

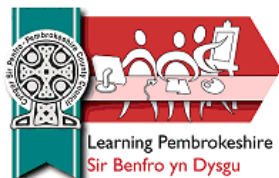
The Learning Journey:

A collaborative approach to Adult and Community based learning in Pembrokeshire

A report on research undertaken by Learning Pembrokeshire,
Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services, and Pembrokeshire College

This report has been prepared on behalf of:

Learning Pembrokeshire



Pembrokeshire Association
of Voluntary Services



Pembrokeshire College



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Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the following:

Learning Pembrokeshire:

Angharad Reed
Mike Isted, Pembrokeshire Education Portal
Administrative staff

Pembrokeshire College:

Julie Thomas
Administrative Staff

Voluntary and Community Sector:

Sue Leonard, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary
Services
Vicky Parsons, St John's Community Hall, Pembroke
Dock
Members of the Training Advisory Group

Members of the current network of ACL providers

Carmarthenshire Learning Network: Alyson Jenkins

RISE Learning Network: Dave Waddington

Editing and Proofing: Jenny Blackmore and Angela Evans

Funding: ELWa under the Common Investment Fund programme

Executive Summary

Through the ELWa Common Investment Fund, funding was received in Pembrokeshire to undertake research into Adult and Community based learning provision across the Local Authority (Learning Pembrokeshire), Pembrokeshire College, and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The overall aim of the Fund is to support closer collaborative working in the delivery of Adult and Community based Learning (ACL) to maximise resources, remove nugatory competition, and meet learning needs.

This report explores current provision of ACL opportunities in Pembrokeshire, examining the content of the learning provided, how it is planned and funded, and issues regarding delivery. Methods of identifying learner needs are described, and opportunities to enhance provision through better co-ordination of information and resources are explored, along with innovative developments in delivery and planning that could usefully feed into the development of a Pembrokeshire Learning Network. Learning Network models from two other areas have been reviewed so that elements of their success may be considered for inclusion in a model for Pembrokeshire. The impact of external influences and strategic developments on ACL have also been considered.

Mapping of current provision indicates that a wide range of ACL courses are being successfully delivered, with no evidence of regional inequalities or discrepancies across the County. There was some evidence of unmet need from the Voluntary and Community Sector, which may in part reflect the particular requirements of the sector, with its high degree of specialist needs such as training in arts marketing, and community transport, and also the preference for in-house training geared to the needs and cultural profile of particular organisations and their volunteers.

Further research in the form of the Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey 2005 suggests that generally there is a reasonable degree of satisfaction with the range of course subjects on offer, but that there were obstacles to learners' participation. For example, many adult learners said that they did not have sufficient time to take up learning opportunities, and that there was a lack of courses available locally and at suitable times to meet the needs of some individuals with family and work commitments. This does suggest the need to explore more flexible delivery methods, including building on experience with on-line learning delivery, but also the need to be more systematic in gathering and mapping data on the geographical distribution of learner needs.

No evidence was found of significant duplication among providers, although the fact that around 15-20% of output was planned and not delivered suggests that anticipating demand accurately presents a challenge for ACL providers.

Delivery methods have been considered including new methods being pioneered by all of the three main providers. There are particular priorities emerging from the pilot projects undertaken as part of this research, which include:

- The need to develop creative delivery methods that better address the learning styles of individuals who may have difficulty benefiting from more traditional models of delivery, perhaps because of earlier negative educational experiences.
- The need to develop delivery models that address economic and social obstacles to learning, including economic disadvantage, lack of basic skills or confidence, transport and care issues.
- The scope in partnership-working of sharing expertise and experience and developing learning models
- The contribution that new technologies, especially the internet, can make to increasing learners' choice, the richness and convenience of the learning experience, and the facilitation of integrated delivery systems involving all providers

The benefits of on-line learning are considered, and the development of the Pembrokeshire Education Portal is considered as a model of good practice. The Portal can be built upon by developing partnership-based strategies for promoting on-line learning opportunities. It can also serve as a platform for the further development of the required information management systems which will form the organisational and technical infrastructure required to develop the Learning Network in Pembrokeshire.

Learning Networks from other areas in Wales have been reviewed, and through focus group sessions consideration has been given to the criteria for success of a Learning Network. The principle aims motivating consideration of the development of a Learning Network for Pembrokeshire are:

- To widen participation in learning
- To better meet learner needs
- To maximise the effective use of resources

The recommendations detailed in this report will enable the following key outputs from the Pembrokeshire Learning Network:

- A strong, single branded, learner-led network, recognisable to all.
- Quality ACL provision.
- The maximisation of the use of all resources available, which includes venues, trainers and back-office functions.
- A set of protocols for sharing of information, resources, and policy development to support more effective strategic planning.
- Hubs of specialist expertise related to particular subject specialisms, online network groups, and sharing policies such as working with vulnerable adults.

Building an effective Learning Network will require commitment, as providers continue to work on already excellent beginnings in developing mutual respect and understanding, and embrace a strategic vision that puts the needs of the learner at the centre of their shared mission. The rewards in terms of widening access are clear, but also the increased efficiency of the ACL sector as a whole. The new model must be essentially evidence and intelligence driven if it is to be learner-centred, and a number of initiatives to improve information gathering, collection, and dissemination are detailed. Matching resources to needs, avoiding duplication, and drawing on the particular strengths and experience of individual providers can only enhance efficient use of resources whilst it drives up quality standards. The need to develop a robust quality framework will be essential to ensuring that providers operating within the network meet the requirements for quality provision as set down by Estyn and ELWa.

The issue of sustainability, however, is central to ensuring the success and longevity of the Learning Network. The appointment of an Independent Management team will require funding to oversee and drive forward the network, and consideration should be given to the way in which the Network is

formally constituted as this may have a direct impact on the way in which funds can be secured for the future.

Implementing the recommendations detailed in this report will go a considerable way to resolving many of the issues identified with widening participation and building best practice in Adult and Community based learning identified by Estyn. They will also support the strategic objectives of key policies and strategies from other organisations, such as the Welsh Assembly Government, and ELWa, which are central to strategic developments in ACL provision.

1. Research Rationale and methodology

1.1 Rationale

Through the ELWa Common Investment Fund, funding was received in Pembrokeshire to undertake research in to Adult and Community based learning provision across the Local Authority, Pembrokeshire College, and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The overall aim of the Common Investment Fund was to support closer collaborative working in the delivery of Adult and Community based Learning (ACL) to maximise resources, remove nugatory competition, and meet learning needs through the achievement of three key objectives. The three objectives were defined as:

- To research and map local provision to develop a clear picture of the current delivery infrastructure and to identify opportunities for change
- To pilot new ACL projects to test innovative and collaborative initiatives
- To develop an action plan for the future development of the Pembrokeshire Learning Network

The four outputs identified to be achieved through this research are:

- To have undertaken a comprehensive review of existing ACL provision in Pembrokeshire, which highlights gaps in provision, identifies unmet demand and areas of duplication in learning provision and which draws on partners' views and ideas for future delivery using all available data sources
- To have researched methods used across ACL provision which identify learning needs, and tools for mapping and sharing information
- To have identified and piloted new models of learning delivery to determine those which suit a community learning setting and recommended options going forward for implementation by the network which sustain or improve the quality of delivery
- To have undertaken research into other appropriate learning network models under development and to propose a 'fit for purpose' Pembrokeshire Learning Network model, which has the support of its members, is sustainable, quality focused, removes duplicate provision, offers innovation in the delivery of learning and provides appropriate support to each stage of the "learning journey"

A second imperative encouraging collaboration in this field is Estyn's approach to area based inspections of ACL provision, with a mandate to inspect all learning provision funded by ELWa (including those European projects where the match funding is from ELWa).

The outcomes of this research will therefore help inform the further development of the strategic framework for the planning and funding of ACL provision, based on a collaborative approach, and explore opportunities for reconfiguring the existing learning infrastructure in Pembrokeshire to develop a flexible, cost effective, and quality focused learning network, responsive to learner needs.

1.2 A partnership approach

The three partners involved in this research are:

- Learning Pembrokeshire
- Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
- Pembrokeshire College

Learning Pembrokeshire

Learning Pembrokeshire is the Local Authority service providing a wide range of county-wide educational opportunities that include accredited and non-accredited courses for adults of all ages and abilities, during the day and evening. This is delivered through a network of provision utilising Local Authority Community Learning Centres, schools, e-learning centres and a range of community settings providing access in both urban and rural locations and through partnerships with other organisations. The service aims to improve the quality of life in the county for adults to develop their personal, cultural and community interests.

The authority delivers provision in ICT, Welsh for Adults, Basic Skills, and ESOL, as well as some other general education courses, through a third party franchise agreement with Pembrokeshire College which generates income for Learning Pembrokeshire. Other income streams are complex and come from a range of sources such as ELWa, the Big Lottery Fund, Local Authority contributions, fee income, and significant levels of European funding.

Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS)

PAVS is the County Voluntary Council, representing the voluntary and community sector in this research. PAVS holds and updates information on 613¹ voluntary and community groups operating in the county. PAVS currently has 242 active members. It is estimated that the sector provides employment for 1549 people in Pembrokeshire with 45% of these jobs being full-time. Over 5,600 people are involved as trustees of voluntary organisations and a further 13,743 people volunteer, performing a wide range of duties in varied settings.

Research² in to ACL provision in the Voluntary and Community Sector undertaken to inform this report targeted all members of PAVS through a questionnaire. Two focus group sessions were held with members of the Training Advisory Group, and in-depth interviews were undertaken with 30 organisations representing 15 different constituencies ranging from Arts and Community Development, to Older People and Welsh speakers.

Just over half of the courses delivered by the sector are provided on demand, with the remaining courses delivered at various times throughout the year and 10% as part of a planned programme or scheduled activities. The majority of organisations do not receive any core funding for their provision and do not have dedicated teaching staff to deliver the courses. Nearly a third of all training provision is delivered by staff of the organisation, with a quarter delivered by external trainers. Forty percent of courses are delivered in-house and 30% at community venues. The breadth of subjects covered are shown in Figures 3 and 4 in Section 2.

¹ Pembrokeshire Voluntary Sector Almanac 2003

² Research into ACL in the Voluntary and Community Sector, March 2006

Pembrokeshire College

Pembrokeshire College is the largest provider of post-16 education and training in the county and offers full-time and part-time Further Education and Higher Education to over 10,000 students. The main campus is sited in Haverfordwest and includes a new centre specialising in advanced technology. A smaller campus, MITEC, is sited at Milford Haven dedicated to IT delivery, marine engineering, boat building and yacht skippering. IT centres are situated in Learning Pembrokeshire Community Learning Centres at Pembroke Dock and Tenby. Community provision is offered through a European Social Fund project – Pembrokeshire Education and Training (PET) and an outreach programme of nationally accredited Introduction courses held at community venues and at some Learning Pembrokeshire centres.

There are a range of third party franchise agreements in operation in addition to the one held with Learning Pembrokeshire. These include Princes Trust Cymru, FRAME (a local charity offering vocational placements to people with mental health problems), and a Learn Direct franchise to private training provider Infotech.

1.3 Methodology

This research has consciously chosen a holistic approach to ensure that the overall purpose – recommending a ‘fit for purpose’ learning network model for Pembrokeshire – is achieved from an informed standpoint. This requires a thorough understanding of context (for providers and learners), the nature of provision, delivery methods, ways in which learner needs are identified, and opportunities to build on good practice and further collaborative working.

The primary data³ relating to ACL provision for Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College was gathered from their individual Management Information systems, which contained data relating to course subjects, location, and timing, as well as details of courses cancelled.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather data about provision in the Voluntary and Community Sector⁴. Base-line questionnaires were distributed to all members of PAVS by post and also available to be completed on the PAVS website. In-depth interviews were held with 30 organisations selected from a combination of those who indicated on the base-line questionnaire that they were happy to participate in further research, and those holding Service Level Agreements with the Local Authority. These 30 organisations represented 16 key constituencies. Interviews explored issues relating to training needs identification, provision of training, and views about a Pembrokeshire Learning Network.

Data was also gathered through two focus group sessions held with the Voluntary Sector Training Advisory Group (TAG), and with members of the current network of ACL providers who are likely to be included in an ACL Estyn area inspection in the county. A key area for discussion was considering the criteria for success of a Pembrokeshire Learning Network.

Quantitative data was recorded and analysed using Excel and other simple statistical analysis techniques. Qualitative data was analysed by examining the range and content of responses to interviews and focus group questions to identify common issues, priorities, concerns and areas of difference.

Representatives from Learning Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire College, and the Voluntary and Community Sector met regularly during the course of this research, and with the author of this report to discuss findings, review presentation of findings, and to consider appropriate recommendations.

³ Primary data is available from each of the providers and/or the author of this report

⁴ Research into ACL in the Voluntary and Community sector, March 2006

1.4 Defining Adult and Community based Learning (ACL)

Defining what is meant by adult and community based learning has been essential in determining exactly what provision is then analysed and reported upon in this research. A report from Estyn⁵ has defined ACL as “... *the learning that is provided for adults in local community venues and which is particularly designed to reach out to places and people which other forms of learning do not reach*”.

