCN) has been working with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to develop Entry, Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced level awards in Citizenship Studies. The National OCN is an educational not-for-profit organisation, offering both course development and accreditation services. Their distinct feature is that they operate on the ground, in areas and with individuals and organisations that are not usually reached by further and higher education. OCN specialise in courses equivalent to GCSE and A level standard but these can link into Further and Higher Education levels. Most Further Education (FE) qualifications now directly link into university Higher Education (HE) courses. Edexcel provide and validate citizenship modules within existing FE courses.

### **Postscript**

The Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme aims to identify the most effective ways in which a major expansion in citizenship learning opportunities for adults can be stimulated and supported. The framework in Appendix 3 provides the basis for action-based learning through the programme. A phased series of sub-regional hubs, starting with the three described in this report – will be the main content of the programme, although the learning will be enhanced by reflective thinking and sharing in the steering group and at periodic conferences throughout the life of the programme, which is due to end in March 2006.

Anyone interested in becoming involved with the programme is encouraged to contact the Civil Renewal Unit (see inside front cover for contact details).

# Appendix 1

## Active learning for active citizenship core curriculum

The core curriculum will be based on the following values:

- Social justice
- Participation
- Equality and diversity
- Co-operation.

It will focus upon and be delivered through participation and active learning.

The curriculum will encourage an understanding of the three heads of active citizenship in a parliamentary democracy (as in the national curriculum for schools). These are:

- Social and moral responsibility
- Community involvement
- Political literacy (a propensity to act after due reflection and to recognise the necessity of compromise).

It will seek to strengthen respect for justice and fairness, for rights and duties, and for diversity, mutual understanding and tolerance in a culturally diverse society.

Within this will be the concern and care for others; presentation and calculation about what effect actions are likely to have on other people and other problems, and an understanding and care for the consequences of actions even when not wholly as intended.

The curriculum recognises that active citizenship can take many forms and aims to provide people with the knowledge, understanding and skills to engage in positive personal development and be effective participants in public life. It also recognises that further reflection, deliberation, understanding, development and skills acquisition may be necessary for particular roles.

In particular, the curriculum is seen as a foundation for building skills for leadership in communities. There are broadly three dimensions to community leadership:

1. Leadership as facilitation
2. Leadership as management and project delivery
3. Leadership as representation or governance.

An understanding of community development principles and practice is crucial to facilitation and representation in particular. An entrepreneurial approach is increasingly recognised as important for management and project delivery.

For sustainability in communities, a combination of these three dimensions of leadership is essential.

The curriculum will fall into two main areas.

## **Communication and participation skills**

This will include:

- Skills of oral and written advocacy and presentation relevant to the practical delivery of local projects
- Publicity and relations with the media
- How to recognise issues of individual and collective concern within communities and how to identify and develop understanding of concerns related to everyday experiences of all individuals and groups
- How to discuss and establish mutually acceptable priorities and make decisions in the context of community development
- How to manage different attitudes, approaches and values within a context of respect for each other and encouraging healthy democratic debate
- How to encourage collective resolution of conflict over priorities
- How to encourage reflective and deliberative processes
- The organisation and facilitation of discussion and action groups
- Democracy and leadership in small groups
- Skills related to the use of everyday activities such as community events, sports/arts etc to facilitate learning and deliberation
- Recognition of existing diversities and development of individual and collective confidence, particularly recognising the importance of identity
- Conflict resolution within and across communities
- How to map and make best use of the links and potential networks between different groups.

## **Knowledge, information and understanding**

This will include:

- Recognising, finding and mapping local sources of information
- Training in the use of the internet and world wide web to discover local, national and international information
- Identification of and knowledge about capacities and capabilities within the voluntary sector and community groups
- Making decisions about positive ways to engage with local, regional and national government agencies operating in the area - including political parties and pressure groups
- How to constructively engage with other democratic, active organisations
- Recognising barriers to engagement and active participation so that strategies can be devised and discussed to facilitate overcoming these barriers
- Information about some of the complexities within public service provision

- The law and policies at local and other levels of governance, in particular in relation to health, housing, employment, environmental control, policing, child protection, care of the elderly and crime prevention
- Gaining an understanding of local community issues and placing these within the broader context
- The reality of the political dimension within everyday life and the legitimate use of power and authority
- Data provision and protection
- The powers and duties of political representative roles, such as local councillors and Members of Parliament
- Ways to monitor action and learning progress
- Consideration of inequalities and concepts of inclusion/exclusion
- Consideration of the variety of meanings of democracy/participation
- Leadership and involving others.

# Appendix 2

## A framework for expansion

A development of widespread citizenship learning opportunities for adults requires clarity about what approaches are most effective, and a concerted, cross-sector strategy to support such approaches.