In this report, the definition above has been considered and the partners involved have evaluated what provision they believe is likely to be included in an Estyn inspection. Consideration was given to where the learning took place and the courses identified from the primary data supplied from each provider.

The issues regarding determining the scope of ACL provision indeed remains something still to be clarified. In recognition of this, Estyn has currently indicated that the required period of notice for ACL inspections be increased from 12 to 24 weeks to enable appropriate provision to be identified and agreed upon.

⁵ Widening participation in adult community-based learning: A survey of best practice, Estyn, 21st June 2004

2. Adult and Community based Learning provision in Pembrokeshire

2.1 Mapping of provision

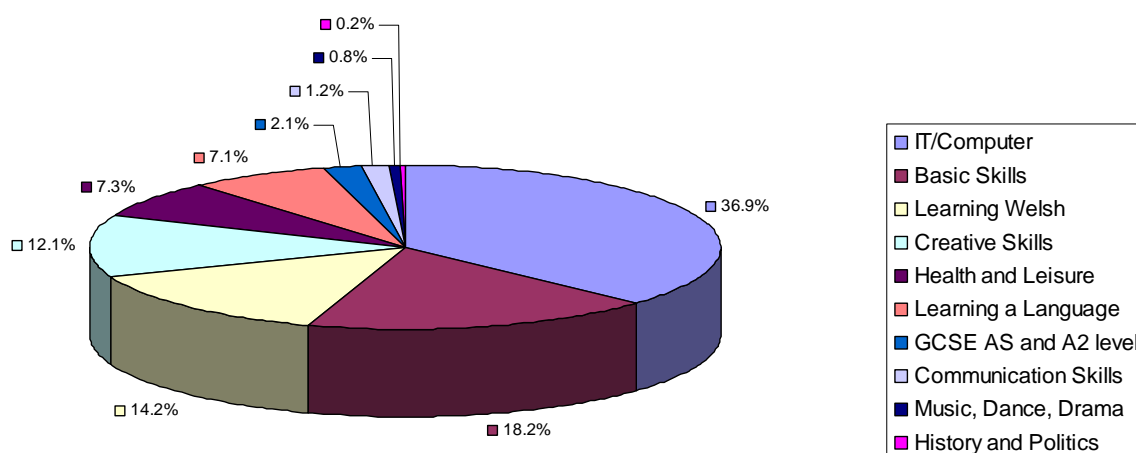
This section of the report examines the provision of Adult and Community based learning in Pembrokeshire. Learning opportunities are predominantly offered by Learning Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire College, and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

This section examines the content of the learning provided, how it is planned and funded, and issues regarding delivery. Methods of identifying learner needs are described, and opportunities to enhance provision through better co-ordination of information and resources are explored.

Following interrogation of their individual Management Information Systems, primary data *for the first term of 2005/06* was provided by Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College based on the criteria outlined in Section 1. Details of provision from the Voluntary and Community Sector has been provided as a result of research⁶ undertaken. For the purposes of this report, the Voluntary and Community Sector is treated as a single provider. It should be recognised that this represents a 'snapshot' of overall provision due to the diversity of the sector. Data from Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College rely on the integrity of the information gathering systems.

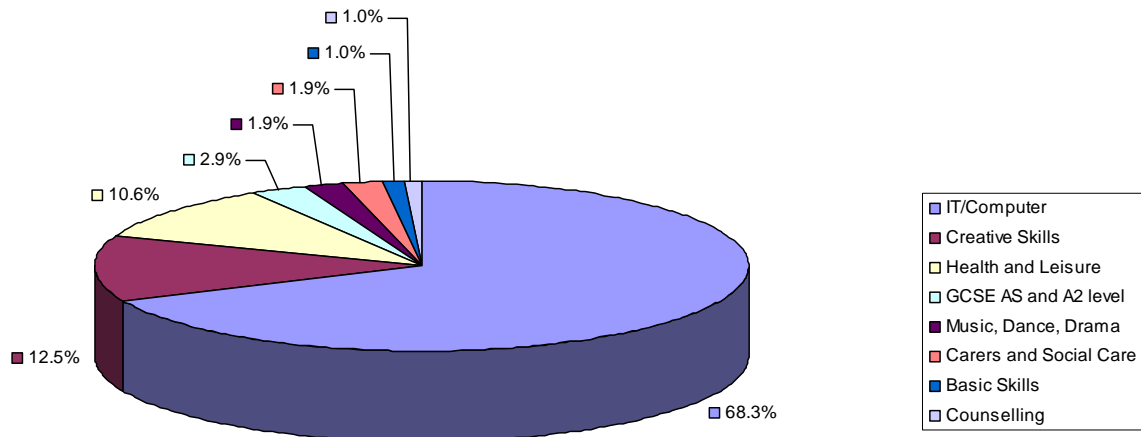
Before aggregating and analysing provision across Pembrokeshire, an initial picture is presented of the overall profile of provision from individual providers.

Figure 1 Learning Pembrokeshire ACL course provision by category for the whole county (Total number of courses offered first term of 2005/06 = 521)



⁶ Research in to ACL in the Voluntary and Community Sector, March 2006

Figure 2 Pembrokeshire College ACL course provision by category for the whole county (Total number of courses offered first term of 2005/06 = 104)



Voluntary and Community Sector (Total Courses Offered = 134)

The charts below are taken from the research report into Adult and Community-based learning in the Voluntary and Community Sector in Pembrokeshire. The way in which data is presented here reflects the many diverse specialisms which operate within the sector.

This data is based on information provided by 55 voluntary and community organisations that responded to a research questionnaire circulated to 222 organisations (members of PAVS)⁷. Of those who received the questionnaire, representing approx 25% of the sector, just over half (28 organisations) reported that they provided training and gave information on their courses offered. Readers should be aware however that whilst the main constituencies are represented here, it is acknowledged that other voluntary and community organisations are also providing training that has not been included in the research.

⁷ Further information on the sample is contained in Section 1

Figure 3 A snapshot of the type of courses provided by the Voluntary and Community Sector in Pembrokeshire with more than eight courses offered per category

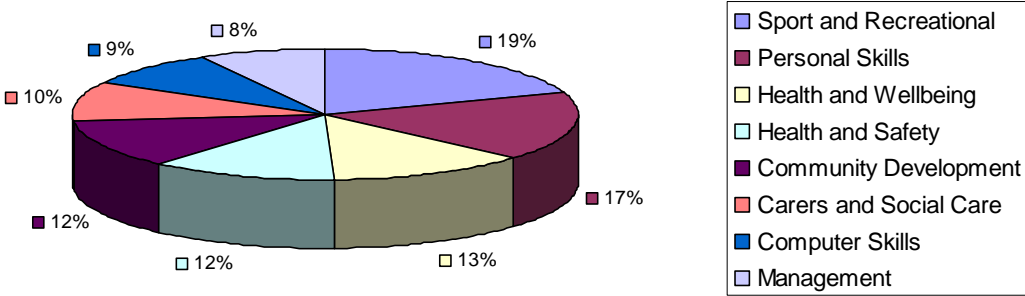
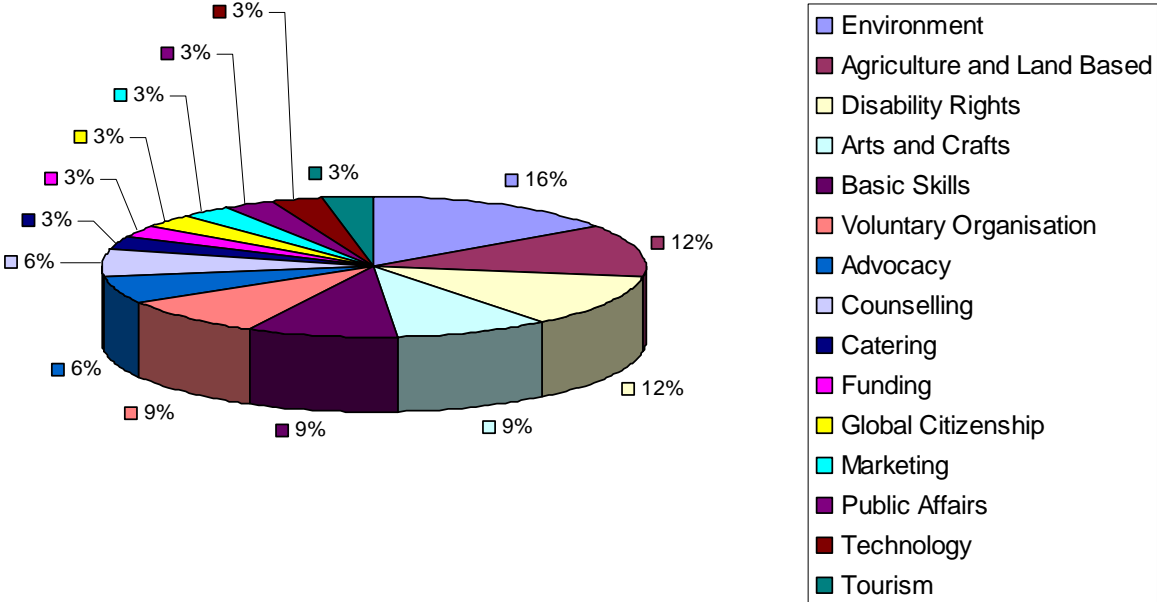


Figure 4 A snapshot of the type of courses provided by the Voluntary and Community Sector in Pembrokeshire with fewer than eight courses offered per category



More detailed information on where courses from Learning Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire College, and the Voluntary and Community Sector are delivered is available in Appendices 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

To summarise, and subject to the *caveat* regarding the Voluntary and Community Sector above, 68% of current ACL provision is delivered by Learning Pembrokeshire (a proportion of this being delivered on behalf of Pembrokeshire College through a third party arrangement in the areas of Community IT, Welsh for Adults, ESOL, Basic Skills, and some general education such as GCSE English), with the Voluntary and Community Sector providing 18%, and Pembrokeshire College providing a further 14%.

2.2 Planning and funding arrangements

The nature of funding arrangements and organisation's roles, creates differences in the delivery of Adult and Community based learning. Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College offer a high number of pre-planned courses, predominantly leading to accredited outcomes. By contrast, just over half of the provision offered by the Voluntary and Community Sector is delivered on demand, reflecting the lack of core funding for their provision, and also the lack of dedicated teaching staff to deliver the courses.

The funding for Learning Pembrokeshire is complex and made up of contributions from ELWa, fee income, local authority contributions, a franchise agreement with Pembrokeshire College, and European funds. Pembrokeshire College's community provision is in the main funded through ELWa with partial funding for the Pembrokeshire Education and Training (PET) Project from the European Social Fund (ESF).

Funding for the Voluntary and Community sector provision is made up of a combination of European funds, member fees, lottery funds and other grants, donations, in-house funds, and in small number of cases Service Level Agreements.

2.3 Popular subject areas

The three most popular subject areas across the three providers are:

- **IT and Computing**, with 272 courses (36%)

It is interesting to note that 70% of the IT provision is provided by Learning Pembrokeshire (representing 36.9% of its output), with 26% provided by Pembrokeshire College (though this represents 68.3% of its overall provision), and the remaining 4% arranged by the Voluntary and Community Sector.

- **Basic Skills**, with 96 courses (12.5%)

Basic Skills provision is almost exclusively (99%) delivered by Learning Pembrokeshire through a third party arrangement with Pembrokeshire College. The remaining 1% is picked up by the Voluntary and Community Sector.

- **Creative Skills**, with 79 courses (10.5%)

Creative Skills (Arts, Crafts etc.) provision is also dominated by Learning Pembrokeshire, with 80% of the courses. Pembrokeshire College and the Voluntary and Community Sector deliver 16.5% and 3.5% respectively.

2.4 Location

Within the Voluntary and Community Sector 40% of courses are delivered in-house, rather than in established learning centres across the county. This reflects the particular needs of learners for convenient locations and familiar venues where they often take their first steps back to learning.⁸ Consequently, data on locations where training is delivered is not provided for the sector here, although information on the types of venues used is available in Appendix 3.

⁸ Research into ACL in the Voluntary and Community sector, March 2006

Courses provided by Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College more frequently use fixed venue locations, although a proportion of courses are delivered through outreach, such as the IT Bus, and the use of local facilities such as Primary school ICT centres.

Figure 5 Locations of ACL provision with 40 or more courses

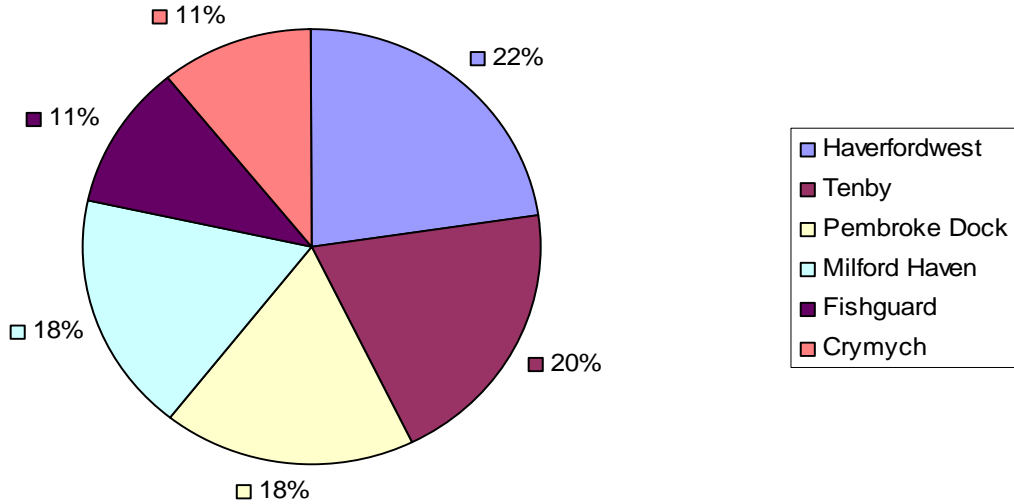


Figure 6 Locations of ACL provision with more than 10 but fewer than 40 courses

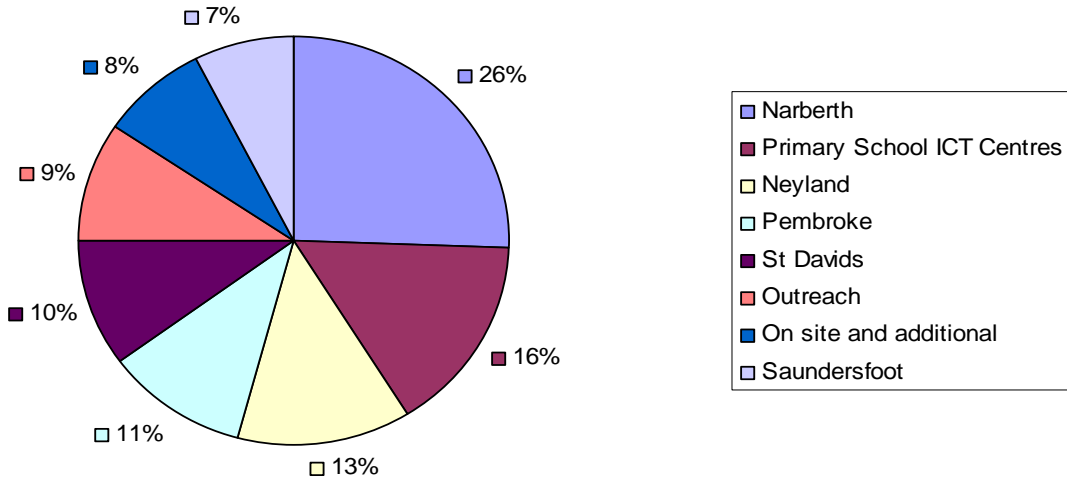
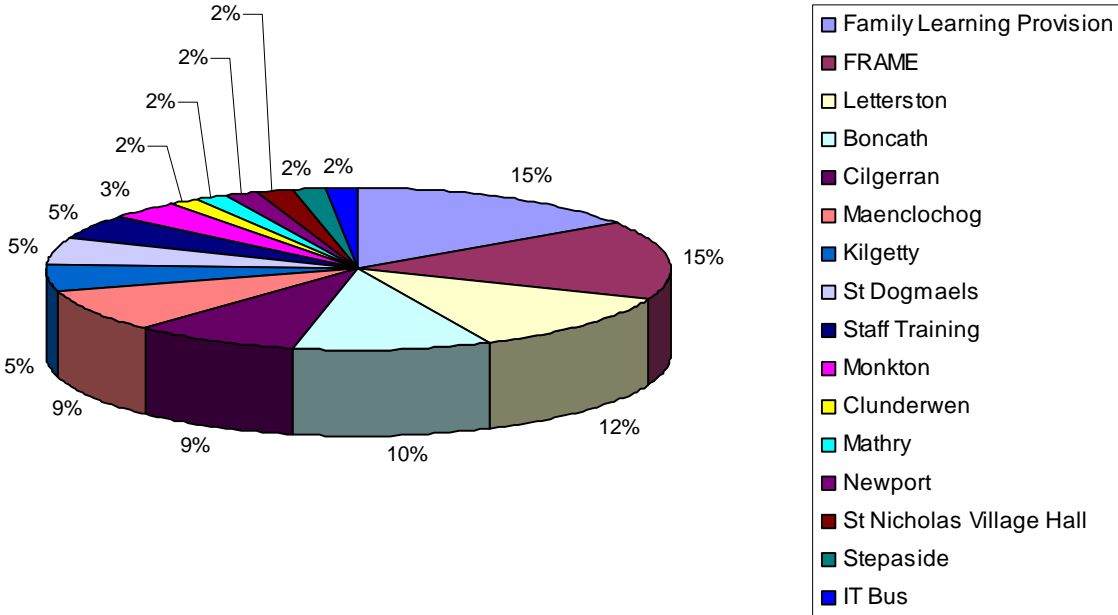
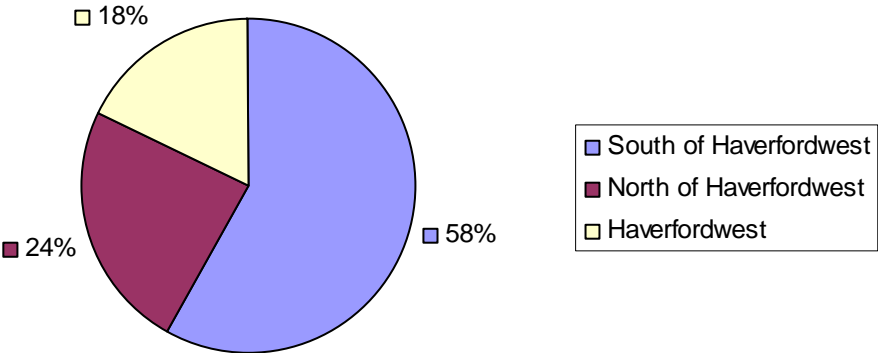


Figure 7 Locations of ACL provision with fewer than 10 courses



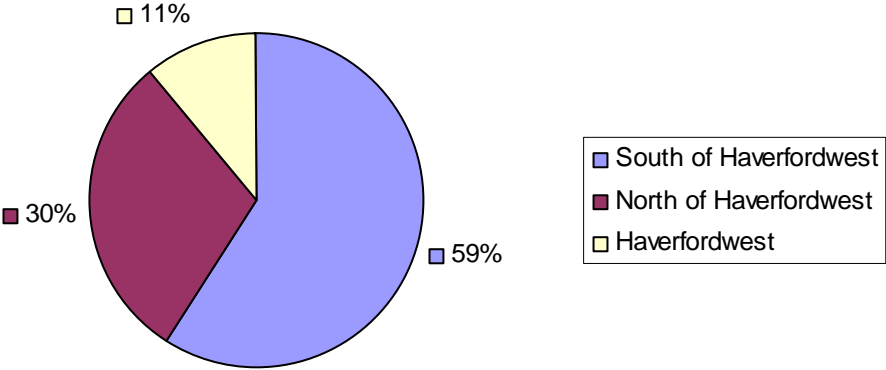
In terms of overall distribution of courses throughout the county this represents a split as shown below. It should be noted, however, that where it has not been possible to determine a specific geographical location for a course offered (e.g. the IT Bus), this has been excluded from the chart below. It is, however, fair to say that given the overall analysis of geographical distribution, it is reasonable to believe that excluding these courses has not distorted the overall picture of provision by location.

Figure 8 County-wide distribution of courses relative to the county town of Haverfordwest



Analysis of 2001 Census data⁹ for Pembrokeshire within the relevant adult learning target age range (16+) reveals the following:

Figure 9 Adult (16+) Population density in Pembrokeshire, 2001 Census



The adult population of Haverfordwest (including Merlins Bridge) represents 11% of the adult population of Pembrokeshire. North of Haverfordwest represents 30%, and south of Haverfordwest represents 59%. It therefore appears that there is no evidence of regional inequalities or discrepancies in ACL provision in Pembrokeshire.

⁹ Census of Pembrokeshire population 2001, ONS Crown Copyright 2003

2.5 Duplication of ACL provision

The issue of duplication is a complex one. At first sight the need to avoid excessive duplication of course provision may seem obvious. This should, however, be viewed in the context of an approach to Adult and Community based learning that should at least in part be market led, as well as responsive to educational and socio-economic drivers. Thus, any provision of duplicated learning opportunities may simply reflect consumer demand. The definition of 'duplication' is also open to various interpretations, depending on the criteria chosen for individualising courses. For instance there can be:

- *duplicated location of specific courses*: however one needs to be clear what counts as the same location e.g. is it the same venue or the same town?
- *duplicated content*: again there can be different dimensions of duplication e.g. same course, overlapping content, same subject area such as IT office applications.
- *duplicated time*: the same course may successfully run on the same day at different times in a given location but be unsustainable if two sessions are run at the same time on the same day at different locations.

Possible duplication between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the other two main providers was investigated through analysis of the data provided, and found not to be an issue because of the different style and content of training and needs of learners. Most of the training provided within the Voluntary and Community Sector is specialist in nature, relating to the specific needs of a specific voluntary organisation and its volunteers, members, trustees, and staff. Where courses appear to be more general, for instance in the provision of IT training, the nature of the learning experience is such that it does not duplicate mainstream provision. Training is delivered or organised in-house in small groups or one-to-one. It often forms a first taste of learning that may give learners confidence to go on to more public and classroom based learning experiences.

Duplication between Pembrokeshire College and Learning Pembrokeshire was also investigated through analysis of the primary data provided. The three geographical areas of Haverfordwest, Milford Haven, and Pembroke Dock have the highest number of courses provided by either or both of these organisations, and each has at least 10 or more courses provided by Learning Pembrokeshire and 10 or more courses provided by Pembrokeshire College. For the purposes of this exercise, an instance of *potential* duplication is defined as courses held anywhere within each town, on any day, which offers *prima facie* the same subject area.

Haverfordwest and Milford Haven

At Haverfordwest and Milford Haven there was no duplication between Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College, in this sense, of planned or delivered course content in the first term of 2005/06. A similar situation applied in Milford Haven with no overlap in provision.

Pembroke Dock

At Pembroke Dock, Learning Pembrokeshire provides a number of introductory courses in computing, such as 'Computing at a Leisurely Pace', and Pembrokeshire College provide accredited courses such as 'Computing for the Terrified'.

Pembrokeshire College IT courses in Pembroke Dock

OCN Introduction To IT	Fri	10:00-12:00	St John's Community Hall
Level I CLAIT New	Mon	10:00-12:00	As above
OCN Level I Using the Internet	Wed	10:00-12:00	As above
OCN Level I Desktop Publishing	Wed	12:30-14:30	As above
Level I CLAIT New	Tues	10:00-12:00	As above
OCN Computing For The Terrified	Thurs	18:30-20:30	As above
OCN Computing For The Terrified	Thurs	18:30-20:30	As above

Learning Pembrokeshire IT courses in Pembroke Dock

Computing at a Leisurely Pace	Mon	10:00-12:00	Pembroke Dock CLC
Computing at a Leisurely Pace	Mon	13:00-15:00	Pembroke Dock CLC
Computing at a Leisurely Pace	Tues	19:00-21:00	Pembroke Dock CLC
Computing at a Leisurely Pace	Weds	19:00-21:00	Pembroke Dock CLC
Digital Imaging using Photoshop	Mon	13:30-16:30	Pembroke Dock E Commerce Centre
Digital Imaging using Photoshop	Mon	09:30-12:30	Pembroke Dock E Commerce Centre
Organising your Computer	Fri	9:30-12:30	Pembroke Dock E Commerce Centre
SAGE Accounting	Wed	09:30-12:30	Pembroke Dock E Commerce Centre

It may appear that there are elements of duplication in the area of introductory computing, although there are significant differences in aspects such as timing and accreditation as well as content. The fact that all these courses ran, however, suggests that there is simply, as experience and the Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey 2005 confirms¹⁰, a high community demand for introductory computing courses, reinforcing the point made above that elements of duplication may appropriately arise from genuine learner needs, a subject addressed in the next section.

¹⁰ Asked "What would you like to learn in the next two years 30% of respondents indicated that they would like to learn about computing, the highest percentage, with 'Languages' coming second at 17%.

2.6 Identifying learner needs

For Adult and Community based learning to be delivered effectively, and to avoid problems of duplication discussed above, it is essential that mechanisms are in place for identifying learner needs as a whole, and that the information is incorporated in to a co-ordinated strategy from which a coherent and appropriate plan for provision for all providers is developed. Identifying learner needs as a whole means recognising requirements relating to content e.g. subject, level, and accreditation, delivery methods e.g. formal, informal, web-based, and venue, timing, and cost.

In the following section, methods currently used by the three providers for identifying learner needs are examined. The task of communicating learner needs and co-ordinating learning provision is also considered.

Voluntary and Community Sector

Research into ACL provision in the Voluntary and Community Sector¹¹ asked organisations about their mechanisms for identifying learner needs. A wide variety of methods were reported including completing skills audits, internal and external monitoring arrangements, such as PQASSO, or through the use of external consultants.