The framework for such a strategy has five elements, which are set out here with the questions that the Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme is designed to answer. These will form the basis for the action-learning based evaluation.

### 1. Curriculum

The Home Secretary has already agreed a core curriculum, following cross-sector discussion (see Appendix 1). The Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme will consider:

- What course outlines and resource materials already exist, what gaps are there and how can they be filled? How important is it to tailor course content to the specific interests and activities of particular learners?
- How can learning resources be more effectively shared and disseminated?
- What can be learned from the expertise that exists in communities, and about the blockages that people identify to their greater involvement in governance and public affairs?
- Whether, in the light of experience, the curriculum needs amending or extending.

### 2. Learning methods

- What types of learning approach promote particular learning outcomes or engage specific learners, for example:
  - non-residential and/or residential courses
  - deliberative space - opportunities for individual and group reflection
  - mentoring and support
  - facilitated networking
  - e-learning
- The practical arrangements necessary to ensure full accessibility are already well established, eg venue, timing, child care, other support facilities, etc. Are there further lessons to be learnt about improving accessibility and inclusion?
- Do trainers need specific skills? What existing expertise can we tap into and how can such expertise be strengthened and expanded through staff development initiatives?

### 3. Citizenship learning in the wider educational context

- How important is formal recognition of people's learning achievements? What is the demand for accreditation? Can it form a block to people's confidence about entering learning processes? Does this apply differently to different target groups?

- How can progression routes to further qualifications be opened up for those who want them?
- How can progression routes between different sectors of education be established? How can citizenship learning be best integrated into the further and continuing education system?
- What evidence is there to support the proposition that citizenship learning offers an access route to wider educational opportunities for people who are alienated from formal education? What is the take up rate and what sort of further learning is identified by participants as useful, relevant and attractive?

#### 4. Funding and sustainability

- How can partnership working minimise duplication of services, ensure sustainability of citizenship learning programmes and promote positive new thinking in existing educational centres?
- What funding models are sustainable? What is the feasible balance between fees and subsidy for different target groups? In what circumstances do charges cause barriers for participants?
- How can we most effectively show that citizenship learning supports the remit, objectives and priorities of Learning and Skills Councils?
- To explore as we make the new initiatives better known whether some further education colleges and departments of continuing education would see in this a market for short courses in citizenship skills for community leaders.

#### 5. Marketing and promotion

- What approaches work best locally?
- Do target groups relate to the concept of ‘citizenship learning’, or is the key to link learning opportunities to people’s specific activity needs?
- How can the work of the hubs be best publicised among FE colleges, departments of continuing education and other established training bodies?
- Would a national branding and marketing programme be feasible and offer value for money, or not?

### Evaluation

The programme will adopt an action-learning based approach to evaluation, using the above questions as its basis. A part-time evaluation co-ordinator will be appointed by the Programme Steering Group with the brief:

- To facilitate self-assessment within each pilot learning hub
- To facilitate the sharing of learning between the hubs
- To consolidate the lessons learnt from the programme as a whole, so as to facilitate agreement on the terms for a framework for expansion at the end of the programme.

The evaluation will be linked into the broader research agenda of the Active Citizenship Centre.

# Appendix 3

## Delegates at the planning workshop

### Austin Court

### Birmingham

16 October 2003

Karen Bartlett, Charter 88

Elizabeth Bayliss, Social Action for Health

Selvia Begum, North Smethwick Resource Centre

Graham Birkin, Cicero

Stephen Bourne, Home Office, Civil Renewal Unit

Trevor Burchick, Northern Wave Swimming Club, Salford

John Chapman, Barnsley and Northern College

Alison Dickinson, UFI/Learndirect

Dick Ellison, Paulo

Mike Felse, Proud City Co-operative, Salford

Alison Gilchrist, Community Development Foundation

Michael Grimes, Citizenship Foundation

Ali Harris, Stonewall, London

Jerry Hayes, Active Community Unit

Ted Hartley, WEA South Yorks

John Holford, University of Surrey

Rennie Johnson, Consultant

Rebecca Linley, Re:source (Libraries, Museums and Archives)

John Lloyd, DfES

Janice Marks, Federation for Community Development Learning

Zoraida Mendiwelo-Bendek, Community Operational Research Unit, Lincoln

Jan Newton, DfES

Carolina Oteyza, Community Pride Initiative, Manchester

Carrie Packham, Community Audit and Evaluation Centre, Manchester

Geeta Patel, Working for Change, Wolverhampton

Peter Shaw, South Birmingham College

Simon Taylor, Fircroft College of Adult Education, Birmingham

Jason Wood, Research Student

Charles Woodd, Home Office, Civil Renewal Unit

Val Woodward, Civil Renewal Unit

Christine Wright, Stoke-on-Trent Community Citizenship Education Forum