In response to the question in the base line questionnaire “*How do you identify training needs for your staff and volunteers?*” the following multiple responses were received:

	Responses	%
Not answered	17	30%
Training Needs Analysis	4	7%
Formal appraisal	11	20%
Meetings	20	36%
Ad hoc	1	2%
Supervision	4	7%
Personal Development Plans	1	2%
Discussion	6	11%
Skills assessment	1	2%
Workshops	1	2%
Statutory and organisational requirements	1	2%

The most popular method for identifying training needs is through meetings, followed by formal appraisal, and then discussion. A range of other methods are used, including supervision, and personal development plans. This research suggests that most organisations have a planned approach to identifying learner, rather than responding ad hoc.

¹¹ Research into ACL in the Voluntary and Community Sector, March 2006

A Voluntary Sector Training Advisory Group focus group session identified some similar mechanisms to those detailed above, but also included issues such as:

- certain subjects courses are repeatedly asked for and over-subscribed
- training relating to employment law and or personnel management is a growth areas because of increasing numbers of employed staff in the sector
- training needs are generated by national organisation's requirements such as MIND, or NIACE

With regard to recording information obtained through these methods, nearly half (46%) of the organisations who responded indicated that they do record the information gathered.

Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College

Discussions with key staff within Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College revealed a wide range of methods used to determine learner needs. These include:

On enquiry – an enquiry may be regarding a specific course, the number of enquiries providing confirmation of the popularity of the particular course offered. An enquiry may also be for a course not currently on offer, or a more general enquiry about a particular subject area or a request for a brochure. In either case the enquiry represents a valuable contact with a member of the providers' target market, and consideration is given below to ways of making the best use of this opportunity.

On enrolment – the act of enrolling for a course represents confirmation that a learning opportunity meets a learner's need, and may also represent an opportunity to explore other related possibilities for learning that may be of interest.

Individual Learning Plans – these can be used to identify areas of cross or further training that may be relevant, and help build a wider picture of learner aspirations.

Joint meetings are held between staff in Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College to discuss progress of provision, and tutor and staff meetings ensure key staff involved in the planning and delivery of provision are working together and sharing good practice. Other methods used across both organisations include learner evaluation forms, links to careers and adult guidance, scrutinising complaints and compliments, and evaluating inspection/audit reports.

Learning Pembrokeshire currently run area learning forums and externally facilitated focus groups. This type of approach could be adopted by all providers to gather further information on learner needs, although a co-ordinated approach would be required.

2.7 Sharing information on learner needs

Whilst there are very many comprehensive ways of identifying learner needs, it is clear from the research that opportunities for sharing this information across providers are not currently being maximised. There is evidence of some sharing taking place between Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College, and also between the Voluntary and Community Sector and some statutory agencies.

The response from all three providers is very positive in terms of wanting to share information, although there were a number of concerns expressed from within the Voluntary and Community Sector regarding ensuring that meaningful responses are made to meeting their needs. All three providers agree that there needs to be an effective mechanism in place for sharing information that is evaluated in the context of strategic and other external issues and in the local context, and from which provision can be coherently planned to satisfy learner needs in an integrated way.

The formation of an effective Learning Network for Pembrokeshire could make a considerable impact on the way in which information can be shared and provision planned, if in addition the use of the Local Authority's Geographical Information System could be maximised for mapping needs across the county, correlated with location of venues, public transport availability, and demographic factors.

An ACL sector-wide information management system could be established in which learner needs data is entered, which enables providers to access details of delivery across the county. The Pembrokeshire Education Portal would be an ideal mechanism for this which offers a secure extra-net for providers, interfacing with a publicly accessible internet site to promote learning opportunities and enable community members both to search for opportunities and provide suggestions and feedback on unmet needs.

2.8 Evidence of unmet need

Research into the extent of unmet needs was included in the Voluntary and Community Sector research, and also the Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey 2005. Within the Voluntary and Community Sector 29% of organisations responded that their current training and learning needs appear to be being met. 44% did not respond to this question, which could be interpreted as a positive response to their needs being met.

Twenty seven percent of organisations indicated training needs were not being met. Respondents identified 18 areas of training and learning which they felt were needed and not available. From the information on mapping of provision described earlier, a number of these areas such as health and safety, IT, fundraising, and PowerPoint are already being delivered by other voluntary sector organisations or other providers within the County. This reinforces the suggestion made above that all providers and potential learners, should have access to a common information system, which could be used for both market intelligence and marketing activities.

Through the Voluntary Sector Training Advisory Group focus meeting, further learning needs were identified in the areas of

- Personal Development (e.g. confidence building, interpersonal skills, communication etc.)
- Legislation e.g. employment law, risk assessments
- Supervision skills (also included in this, mentoring, informal guidance)
- Free/low cost first aid and manual handling
- Specialist training that may only be available further afield

Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey 2005

Unmet needs can be viewed as encompassing both particular educational needs that individuals or groups have identified themselves as having, for which there is apparently no suitable provision, but can also be viewed as including unfulfilled learning opportunities arising from individual and group's real or perceived obstacles for learning. In this context, it is useful to consider findings from the Adult Learners Survey.

Respondents to the survey who were **not** currently undertaking a learning activity were asked '*what stops you from getting involved in learning?*'

Respondents were invited to tick as many responses as applied from a list of seventeen possible options. There was also a category 'other', in which they could note a textual response, nearly half of these focused on respondents' available time, which they reported was often restricted by work arrangements. One in six also identified their age as a barrier to learning activities.

It is clear that respondents suggested that factors related to time were the greatest obstacle to Adult and Community Learning. Unsurprisingly, this response was particularly common amongst individuals of working age (aged 25-64) and the most frequently cited barrier in these age groups. Twenty six percent of respondents said that their participation was limited because courses were not available at suitable times. 27% of respondents cited cost as a barrier, particularly in the 19 to 24 years age group.

The lack of availability of courses locally and associated transport issues were given as reasons that prevented individuals from accessing courses. 20% of respondents stated that the fact that courses were not available locally was a factor likely to stop them participating in learning activities, and 5% said that a lack of transport was a factor. 21% cited travelling distances as a barrier to learning. Since this was a multiple choice question, it is reasonable to assume that respondents who stated that travelling distances were a barrier to taking part in a learning activity may also have been restricted in their participation by a lack of availability of courses locally.

Respondents were asked to describe what single change would make them more likely to take part in a learning activity and 261 responses were received. Half of responses (131) concerned the arrangement and delivery of courses, specifically the time learning is available (40), the location (39) and the subjects available (38). Respondents suggested day time courses matching school times, early evening times and weekend sessions. An alternative to the traditional school calendar was also suggested, i.e. courses that started in October rather than September, and staggered start times for courses.

Respondents suggested local venues for training, in villages and towns nearer to their homes. Although some proposed specific subject interests (e.g. wood turning, keep fit, Spanish) most made a general comment about the level of choice and available subjects, such as "more choice of subjects".

Almost a quarter of responses (64) identified lack of time as a barrier to learning, citing family commitments, work demands and other responsibilities as preventing them from accessing learning.

The cost of learning was identified as a barrier in 35 responses while 24 comments were made by respondents who said they were not interested in learning activities or lacked confidence to attend. Other barriers listed included transport difficulties (17), health (9), lack of information (8), childcare (6) and age (4). In their replies, respondents included more than one issue suggesting that barriers are inter-related and complex; for example, timing, location and delivery methods linked to the time pressures which respondents reported that they faced.

The survey suggests there are significant barriers to participation in training and learning activities which are inter-related and influenced by the low waged, rural nature of Pembrokeshire. The location, timing and cost of learning are barriers exacerbated by the work, family and personal commitments of respondents who completed this survey. Whilst the network of community centres in Pembrokeshire hosts much of the learning provision currently accessed by respondents, opportunities for greater use of community facilities, more imaginative scheduling and flexible delivery were identified. Although most respondents favoured evening times for learning activities, a significant minority feel alternative times are necessary to allow their participation. Responses suggested that individuals give equal priority to learning for skills-driven reasons, often connected to employment, and to learning for personal and social benefits.

The choice of courses was not the most significant factor for these respondents, suggesting that addressing the question of unmet needs requires prioritising issues of access over content at this stage.

2.9 Areas of planned provision that did not go ahead

Learning Pembrokeshire

In the first term of the 2005/06 academic year, Learning Pembrokeshire delivered 521 courses¹². 104 courses were planned but not delivered in the first term. There was no one particular subject area that stood out more than others that was cancelled. In the overwhelming majority of cases this was due to lack of numbers, and in many cases courses with the same content were being offered at an alternative time in the same geographical area, and these went ahead.

Pembrokeshire College

In the first term of the 2005/06 academic year, Pembrokeshire College delivered 104 courses¹³. 9 courses were planned but not delivered in the first term. A third of these were IT related, another third GCSE (English and Mathematics), and a third vocational/leisure.

Voluntary and Community Sector

In researching provision of Adult and Community based learning in the Voluntary and Community Sector, 43% respondents involved in the delivery of learning indicated that there had been provision planned that didn't go ahead. In the majority of cases this was due either to a lack of participants (50%) or a lack of funding (42%)¹⁴.

The issue of planned but undelivered provision is perhaps best addressed in the context of the research cited above into unmet needs, and obstacles to take-up. In line with earlier recommendations on developing a coherent Information Management system and protocols it would be helpful to record for subsequent analysis all data relating to cancellations. Feeding this data in to an integrated IMS and GIS system will help in developing a clearer picture of supply and demand of Adult and Community based learning across the county.

It should be further noted that in the majority of cases, providers indicated that learners were usually referred to alternative learning opportunities taking place near them to ensure their needs were met and the opportunity for learning was not lost.

2.10 Conclusions on ACL Provision

This section of the report has considered a range of issues associated with the provision of Adult and Community based learning opportunities in Pembrokeshire.

In terms of the providers themselves, Learning Pembrokeshire delivers 68% of the opportunities, although a proportion of this is delivered through a third party arrangement with Pembrokeshire College. The Voluntary and Community Sector and Pembrokeshire College provide the remaining 18% and 14% respectively. Both Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College offer a high number of pre-planned courses, predominantly leading to accredited outcomes, whereas just over half of the Voluntary and Community sector courses are delivered on demand, reflecting the lack of core funding for their provision, and also the lack of dedicated teaching staff to deliver the courses.

With regard to subject areas, the three most popular are IT and Computing, Basic Skills, and Creative Skills. In terms of geographical distribution of courses, analysis of location of provision alongside the Adult Census 2001 data indicates there is no evidence of regional inequalities or discrepancies in ACL provision in the County. It may appear that there are elements of duplication in the area of Introductory Computing, although there are significant differences in aspects such as timing and accreditation as well as content. The fact that all these courses ran, however, suggests

¹² Based on the primary data received from Learning Pembrokeshire

¹³ Based on the primary data received from Pembrokeshire College

¹⁴ Research into ACL in the Voluntary and Community Sector, March 2006

that there is simply, as experience and the Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey 2005 confirms, a high community demand for these types of courses, reinforcing the point that elements of duplication may appropriately arise from genuine learner needs.

All three providers collect information on learner needs through a wide variety of methods. They are also very positive in terms of wanting to share that information, although it is necessary to be aware of some concerns from within the Voluntary and Community Sector regarding the provision of meaningful responses to their needs. All three providers agree that there needs to be an effective mechanism in place for sharing information that is evaluated in the context of strategic and other external issues and in the local context, and from which provision can be coherently planned to satisfy learner needs in an integrated way.

Research into the extent of unmet needs was undertaken and encompassed both particular educational needs that individuals or groups have identified themselves as having, for which there is apparently no suitable provision, but also unfulfilled learning opportunities arising from individual and group's real or perceived obstacles for learning. Respondents to the Voluntary and Community Sector research identified 18 areas of training and learning which they felt were needed and not currently available. The Adult Learning Survey 2005 suggests there are significant barriers to participation in training and learning activities which are inter-related and influenced by the low waged, rural nature of Pembrokeshire. The location, timing and cost of learning are barriers exacerbated by the work, family and personal commitments of respondents who completed this survey. For the respondents of the survey, lack of suitable courses was not the most significant factor representing a barrier to pursuing learning, suggesting that addressing the question of unmet needs requires prioritising issues of access over content at this stage.

The formation of an effective Learning Network for Pembrokeshire could make a considerable impact on the way in which information can be shared and provision planned, if in addition use of the Local Authority's Geographical Information System could be maximised for mapping needs across the county, correlated with location of venues, public transport availability, and demographic factors.

3.0 Adult and Community based Learning - Methods of delivery

3.1 Current delivery models

Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College

Both Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College deliver a wide range of predominantly accredited courses in a variety of settings. These include Community Learning Centres, schools, village halls, and the College sites at Haverfordwest and Milford Haven (MITEC). The primary delivery methods are traditional 10/20 week, classroom based, tutor led classes, however they also provide other formats for learning such as:

- Taster sessions
- Workshops
- Short courses
- Small group, learner led delivery in Adult Basic Skills & ESOL
- A video linked AS English course

Voluntary and Community Sector

Research¹⁵ suggests that the majority of organisations in the Voluntary and Community Sector deliver training in multiple ways. The most commonly used method of training delivery is classroom based (50% of respondent organisations) followed by one-to-one instruction (29%), workshops (25%), action learning (25%), and practical hands on training (21%). Fourteen percent of organisations offering training report using on-line learning.

Learn Direct

Learn Direct provide on-line learning opportunities in short modules, that can be accessed in a centre, at home or in a work place, at times convenient to the learner. There are also opportunities for tutorial support if required.

Learn Direct centres in Pembrokeshire are based at:

- Learning Pembrokeshire - Fishguard (E-learning centre), and Narberth
- Pembrokeshire College - MITEC centre, Milford Haven
- Voluntary and Community Sector – PAVS (link centre open to those in the voluntary sector only)
- Private sector - Infotech, Neyland (link centre)

Other centres where staff are able to contact Learn Direct for further information or ask for enrolments to take place are:

St John's Community Hall, Pembroke Dock
Pennar Family Centre, Pembroke Dock
Pembroke Dock Community Centre
Tenby Community Centre
Letterson Memorial Hall
Careers Wales West Centres
Job Centre Plus

¹ Research in to ACL in the Voluntary and Community Sector, Nov'05-Feb'06

To date in Pembrokeshire, there have been 65 external enrolments through these centres, although data is not yet available on specifically which centres they relate to. It is felt that there is still much potential for increasing community participation in Learn Direct opportunities - in the Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey 2005, 38% of respondents indicated that they would be interested in pursuing on-line learning, and 80% reported having access to the internet (71% had access at home).

3.2 Identifying and piloting new methods of delivery

In the context of minimal funding available for non-accredited courses, and exploring in more detail appropriate delivery methods suitable to a community learning setting, a number of pilots were identified as outlined below, where it was hoped to gain a better understanding of ways in which learners may benefit from less formal arrangements and the potential for these to dovetail in to more mainstream offerings.

Due to the time constraints in completing this aspect of the research, it was decided that areas for piloting and evaluation would be identified from expressions of interest already received through previous Voluntary Sector Training Advisory Group meetings, community activities already started with Pembrokeshire College, and the evolving Pembrokeshire Education Portal led by Pembrokeshire County Council. The four pilot areas identified offered very different approaches to learning, as follows:

- *Learning for Living* – focusing on the delivery of on-line learning to unpaid carers.
- *St John's Community Hall Learning Club* – an opportunity for individuals to come together, and identify and organise activities to meet their learning needs.
- *Pembrokeshire Education and Training (PET)* – an ESF funded project dedicated to providing access to demand-led learning opportunities for economically and socially disadvantaged communities and individuals.
- *Pembrokeshire Education Portal* – exploring the potential of a web-based portal to support interactive learning and opportunities for collaborative working.

A brief overview of each pilot is provided below, along with a summary of the key issues for consideration at the end of this section. A more detailed analysis of each pilot is included in Appendices 4 to 7 along with information on who to contact to discuss further.

3.3 Learning for Living

The aim of the model is to provide flexible access to learning and ongoing support for unpaid carers, thus removing many of the key barriers to learning identified by them, such as being unable to attend structured courses due to caring commitments, the cost of training, and lack of available transport to attend a training centre. It was hoped that other, less tangible issues such as low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and feelings of isolation could also be addressed.

At the heart of the learning model is an on-line course, accredited by City and Guilds which they describe as "...an online learning programme for carers. It builds on the skills that carers and former carers have developed in their caring roles. It also helps to build confidence and develop computer skills, and could pave the way for further study or a return to a paid job." The programme actually consists of two core elements, namely a Level 2 qualification - Certificate in Personal Development and Learning for Unpaid Carers, and an on-line learning resource.

A partnership approach

The initial requirement was to identify a delivery partner, but then it became clear that there was considerable potential for a number of other organisations and/or projects to be involved and add value to the overall experience for the learners. The key to the success of this model has been to identify contributors and their particular strengths. In total, 5 partners and/or projects were identified and became involved.

Support for learners

Although learners are registered with City and Guilds for a period of two years, the initial pilot ran over a four-month period and learners were encouraged to work to this timeframe, where possible. Additional support was available and whilst the predominant form of learning was on-line, optional tutor-led study sessions were made available, as well as IT support to improve basic IT skills, and mentoring offered by peers, who were carers who had successfully completed the course themselves.

Funding and resources

The main source of funding for delivery of this pilot was from ELWa, drawn down by the delivery partner, Pembrokeshire College. The additional support from other partners was paid for through project funds such as Objective 1 ERDF, ESF, the Welsh Assembly Government's *Building Strong Bridges Programme*, and the Big Lottery Fund. The peer mentoring process is undertaken voluntarily, and there is no charge for learners.

Evaluation and Summary

Feedback from learners and partners alike has been extremely positive. Three learners successfully completed the course, and two learners have one further module to complete. Others are able to continue with their learning due to the very flexible nature of the on-line courses. Although the pilot was successful, it is proving difficult to attract new learners, and this is something the partners need to address. Five new learners have started the course, which is also now being delivered to carers in Ceredigion although the local County Voluntary Council are not currently involved in the partnership.

The model has proved to be an excellent example of partnership working across sectors, drawing on the strengths of each to build a sustainable training and support infrastructure meeting the needs of a specific group of learners. Whilst this course has been targeted at one particular group of people, that of unpaid carers (of which there are around 14,000 in Pembrokeshire alone), there is clearly the potential to develop this approach for other groups of learners who experience similar barriers to learning, such as people with disabilities and working single parents.

Two key recommendations to come out of this work are to pilot the learning model centred on alternative on-line courses for different groups of learners, and to develop an e-Learning Study Skills module particularly geared to those with little or no IT experience.

For more detailed information on the *Learning for Living* model, and who to contact to find out more, please see Appendix 4.

3.4 St John's Community Hall Learning Club

The aim of this pilot was to set up a 'learning club' within St John's Community Hall in Pembroke Dock whereby individuals come together through an initial consultation session to identify and plan activities to meet their desired learning needs.

Thirty-seven people were invited to attend the initial consultation session and much interest was shown, although on the day there were just nine participants. The session worked on establishing areas of common interest, and through a process of group discussion using a set of guidelines developed specifically for this pilot, reached a consensus on four areas of learning they wanted to explore. In the end, due to time constraints, just two of the four areas were covered, but these were both very successful. It was also necessary to open up the sessions more widely to ensure sufficient numbers of participants.

The two learning activities carried out were 'Introduction to Dance' and 'Basic Cookery Skills'. Further details about these are included in Appendix 5.

Support for learners:

The key person involved in this pilot was the full-time Development Officer employed by the Community Hall. This officer played a key role in supporting the learners in terms of co-ordinating the activities e.g. finding a tutor, booking facilities, organising refreshments etc. and certainly in the early and evolving stages of a Learning Club model, it would appear to be important for someone to act as a lead or co-ordinator.

Funding and resources:

A small budget of up to £300 was identified from the Common Investment Fund to support this pilot of both the Learning Club session and the learning activities themselves. These funds covered the costs of tutors, refreshments, publicity materials, and food for cooking. The time spent on the pilot by the Development Officer (currently partly funded through ERDF) had not been costed or paid for separately, as the pilot was considered to be part of their current role in developing learning activities at the Hall. In the end the actual total costs incurred throughout this whole exercise were only £133.00. This was partly due to the fact that the Cookery tutor insisted on doing this piece of work on a voluntary basis.

Evaluation and Summary:

Both the initial consultation session and ensuing learning club activities were evaluated and overall were a real success. Participants had enjoyed the experience and discussions of the initial consultation session. They all felt that the aims of the session had been met, but acknowledged that the whole process would have been easier and worked better if there had been more participants. They indicated they would like to see a Learning Club formed, and would be prepared to pay a small subscription. However, they felt that such a Club could only work with a minimum number of approximately 30 members, and felt unsure that it could be sustainable without external funding of some kind.

It is also recognised that whilst the participants involved in the session positively embraced the activities relating to establishing areas of common interest, further work needs to take place to support members in building their confidence and identifying their strengths. As this happens, and the number of members grows, it is felt that the model will evolve to provide an infrastructure from which a broad range of activities can be identified and planned. Various options need to be explored as to how the model can be sustained, and it would be beneficial to talk with representatives from the University of the Third Age (U3A) about how their model works.

The ongoing dance lessons are now self-sustaining as participants make a contribution to cover the cost of the tutor, and they bring in their own refreshments (there is no charge for using the community hall). These lessons will be able to continue for as long as there are sufficient numbers of learners turning up to cover the costs of the tutors. It is hoped that the skills learnt by the participants in the cookery lessons will be passed on in the future to other friends in a similar situation, using their own kitchens and produce.

It is clear that there is a need for a key person to co-ordinate activities, ensuring effective communication amongst members, and that there is compliance with legislation (e.g. health and safety) where relevant. This is part of the infrastructure needed to ensure things move forward, but over time it is hoped that reliance on such a person would be reduced. A Learning Club ethos where there is no formal pressure to achieve, and where it is fine to simply 'come along and have a go' can provide a positive learning experience (as evidenced in both learning activities piloted here) and potentially lead to other opportunities to develop individuals' learning further with other providers in the future, as learners' confidence grows. With support (such as a person at the end of a telephone line, who could absorb some of the responsibility for helping remove obstacles and provide encouragement), learners are more likely to feel safe in their journey forward.

For more detailed information on the St John's Community Hall Learning Club pilot, please see Appendix 5.

3.5 Pembrokeshire Education and Training (PET) Project

The Pembrokeshire Education and Training (PET) project is the third phase of a European Social Fund bid aimed at bringing learning opportunities to communities in the county that have a low level of participation in traditional learning opportunities as a result of economic inactivity and social deprivation. Run by Pembrokeshire College, the project aims to tackle barriers that prevent many people from returning to learning and finding employment. These barriers include:

- Disengagement with traditional formal teaching methods
- Lack of appropriate child care and an inability to fund what is available
- Cost of training
- Lack and cost of transport (both private and public)
- Lack of individuals' self confidence
- Lack of appropriate Adult Guidance

The main beneficiaries are unemployed people, or those not active in the labour market, aged over 16 years. A small number of people employed on a part-time basis in low skilled employment are also eligible.

Support for learners:

The PET project employs a full-time Project Co-ordinator and Adult Guidance Officer. Community tutors are employed on a part-time and hourly basis. The Project Co-ordinator has developed extensive networks with community groups and external agencies working with potential beneficiaries. These range from Family and Community Centres, Mother and Toddler groups, referrals from Health Visitors, the Job Action Team and the Army Family Centre. Free nationally accredited courses are then set up in local venues using tutors who are suited to working at outreach venues with largely disengaged learners. Childcare and travel costs are paid for by the project. Delivery is informal and friendly with a focus on adult needs. The College mobile classroom, which is fully equipped with computers, is used at locations where suitable venues for IT learning are unavailable

An Adult Guidance Officer meets with target groups on a monthly basis to carry out informal guidance sessions and to undertake one-to-one pre-booked guidance interviews. The officer provides advice and refers beneficiaries on to suitable providers. At the first lesson of a course the Guidance Officer and the Project Co-ordinator carry out an initial review where individual's learning needs are discussed and recorded. Any Basic Skills requirements are referred to the Pembrokeshire College Basic Skills Co-ordinator who in turn will refer either to Learning Pembrokeshire Community Basic Skills Team or make a referral in-house. All course resources are provided as well as specialist IT equipment when needed.

The PET project is publicised through a range of methods including:

- Newspaper articles and photographs highlighting successful completion and attainment of certification
- Radio coverage of events
- Community/group newsletters
- Posters and flyers
- Open days/events in target areas
- Display boards
- Partnership working

Funding and resources:

The project is partially funded by a European Social Fund Objective 1 bid. Further funding is drawn down via Welsh Assembly Government

Evaluation and Summary:

This third phase, the PET project, is still in its infancy, although some beneficiaries of two earlier projects Let's Get Learning and Let's Get Learning 2 (Priority 4 Measure 3 projects run in 2000/02 and 2002/05 respectively) have continued their learning journey in the new project, itself a tribute to the effectiveness of the model. There is, however, some concern about the long term sustainability of the approach, given its current dependence upon ESF funding and the relatively high cost per learner given the small class sizes and associated costs in facilitating access to learning among disadvantaged groups.

For more detailed information on the Pembrokeshire College PET Project, please see Appendix 6.

3.6 The Pembrokeshire Education Portal (PEP)

The Pembrokeshire Education Portal is described as “an on-line collection of websites, brought together in one place to create a network of information and people to support teaching and learning activities”. It provides a forum for teachers and learners alike to share resources, collaborate, and communicate. Pembrokeshire County Council is the lead partner in the project, providing the developing technological infrastructure, technical support, and training.

The benefits of the PEP to learners in Pembrokeshire (including schools, Adult and Community-based learners and learners in the work place) include encouraging more independent learning; providing access to a rich variety of learning materials across different media; increasing access to learning in isolated rural areas; extending choice by enabling the delivery of minority interest courses where traditional delivery methods would not be viable; allowing course delivery/development through the medium of Welsh; supporting the “learning journey” throughout all its stages by use of an Internet based portfolio/ record of achievement; and enabling collaborative development of learning resources through pooling expertise, learning materials, and creative thinking.

Following a pilot project which ran in county schools, the portal is being rolled out to a wider partnership in the arena of Adult and Community Learning, which includes the Voluntary and Community Sector, Learning Pembrokeshire (Community IT), Pembrokeshire College (as part of the development of the virtual tertiary environment), and work-based learning providers (Pembrokeshire Training Providers Forum).

It is clear from the pilot work to date that there is considerable potential for the portal to be an invaluable tool for learners and learning providers in a number of ways:

- Firstly, there is a public area with open access which will provide a central point of information about learning opportunities, training providers, careers advice and information. This could potentially also include volunteering opportunities and will provide a ‘shop front’ to all that providers have to offer to potential and current learners in the county.
- Secondly, for current learners, there is the potential to access more innovative forms of learning opportunities and resources such as the development of internet based portfolios and records of achievements, on-line tutor support, peer learning on-line, video footage and much more.
- Thirdly, there is considerable potential within the framework for sharing ideas and learning materials, and for collaborative work between learning providers. The sharing of good practice, expertise, and learning resources should be of tremendous benefit to all providers within the county, and hence to learners who benefit from better coordinated, informed and resourced Adult and Community based learning provision.

Funding and Resources:

To date, the development of the portal has been funded through a variety of sources including mainstream education budgets, ELWa (Common Investment Fund), and European Objective 1 funds. In the longer term it is expected that charges will be made to enable the continued functioning and development of the portal. Although these charges are still to be determined, it is expected, for example, that schools will be charged in the region of £3.50 per learner per annum.

Evaluation and Summary:

Evaluation from the pilot programme has so far been very positive and the potential for both learners and providers is clear. The appeal of on-line learning to Adult and Community learners is an important consideration, as is on-line access itself. Thirty-eight percent of respondents in the Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey 2005 indicated that they would be interested (22% very interested) in pursuing on-line learning, and 71% reported have internet access at home, with only 20% reporting no internet access at all. That 20% reported having no internet access at all may suggest that the provision and marketing of public internet access, such as in public libraries and E-learning Centres, may be an important element in developing the Learning Network model to which this project can undoubtedly contribute.

In relation to learner support, it may be necessary to undertake a skills audit within the organisations who are delivering (or who could potentially deliver) on-line learning opportunities to determine the range of skills and knowledge in both developing these type of opportunities and also provision of on-line tutor support. Where gaps in skills have been identified, it may be possible to link up with, and learn from, other providers who do have the experience and improve the capacity of, for example, the voluntary and community sector to deliver in this way. There will of course be a time cost to developing resources and learning new skills and the ability to commit to the time required for this needs to be decided in the context of the extent to which it will meet learner needs, bearing in mind that on-line learning is not simply a substitute for other forms of learning.

In relation to collaborative opportunities, it is recognised there may be an issue to overcome here regarding trust and confidence in working with other providers who may previously have been viewed as 'competitors'. As work continues to remove nugatory competition, with a continued emphasis on collaborative working to achieve broader aims relating to adult and community learning provision, it is hoped that these barriers will, in due course, break down. Building on the positive experiences of pilots such as the Learning for Living model, there is every reason to believe that the Pembrokeshire Education Portal will have an important part to play in the strategic development of ACL provision and provide an excellent facility to maximise the opportunities partnership working can offer (identified by Estyn¹⁶ as a key issue for effective strategic planning of ACL provision).

To find out more about the Pembrokeshire Education Portal and who to contact, please see Appendix 7.

¹⁶ Widening participation in adult community-based learning: A survey of best practice, Estyn, 21st June 2004

3.7 Conclusions on ACL Delivery methods

A wide variety of methods are in use to deliver Adult and Community based learning opportunities to the people of Pembrokeshire, and new methods of delivery are being pioneered by all of the three main providers. There are particular priorities emerging from the pilots described above, as progress is made towards establishing an effective Adult and Community based Learning Network for Pembrokeshire. These priorities are:

- The need to develop creative delivery methods that better address particular individuals and groups and their learning styles that may have difficulty benefiting from more traditional models of delivery, perhaps because of earlier negative educational experiences.
- The need to develop delivery models that address economic and social obstacles to learning, including economic disadvantage, lack of basic skills or confidence, transport and care issues.
- The scope in partnership working of sharing expertise and experience and developing learning models
- The contribution that new technologies, especially the internet, can make to increasing learners' choice, the richness and convenience of the learning experience, and the facilitation of integrated delivery systems involving all providers
- The pilot studies detailed above reveal the benefits of providing needs-led learning opportunities, where learners are able to engage in the learning process by identifying desired learning outcomes, and pursuing them at their own pace
- Sustainability may be an issue in project -funded initiatives, and the benefits of self-sustaining models, such as the St John's Community Hall Learning Club, should be further investigated and built upon.

4.0 Learning Networks

One of the core outputs of this research has been to identify ways in which a Learning Network may operate in Pembrokeshire. In the context of this research and the strategic developments and external influences (outlined in the next section), it can be argued that three main purposes of establishing any Learning Network are to:

- Widen participation in learning
- Meet the needs of current and potential learners
- Make the most effective use of all resources available

The establishment of two very different Learning Networks in Wales have been reviewed as part of this research, to determine aspects of good practice which could be adopted in Pembrokeshire. Representatives from both networks were invited to give a presentation. The two Learning Networks considered were:

- RISE – a cross-sectoral Learning Network extending across the five counties of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Monmouthshire, and Newport
- Carmarthenshire Learning Network – a project funded network covering the county of Carmarthenshire

A brief overview of each network is provided here, but further information is included in Appendices 8 and 9.

4.1 RISE Learning Network

RISE is a learning network that developed as a result of the closure of the Corus steelworks. It was established in light of a survey which indicated that 65% of the population of working age in the five counties affected by the closure had no intention of taking part in any form of learning for the foreseeable future. Securing over £20 million of European funds has enabled RISE to work towards its objectives of attracting new learners, establishing an extensive network of branded learning centres, and building a stable partnership base. Learners are actively involved at all levels and at all stages through a range of mechanisms from Learning Advocates to Learner Forums.

Partnership working

RISE has established a 3-tier organisational structure (specific details regarding the structure are contained in Appendix 8), and has worked hard to achieve its objectives in relation to partnership working. Agreement on a core vision and key principles was paramount, and through extensive consultation it has achieved major developments related to areas such as curriculum initiatives, funding strategies and a training programme.

RISE has recognised the strengths that partners were able to offer the learning network. For example, the voluntary sector has played a key role in the Learning Advocates initiative. These advocates promote learning in their local communities and receive training support from voluntary sector bodies as well as Learning Development Officers. They play a key role in the promotion of learning and in support of the widening participation agenda.

Quality Assurance

Partners have benefitted from the development of a 'Good Practice and Quality Framework' where local learning development issues are considered and addressed strategically, thereby ensuring that accessible, appealing, and responsive learning opportunities are available.

Guidelines were developed for Learning Centres, Learning Action Centres, and Workplace Centres (similar to the approach used by Learn Direct), whereby providers are required to meet specified standards before being included in to the RISE 'brand'. These standards form a core part of the quality assurance process for key areas such as learner and tutor support and connectivity. All training providers involved in the network are expected to meet the RISE standards for learning delivery.

In relation to measuring the benefits and/or outcomes of informal and non-accredited learning, the network has adopted the use of RARPA (Recognising and Recording Performance and Achievement) standards set by NIACE, and this has played a key role in the development of a framework for learner progression.

4.2 Carmarthenshire Learning Network

The Carmarthenshire Learning Network arose from the need to widen participation in Lifelong Learning identified by the local Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCET). There was a need to ensure that 'first steps to learning' were provided for, and that learners were supported and encouraged to progress to formal, accredited education and training.

A very clear need was also identified to engage with learners who had not recently accessed post-compulsory education or training and those who may have had negative learning experiences, and one of the goals of the network in the first phase was also to develop the capacity of training providers to respond more effectively to the community's learning needs.

Funding was initially obtained through European funds for two years up to 2005, and further ESF funds have now been secured for a second period up to 2007.

Six Learning Forums are based around the six geographical areas already identified for Community Regeneration purposes and these bring together learners, providers, and agencies in the area. A strategic plan for provision is developed through termly meetings, based on learner needs, and this is then fed in to the local CCET. There is a Community Learning Officer to take the project forward in each geographical area. There was also a Learning Officer during the first phase of the network, who worked specifically with voluntary sector organisations across all areas.

Partnership working

The network is based on a partnership model involving ten diverse organisations, which played very different roles in the life of the community. It was important that partner organisations adopted a shared vision for the network, which also provided an opportunity to foster collaboration between providers involved in a wide range of initiatives designed to broaden access to learning. Over time, structures developed to inform future collaboration opportunities and the feeling was that partnership working through the network would continue for as long as there was funding to sustain it.¹⁷

The strategic management of the network was undertaken by the Technical and Operational Group, and the operational management by the Project Manager.

¹⁷ Evaluation of the Carmarthenshire Learning Network, NFER final report, September 2005

4.3 Criteria for success of a Learning Network

Two focus group sessions were held in Pembrokeshire to consult on the way in which a Learning Network in Pembrokeshire might operate, and to look specifically at criteria for success. The first session was held with members of the Voluntary Sector Training Advisory Group. The second session was held with members of the current network of ACL providers who are likely to be included in an ACL Estyn area inspection in the county.

In each case the question was asked “*what do you think are the criteria for success of a Learning Network in Pembrokeshire?*”

The outcomes (taken from flipcharts) of both sessions are detailed below:

Voluntary Sector Training Advisory Group

Transparency
Increase in learning participation
The right people and commitment
Clearer information
Directory of who does what
Web site/Notice board – sharing of up-to-date information
Continuous membership – funding
Still here in 5 years time
Key driver to keep momentum and keep on track
Tangible examples of where policy has been influenced
Learner ownership – pride
Access to specialists
Joined up, coordinated approach

Current network of ACL providers

Learner-led with mechanisms for input to planning (potentially building on the learner forums and learner champion initiatives already taking place). A network that is inclusive and accessible.

Quality standards for overall learning experience. These need to be measurable and quantifiable (including ‘soft’ outcomes).

Clear set of protocols for partnership working and information sharing, leading to more effective strategic planning. Responsive to new initiatives in a local context, and potential to influence new initiatives (where funding follows clear evidencing of needs). Effective and efficient working, encouraging sharing of good practice.

Maximising resources – including staffing (especially specialist skills/knowledge), finance, shared marketing, CPD programmes, and sharing of good practice

Learning Centres – emphasis on quality not quantity (rationalisation of buildings but not provision, and encourage collaboration).

Independent Management Team – to manage the network, ensure adherence to protocols etc.

Sustainable and guaranteed funding over a period of time to ensure the future of the network.

Rationalisation will lead to savings, to be invested in the network and provide tangible outputs.

4.4 Conclusions on Learning Network models and criteria for success

There are many similarities between the criteria for success identified between the two focus groups, and the ways in which the two learning networks researched operate. The key issues relating to the success of these and to the developing network in Pembrokeshire are:

Being learner-led

An inclusive and accessible approach that has the learner at the centre of all its work is vital to the effectiveness of a learning network in appropriately responding to and anticipating current and potential learner needs. It is expected that the role of community consultation undertaken by RISE will become good practice in Estyn Area Inspections¹⁸, and there are many ways in which learners can be engaged in the planning for ACL provision, such as the RISE Learning Advocates scheme. The Learner Focus groups currently run by Learning Pembrokeshire, and the Learning Champions initiative run by PAVS are two mechanisms that could be built upon in the Pembrokeshire network to promote an inclusive, learner-led approach.

Developing a shared vision and shared principles

In both networks evaluated, this was a key requirement in ensuring the networks moved forward in their work. The development of a shared strategic vision and values is essential to ensure maximum 'buy-in' by the participants, and effective progress towards the achievement of well defined and understood goals.

Making the most effective use of resources

The issue of sustainability of provision is key and it will be necessary for providers to work together to share resources to meet learner needs in the most cost-effective way, and to have the potential to attract funding from a wider range of sources, for example the Big Lottery fund. With a focus on quality and not necessarily quantity of learning centres, combined with sharing of skills, knowledge, expertise, and good practice across the whole of ACL provision, resources can be maximised to achieve the best possible outcomes for learners.

In addition, developing shared back office functions, such as marketing and promotion, will support this objective, and the work already begun in bringing together certain elements of the Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College MIS systems could be built upon and expanded under the protocols to be developed for sharing of information.

Quality

Quality in every aspect of provision was a significant feature of the RISE network, and also featured strongly in the focus group sessions. Developing a robust quality framework that all partners can both sign up to and contribute to and which is set within the context of external quality requirements (e.g. Estyn and ELWa) will play a key part in developing the strong brand image required.

Recognising the contribution that everyone has to make

The success of the RISE network in particular was due in part to the ability to recognise and build upon the strengths that each partner had to bring to the network. The recognition that the voluntary sector, for example, has much to offer in the way of specialist knowledge and expertise in engaging 'harder to reach' groups and is in touch with the 'grassroots' learners was capitalised on in RISE through their involvement in the Learning Advocacy scheme.

¹⁸ Building Learning Communities in Wales: Next steps for RISE, 21st October 2005

Research indicates that *“funding must encourage partnership rather than competition among institutions, and be founded on regular and structured mapping of all stakeholder needs and strategic planning”*.¹⁹ Linked to this is a need to understand and value cultural and organisational differences between partners. It is often the very differences between organisations and the communities they represent and are embedded in, that makes partnership working in pursuit of a common strategy both challenging and potentially so effective.

Sustainability

This is a key issue for both networks evaluated. RISE was able to secure substantial funding initially due to the closure of Corus and the immediate impact of this on the surrounding communities. One of their key challenges now, however, is to find a way to secure long term funding to build on the foundations established, and to plan for the rundown in European funding. The fact that there is currently no mainstream funding to support additional learners is a particular challenge. Similarly, the Carmarthenshire Learning Network is European funded, and whilst this has been secured up to 2007, there is a question mark over how the network will be sustained beyond this point.

Both the Voluntary Sector Training Advisory Group and the current network of ACL providers focus group sessions recognised that funding for the network is an important issue and central to ensuring the success of a Learning Network. They recognised the need for a ‘key driver’ to move the network forward and suggestions were made for the appointment of an Independent Management team to oversee and drive forward the network. Consideration should be given to the way in which a network is formally constituted (RISE are exploring for example the option of becoming a ‘Learning Foundation’) as this may have a direct impact on the way in which funds can be secured for the future. The growth areas of Social Enterprises and Community Interest Companies are just two that could be explored.

¹⁹ Best practice approaches to achieving parity of esteem in education and training, Newidiem, February 2003

5.0 External factors influencing the future of ACL provision

There are a considerable number of strategic developments and initiatives that will have an impact on the way in which Adult and Community based learning provision may be delivered in the future.

In no particular order, a summary of these developments are detailed here and should be taken in to consideration in the planning process for the Pembrokeshire Learning Network.

Estyn Common Inspection Framework and Area Inspections

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, carrying out inspections of individual education and training providers in Wales. The development of a Common Inspection Framework, and accompanying Guidance on Inspection of Adult and Community-based learning²⁰ plays a significant part in developing and implementing a strategic programme of meeting Adult and Community learner needs, and the quality framework to be developed by the Learning Network. The Estyn framework focuses on achievement of learners in adult community-based learning provision; the quality of education and training provided; and the effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management, with inspections now being undertaken on a geographical rather than institutional basis.

There are also high expectations of partnership working from external organisations such as Estyn. Effective partnership working is necessarily time consuming and often this type of work receives no external funding.

Funding

There are several external factors relating to funding that will have an effect on adult and community-based learning provision in the county. Firstly, the uncertainty relating to short term, project-based funding from European Funds (ESF) beyond 2008. In view of this, it is difficult to plan beyond the current projects being delivered, other than to explore alternative and more sustainable funding options.

Secondly, the development of a new National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) through ELWa brings with it uncertainties as to how core funding will be calculated and allocated. It is clear that the focus underpinning the new developments are based around the areas of collaboration and partnership²¹, and in this respect the work being undertaken in Pembrokeshire to develop an effective partnership approach to ACL provision will certainly support this system. In addition, it is hoped that the plans to introduce progressively over a number of years a level playing field for all providers and to simplify the resourcing of post-16 learning will support parity of esteem between providers.

The Welsh Assembly Government

From April 2006, ELWa will no longer operate as a quango, but will instead be brought in to the Welsh Assembly Government. ELWa was identified as one of the quangos as having some of the greatest potential for joining up with the work of the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver a better and more streamlined education and training service. With this move, however, comes inevitable uncertainties regarding future funding and strategic direction.

There are also further uncertainties over the future of the Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCET) and what, if anything, will replace these should they be disbanded, leading to a potential gap in terms of local learning partnerships.

²⁰ Guidance on the Inspection of Adult Community-based learning, Estyn, September 2004

²¹ NPFS information from ELWa web site, www.elwa.org.uk

Government-set targets for lifelong learning are presented in the context of 'The Learning Country'²² strategy, and recognise that widening participation of adult learners, particularly those in adult community-based learning, will help towards the achievement of those targets. A number of key principles are identified within the strategy, and these include:

- *The interests of learners override all others* - Standards, results and outcomes matter more than inputs. All sectors and providers must plan to achieve stretching but realistic targets, sharing international best practice and setting new benchmarks for quality assessment.
- *Barriers to learning must be recognised and steadily overcome* for the benefit of learners' access and participation; support for diversity and communities; and wider opportunities and option choice.
- *Policy and programme development* must be undertaken on the basis of *partnership* with all those who can contribute to success using effective consultation; the least possible bureaucracy; and encouraging genuine commitment to work across organisational boundaries with partners playing to one another's strengths.
- The agenda for lifelong learning must be applied in ways that reflect the *distinctive needs and circumstances* of Wales taking full account of the functions and capacities of local government, the contributions of business, and the vital support of the voluntary sector.

All of these principles should guide the strategic direction of the Learning Network and ensure that the contribution from all members in helping to achieve the principles are recognised, valued, and built upon.

Regional Statement of Needs and Priorities 2006/07

Two of the key regional priorities for change identified for 2006/07 are particularly relevant here:

SWW2 – Further development of efficient and effective learning networks that provide a range of equitable learning opportunities whilst removing nugatory competition in learning provision;

SWW4 – Develop innovative and sustainable learning pathways to engage the (economically) inactive including those with disabilities.

Investing in education and learning

Between 2005-2008, ELWa is expected to invest £1.75 billion in learning and skills in Wales²³. Improving the quality of learning delivery is key, and a Provider Performance Review (PPR) system has been developed by ELWa to build a comprehensive overview of each provider's quality and performance. PPR is being implemented to put into effect powers (Learning and Skills Act 2000) to assess the quality of the provision funded by ELWa, and take judgements about quality into account in deciding which providers to continue to fund. This continued emphasis on quality of provision and performance from both ELWa and Estyn requires providers to work together to share good practice and resources, and to ensure that quality is embedded in to every aspect of their work.

²² The Learning Country: A comprehensive education and lifelong learning programme to 2010 in Wales, August 2001

²³ ELWa web site, www.elwa.org.uk

Community Learning Strategy

The development of a Community Learning Strategy by ELWa is expected to support the aim of establishing a collaborative framework for key providers and stakeholders to scope, plan, and deliver key priorities such as basic skills, and tackling economic activity. The results from a number of pilots across Wales is expected in March 2006 and will feed in to the development of this strategy, which Estyn has also identified as critical to the future success of adult and community learning.

Current initiatives such as the Learning Community Account pilots, which aim to give communities “buying power” to purchase learning to meet identified needs, means that communities will need to be able to access coherent information on what is being provided and where, and to be assured of the quality of the training they receive. The development of the Pembrokeshire Education Portal will have a key role to play to ensure there is a coherent, up-to-date, central point of information for current and potential learners in Pembrokeshire.

Statutory legislation

Research within the Voluntary and Community Sector in Pembrokeshire, identified 23 separate items of new legislation and/or statutory changes as potentially impacting on future provision. Examples given included the Disability Discrimination Act, the Environmental Protection Act, and MIDAS (relating to Community Transport). In this context, it is essential that providers consider ways in which legislation will impact (positively and negatively) on future provision, and how learners, where appropriate, are kept up-to-date with such changes.

Community Plan for Pembrokeshire 2003-2008

The Community Plan for Pembrokeshire highlights the need for integration of strategic plans across the county to ensure everyone is working towards the same overall goals.

The key priority D1, ‘Encouraging People to reach their Potential’ will be of particular relevance to the work of the learning network, where long term aims are to ‘encourage people to maximise their potential by learning and acquiring new skills; equip people with the skills needed to make effective use of ICT through community based learning; and to widen participation in lifelong learning within socially disadvantaged groups’²⁴.

Targets set include reducing the percentage of people of working age without qualifications, increasing the number of enrolments on all types of adult and community based learning, and increasing the number of people achieving qualifications in ICT.

Progress towards fulfilling this key priority will also help contribute to priority D2 ‘Promoting Health Wellbeing’, the provision of learning opportunities directly relating to health and wellbeing, for example in the fields of health, exercise and nutrition will obviously have a direct impact, but also any initiatives that help to develop individual and the community’s sense of self worth and access to improved educational and employment opportunities will have a positive impact upon their wellbeing. All three providers involved in this research have indicated that many of their learners report on the social and therapeutic benefits of courses they have attended, including non-accredited based learning.

²⁴ A community plan for Pembrokeshire 2003/08, October 2003

Active Communities Directorate (ACD)

The Active Communities Directorate is responsible for the government's work to strengthen the voluntary and community sector, and support greater participation in society through volunteering and giving. A wide range of initiatives have emerged from work of the ACD, including the 'Futurebuilders' programme (currently only operating in England), which 'assists front line voluntary and community organisations to build their capacity to increase the scale and scope of their public service delivery'.²⁵ The direction of funds, determined by the government, supports those organisations directly involved in delivering key public services, and this includes education and learning. The outcomes of the various initiatives need to be monitored to understand, in particular, programmes such as the 'ChangeUp' hubs of expertise, which may be used to inform good practice in sharing specialist expertise with a sector that has a long established history of engaging with the 'harder to reach' groups.

²⁵ Active Communities Directorate web site, www.homeoffice.gov.uk

6.0 Building on existing partnership activities

It is important to recognise in this research that there are already some very positive examples of partnership working taking place across ACL providers in Pembrokeshire. This includes working together on delivery, marketing, and training.

Joint delivery

The *Learning for Living* course detailed in Section 3 of this report provides an excellent example of partnership working and using each partner's strengths to provide a positive learning experience for carers. Opportunities for further collaborative work should be explored as the Learning Network develops.

Joint marketing initiatives

There are a wide range of joint marketing initiatives taking place across the county, including:

- A series of open days organised by Learning Pembrokeshire throughout the year in each Community Learning Centre and all providers who deliver in the centres are involved, including Pembrokeshire College, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth and the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- A joint planning approach to the national Adult Learners' week, in May of each year. During 2006 a joint promotional booklet is planned to include individual providers' events and a number of partnership projects. This venture is enabled through funding acquired by means of a jointly prepared bid to Awards for All and NIACE DC.
- A joint promotional approach to the 'Learning Zone' stand at the Pembrokeshire County Show, held in August each year. This is jointly planned, funded and staffed by a number of different providers.

It is interesting to note here that research from the Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey reveals that current marketing initiatives based upon written information (brochures and leaflets, newspaper adverts) and word of mouth seem to be the most effective in encouraging participation in learning. However, although relatively few individuals said that they had found out about their learning activity via other sources such as Learning Zone, it is possible that whilst not the primary source of information, these events may well have provided reminders or prompts for individuals thinking about attending a learning activity.

Joint meetings and training

Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College have particularly strong links through the third party franchise arrangement in operation. This results in regular meetings taking place to work on meeting additional learning needs of learners on courses through this arrangement. Other third party arrangements with voluntary and community sector organisations such as Princes Trust and FRAME, also ensure regular meetings.

There is joint training between Pembrokeshire College and Learning Pembrokeshire on quality training for managers on self-assessments and the Estyn Framework, which could be opened up to the Voluntary and Community Sector. Peer observation and assessment of classroom practice and teaching across the provision commenced last term, which does include the Voluntary and Community Sector. This follows the Estyn framework and the outcomes are monitored with results used to inform future planning and identification of training needs.

An ACL tutor conference has been organised by Learning Pembrokeshire in March 2006, which is open to all providers of ACL in the county.

7.0 Summary and Conclusions

This report has explored current provision of Adult and Community Learning opportunities in Pembrokeshire, and innovative developments in delivery and planning that could usefully feed into the development of a Pembrokeshire Learning Network. Learning Network models from two other areas have been explored so that elements of their successes may be considered for inclusion in a model for Pembrokeshire. The impact of external influences and strategic developments on ACL have also been considered.

The principle aims motivating consideration of the development of a Learning Network for Pembrokeshire are:

- To widen participation in learning
- To better meet learner needs
- To maximise the effective use of resources

General conclusions from this research are reported below using the above criteria for success, before going on to specific recommendations.

7.1 Widening Participation in Learning requires better meeting of learner needs

From mapping of current provision it is clear that a wide range of Adult and Community based learning courses are being successfully delivered. There was some evidence of unmet need from the Voluntary and Community Sector, with a demand for additional subjects being identified by some respondents to the research into ACL provision in this sector (see Section 2). In part, this may reflect the particular requirements of the sector, with a high degree of specialist requirements such as training in arts marketing, community transport, mental health service users' rights, and also the preference for in-house training geared to the needs and cultural profile of particular organisations and their volunteers.

Effective partnership working and sharing of information may help to better integrate the identification and fulfilling of unmet needs in this area into the wider context of Adult and Community based learning provision. This will require an understanding and respect for the fact that there are cultural differences between providers, but that a shared commitment to the principle aims of the Learning Network will ensure a firm foundation from which a successful and effective network can evolve.

The Pembrokeshire Adult Learning Survey 2005 suggests that generally there is a reasonable degree of satisfaction with the range of course subjects on offer, but that there were obstacles to participation in the form of lack of time, lack of locally available courses and at suitable times to meet the needs of those who work, and with family and work commitments. This does suggest the need to explore more flexible delivery methods, including building on experience with on-line learning delivery, but also the need to be more systematic in gathering and mapping data on the geographical distribution of learner needs, and in this respect the recommendation that a Management Information System that is integrated with GIS mapping could be very helpful.

Effective partnership working to widen access needs to encompass joint information gathering and sharing, but also strategically directed information distribution, ensuring that equal access is had by all sectors of the community to relevant information on opportunities available from all providers. The Pembrokeshire Education Portal has a significant role to play in delivering such an outcome, already being recognised across Wales as a leading-edge development, but consideration also needs to be given to widening and promoting access to such on-line resources. In this respect the '*Learning for Living*' project exemplified good practice in providing access and support to learners who had previously been unable to fit into more traditionally structured learning opportunities.

There are many good examples, some of which are discussed above, where partnership working is taking place, on a formal and sometimes less formal basis to maximise learner participation. The key in all these cases is the recognition that barriers to learning can lie both in an individual's personal history – e.g. in previous unsatisfactory educational encounters, lack of confidence, lack of belief that things can get better etc, and in objective social conditions, such as lack of financial resources, inadequate public transport, and domestic responsibilities.

Adopting an approach that is learner-led helps to give previously disempowered learners a sense of power and confidence, and increases motivation, whilst partnership working enables providers to draw upon the specialist experience in particular sectors, from co-ordinating social support, to information management, to appropriate interpersonal skills in working with particular disadvantaged groups.

The key here is that what is being offered are learning opportunities that are based upon the multi-dimensional needs and aspirations of learners. Widening participation can only proceed on the basis of providers working together to identify and meet the needs of those who are not currently engaged in the learning process, and not on attempting to fit them into existing systems that they currently find inaccessible for whatever reason.

Learner representation across all levels of the network will make learners partners in the strategic planning process and ensure that their aspirations play a key part in driving the direction of ACL provision, thus resulting in greater participation, increased levels of satisfaction, and the development of a positive learning culture.

7.3 Maximising the effective use of resources

Building an effective Learning Network will require commitment, as providers continue to work on already excellent beginnings in developing mutual respect and understanding, and embrace a strategic vision that puts the needs of the learner at the centre of their shared mission. The rewards in terms of widening access are clear, but also the increased efficiency of the ACL sector as a whole. The new model must be essentially evidence and intelligence driven if it is to be learner centred, and a number of initiatives to improve information gathering, collection, and dissemination have already been discussed.

Matching resources to needs, avoiding duplication, and drawing on the particular strengths and experience of individual providers can only enhance efficient use of resources whilst it drives up quality standards. The need to develop a robust quality framework will be essential to ensuring that providers operating within the network meet the requirements for quality provision as set down by Estyn and ELWa.

Some providers will already be familiar with this approach, such as the Lifelong Learning Manager in Learning Pembrokeshire who has already been trained as an Estyn Additional Inspector, and all Lifelong Learning Co-ordinators are peer assessors. Pembrokeshire College's community provision is also managed by a Community Leader who is an Estyn peer assessor. The Voluntary and Community Sector, however, are less familiar with the inspection framework. Although a small number of staff have undertaken peer assessor training, this needs to be widened out and the sharing of information and skills will be critical to ensuring that every member of the network can achieve the quality criteria, and joint training arrangements on issues such as preparation for self-assessment reviews and inspections should be opened up to all.

8.0 Recommendations

The key recommendations from this research support the reconfiguring of the existing learning infrastructure in Pembrokeshire to develop a flexible, cost effective, and quality-focused Learning Network, responsive to learner needs.

Implementing these recommendations will go a considerable way to resolving many of the issues identified with widening participation and building best practice in Adult and Community based learning identified by Estyn²⁶. They will also support the strategic objectives of key policies and strategies from other organisations central to strategic developments in ACL provision, such as the Welsh Assembly Government, and ELWa. At the same time, the research has been undertaken in the context of the local environment and operating policies and is representative of the partners and the sectors they represent.

The recommendations detailed on the next page will enable the following key outputs from the Pembrokeshire Learning Network:

- A strong, single branded, learner-led network, recognisable to all.
- Quality ACL provision.
- Maximising use of all resources available, which includes venues, trainers and back-office functions.
- A set of protocols for sharing of information, resources, and policy development to support more effective strategic planning.
- Hubs of expertise.

²⁶ Widening participation in adult community-based learning: A survey of best practice, Estyn, 21st June 2004

The Pembrokeshire Learning Network – branding and structure:

- To develop a strong, single brand for the Pembrokeshire Learning Network, which includes shared promotional and marketing materials and events.
- To develop a robust quality framework for delivery of Adult and Community based learning provision within the Learning Network. This framework will include:
 - Self-assessment tools based on the Estyn model (for the Voluntary and Community sector it is also recommended that consideration be given to adapting the Good Practice Guide: Voluntary Organisations and the Common Inspection Framework as an initial introduction to the Estyn Framework²⁷)
 - A programme of continuing professional development for all ACL tutors
 - Ensuring effective evaluation of 'soft' learning outcomes, working with tools such as NIACE RARPA/Catching Confidence recently developed.
- To develop a set of protocols and effective systems for sharing of:
 - Information on learner needs, provision, community venues, trainers
 - Back office functions such as health and safety checks, CRB checks delete etc.
 - Resources such equipment, learning materials, venues, tutors, and finances
 - Policy development, for example appropriate protocols for working with vulnerable adults
- To develop '*hubs of specialist expertise*' within the Learning Network. These 'hubs' may be related to particular subject specialisms, online network groups, and sharing policies such as working with vulnerable adults. The development of such hubs recognises the particular contributions partners have to bring to the network, and the work from these can be shared across the network to ensure an effective and consistent approach.
- To appoint an Independent Management Team and Network Co-ordinator with overall responsibility for driving the direction of the network, ensuring adherence to the quality framework, and co-ordinating activities.

²⁷ Good practice guide: Voluntary Organisations and the Common Inspection Framework, York & North Yorkshire voluntary sector learning and skills network, March 2003. Whilst this guide is based on the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) in England, the general principles of the framework are similar to Estyn and could be easily adapted to provide an excellent introduction for Voluntary and Community organisations new to this approach, as a first step towards working within the Estyn framework.

The Pembrokeshire Learning Network - Meeting Learner Needs:

- To develop a web-based database of provision, accessible to all (current and future learners) using the Local Authority's GIS, and infrastructure of the evolving Pembrokeshire Education Portal.
- To develop a web-based database of learner needs linked to the Local Authority's Geographical Information System (GIS), to enable ongoing evaluation of, and responses to, adult and community learning needs on a geographical basis.
- To ensure provision continues to be based on learner needs, and delivered in a way which is most appropriate for learners in terms of issues such as location and delivery methods. This includes building on work already undertaken in exploring new models of delivery, for example Learning Clubs, e-learning, and the Pembrokeshire Education Portal.
- To develop a more effective and seamless learner support system at all stages of the "learning journey" from initial engagement through to informal and formal learning activities, to include Basic Skills Assessment and Referral systems.

The Pembrokeshire Learning Network - a learner-led approach:

- To develop mechanisms for involving learners in planning, for example building on the Learner Forums already established by Learning Pembrokeshire, and developing the Learning Champions initiative in the Voluntary Sector.

Sustainability

To achieve these outputs and to secure the longevity of the Learning Network, consideration must be given as to how a Network of this type can be sustained. It will certainly be necessary to consider ways in which future funding mechanisms for all providers will work, and some kind of reconfiguring of this may be required.

A funding mechanism which is learner-led (i.e. it follows the learner along their "learning journey") would almost certainly be appropriate here, and where the Network is taking responsibility as a whole for meeting targets set by funders, then the approach to maximising resources, sharing good practice, and development of protocols for sharing will almost certainly help.

However, critical to the success of the Learning Network will be the appointment of an Independent Management Team as outlined above to drive it forward and ensure the integrity of the 'brand'. It will be necessary to secure funding for this from the outset, with the recommendation that if project funding (e.g. European) is secured for say an initial 2 year period, that a clear, sustainable exit strategy is developed for the team and network as a whole during this time. This should include considering the setting up of a separate legal entity, for example, along the lines of a social enterprise model such as a community interest company.

9.0 Building a Pembrokeshire Learning Network in the context of the main findings and issues identified by Estyn in Adult Community-based Learning²⁸

In Estyn's survey of best practice of widening participation in adult community-based learning, a number of important issues are raised which are responded to below in the context of developing a Learning Network in Pembrokeshire.

"Providers undertake little mapping of provision across local areas to identify opportunities for expansion or partnership arrangements".

This research has started that mapping process, and developing the use of tools such as the GIS system to integrate in to a common Management Information system recommended in this report will ensure a more coherent approach to mapping local provision and need on an ongoing basis.

"The absence of common data collection arrangements makes it difficult for providers and national bodies to reach a reliable view about trends in the number and location of learners in different parts of the system and the performance of the sector in widening participation".

This research has included an initial Adult Learners survey distributed across Pembrokeshire, and has been analysed alongside the data collected on provision and location, for example, across the County. There is ongoing work between Learning Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire College to identify areas where their respective MIS systems can be integrated, and the development of a clear set of protocols for sharing information will make a significant contribution to achieving reliable and up-to-date data on learning trends to inform future strategies.

"In taking steps to identify the needs of non-traditional learners, the best providers clearly identify which sector of the market they are targeting and the needs that they are intending to meet. However, only a few providers make effective use of community profiles or other local market information".

The involvement of the Voluntary and Community Sector in this research has been key to identifying needs and issues relating to the more non-traditional learners, and through this and the evolving learning network, it is hoped that a better understanding of the role of specialist sector training providers can be gained and benefited from by all. In addition, working with other local market information gained through other networks and initiatives, and resources such as the local Community Plan, will continue to inform the most appropriate ways of responding to local needs.

"Whilst there are a number of high profile campaigns to promote adult learning nationally, these do not always link closely with the provision available locally. At a local level, promotional work varies unduly in quality and effectiveness".

²⁸ Widening participation in adult community-based learning: A survey of best practice, Estyn, 21st June 2004

The formation of the Pembrokeshire Learning Network will ensure a strong, single branded approach to marketing and promotional activities. The activities and ways in which learning opportunities are promoted will be informed by learners involved in the network, and will be appropriate to the local area based on locally identified needs and issues. There are already, however, many good examples where joint marketing initiatives operate at a local level, such as a 'one stop shop' Learning Zone at the Annual County show, joint activities during Adult Learner's week etc. and these should continue to be built upon.

"In some areas, the expectations and aspirations of new learners have been raised but it has not been possible to sustain programmes and projects in the medium to long term".

Sustaining the Learning Network has been identified as a key issue for consideration. Much of the training provided through the Voluntary and Community Sector is project funded and/or provided where other short-term funds are secured (hence 51% is delivered 'on demand') and the PET project delivered through Pembrokeshire College is also European funded. Priority must be given to ways in which longer-term funding can be secured for the network to continue to be able to respond to learner needs and widening access. Investigating the most appropriate constitution for the Learning Network and considering appropriate exit strategies, should project funding be secured, will be a priority.

"Often, adult and community learning is provided through partnerships between two or more organisations...however, whilst such arrangements provide the potential for a strengthened strategic approach to identifying and meeting the needs of adult learners in the community, in practice, strategic planning does not build effectively on the potential opportunities that the partnerships offer".

The success of the Learning Network in Pembrokeshire will build on partnerships already established and maximise use of resources, skills, knowledge, and expertise. This research has provided an excellent opportunity for the three key providers of ACL to come together, and the development of an inclusive and learner-led network will ensure a coherent approach to strategic planning of ACL provision in Pembrokeshire.

"Learners on ACL programmes generally make good progress as a result of their involvement. Others do not secure accredited outcomes but do gain important skills such as confidence and self-esteem to help them further on the road of learning. However, progress of these learners within the system is not well-tracked and evidence of progression tends to be anecdotal".

It has been recognised that recording and measuring of 'soft' outcomes has an important part to play in ensuring that these have equal validity alongside other more tangible outcomes such as accreditation. The Voluntary and Community Sector across Wales has undertaken a considerable amount of work in this field, and working with that and the newly developed 'Catching Confidence' tool developed by NIACE, which looks at the nature and role of confidence and ways of developing and recording changes in the learning context, will ensure that appropriate methods of tracking and evidencing such progression will be adopted and used to inform future strategies, and hopefully secure funding.

“Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment is good and some is very good. Teachers use a variety of different strategies to maintain learner’s interest and participation in classes.

Many providers are at an early stage of developing their quality assurance arrangements. The quality mechanisms they use vary widely according to the history of the organisation. There are wide variations in the degree to which they are developing quality effectively. Most providers produce annual self-assessments, but these do not always cover all the issues”.

The Pembrokeshire Learning Network will build on good practice to date in this area and encourage and support the sharing of good practice in teaching and assessment strategies. The quality framework developed will ensure a coherent and consistent approach to quality across all aspects of provision, and all providers as part of the ‘brand’ will be expected to provide training to a specified quality standard, which will be monitored through the Independent Management Team and Network Co-ordinator to ensure the integrity of this framework, which will include working with appropriate self-assessment tools, and a programme of continuing professional development for all those involved in the delivery of Adult and Community based learning.

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