

**COMMUNITY LEARNING TRUST  
PILOTS: PROSPECTUS**

**New Challenges, New Chances:  
Further Education and Skills  
System Reform Plan**

11 APRIL 2012

# Contents

<b>Ministerial Foreword.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Community Learning Trust Pilots: introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Community Learning: aims and objectives.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Community Learning: policy commitment .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Community Learning Trust Pilots: the invitation.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Selection Criteria .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Support and Evaluation.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Key Dates.....</b>	<b>16</b>

# Ministerial Foreword

## John Hayes, Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning

Underpinning all Government learning and skills policies is the firm conviction that learning is precious because it brings light to all kinds of lives. Whether the learner is a young apprentice looking to gain vocational skills as the basis for a fulfilling career or an older person wanting to remain physically and mentally active by taking part in adult education classes, we know that learning enriches individuals, strengthens communities, and feeds the common good.



Accessible community learning is an indispensable feature of any learning and skills system that truly claims to be lifelong. As well as offering personal fulfilment, community learning helps to break down the barriers that divide communities and plays an important role in creating secure and welcoming neighbourhoods. It can also improve people's health and well-being and help them become more capable in using digital technology. Each year, community learning improves the quality of many thousands of lives across England. And often it makes a telling contribution towards the growth of local economies by helping people to develop the skills, confidence and independence required to progress to training and employment.

Whether or not it leads to a qualification, learning is transformative – transforming attitudes, knowledge, understanding, ability, mood and, importantly, potential. We underestimate the value of these different kinds of learning, or create artificial boundaries between them, at our peril. Community learning draws on a rich tradition stretching back to the early 19th century and bears out Ruskin's dictum that "that country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings." Its strong roots are now part of our social fabric, nurtured and supported over the years by countless families and artistic, cultural, scientific, environmental, social, religious and trade union organisations through volunteering, teaching, managing and campaigning.

When I became Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, I vowed to champion the cause of community learning as resolutely in office as I had done in opposition. For me, this prospectus marks the next important step in making good on that promise. It takes forward the 'New Challenges, New Chances' strategy for further education, published last December, by starting from the premise that learning is not just for local people and their communities, but rather belongs to local people and must answer to them for its success or failure. This document invites you to take part in a pilot that represents a major milestone in a policy development process that began in spring 2011 with a series of stakeholder meetings to develop and debate the options for maximising the impact of public funding and delivering a new vision for community learning.

Those discussions took particular account of Government's Open Public Services White Paper, which set out our approach to the delivery of public services. Notably, it signalled an end to the outmoded, top-down model of public service delivery which puts bureaucratic requirements above the needs of service users. By piloting a range of different community learning trust models we intend to put communities in the driving seat. We want local people to have a real voice in deciding the kind of learning they want. We want each trust to recognise and meet the differing needs, wishes and aspirations of its various communities, working with local people, local organisations, local businesses and local services in a way that strengthens and builds civil society. Let us never again be timid in recognising that learning matters most because it teaches us that all that is known is within our grasp; that, in Chesterton's words, "education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another."

I look forward to seeing your proposals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Hanger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

## Community Learning Trust Pilots: introduction

1. [‘New Challenges, New Chances: building a world class skills system’](#) set out clear aims and objectives for the £210m per year Community Learning budget in England and announced our intention to pilot a range of community learning trust models to deliver these new, agreed objectives more coherently from August 2012.
2. Since the Coalition Government came into power, it has introduced policies across all areas of public life that are designed to drive fairness, reduce bureaucracy, strengthen communities, improve health and well-being, increase local decision-making and make high quality information more accessible. In this way we are building a society in which every member has the skills and confidence to act responsibly, fulfil his or her potential and make a personal contribution to the community – a contribution that reflects communal pride, a strong sense of belonging and a desire to feed the common good.
3. The vision for community learning trusts embodies and reflects this much wider raft of policy developments across Government. Ministers want to see people in local neighbourhoods, wards and parishes empowered to work collaboratively with learning providers and other partners to agree their own community learning priorities, strategies and partnership models - in order to develop a shared identity, build a culture of lifelong learning and foster social purpose at neighbourhood level. We know that many areas of England are already well forward on this journey.
4. We have taken on board your views. In the eight policy roundtable meetings held between February and April 2011, you told us that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model would never, and could never, work for community learning. We listened to discussions about the innovations you are introducing in order to reach out to your most disadvantaged communities, improve value for money for the tax payer and work in partnership with other learning providers and local services, such as the National Careers Service, to deliver the best and most widely accessible community learning offer.
5. Out of these discussions we developed the framework for the community learning questions in the national ‘New Challenges, New Chances’ consultation and the debates at four regional consultation meetings. We received 185 consultation responses to the consultation from providers, representative



Courtesy of Morley College

groups and community organisations, as well as more than 6,500 responses from individuals to a companion 'Citizens Survey.' These responses provide the foundation for the community learning trust pilots we describe in this prospectus.

6. You have told us that you are eager to work with your communities to develop innovative community learning trust models. We are particularly interested in applications that demonstrate how local people and organisations can take the lead. Becoming part of this pilot will give you full access to the community learning trust support programme and more flexibility to use your 2012/13 Community Learning budget<sup>1</sup> to try out new approaches, as well as opportunities to exchange ideas and compare outcomes with other community learning providers. We look forward to seeing your proposals.

### Social Marketing and Community Learning

One council felt that national statistical models 'never seem to describe the city the way we know it to be' and has developed a bespoke market segmentation approach, focused on analysing levels of trust in council services and within neighbourhoods. The segmentation, based on housing tenure, describes the city in terms of owner occupiers, private renters and public sector renters. The model uses 41 variables, including themes significant for community learning reform such as health, employment and education.

This segmentation has been set against MIS data from the community learning service, generating insights to inform the marketing, planning and delivery of learning and enabling a forensically local approach to community learning. Crucially, it provides detailed information about the learning preferences and aspirations of *non*-learners, supplementing MIS data on extant learners. It can also facilitate and map join-up with other council services. This approach to dialogue with communities has significant potential.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly Adult Safeguarded Learning – [Notified by the Skills Funding Agency](#)

## Community Learning: aims and objectives<sup>2</sup>

### Purpose of Government Supported Community Learning:

- Maximise access to community learning for adults, bringing new opportunities and improving lives, whatever people's circumstances.
- Promote social renewal by bringing local communities together to experience the joy of learning and the pride that comes with achievement.
- Maximise the impact of community learning on the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities.

### Objectives:

- Focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural areas and people on low incomes with low skills
- Collect fee income from people who can afford to pay and use where possible to extend provision to those who cannot.
- Widen participation and transform people's destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances, e.g.
  - improved confidence and willingness to engage in learning
  - acquisition of skills preparing people for training, employment or self-employment
  - improved digital, financial literacy and/or communication skills
  - parents/carers better equipped to support and encourage their children's learning
  - improved/maintained health and/or social well-being.
- Develop stronger communities, with more self-sufficient, connected and pro-active citizens, leading to:
  - increased volunteering, civic engagement and social integration
  - reduced costs on welfare, health and anti-social behaviour
  - increased online learning and self-organised learning
  - the lives of our most troubled families being turned around.
- Commission, deliver and support learning in ways that contribute directly to these objectives, including:
  - bringing together people from all backgrounds, cultures and income groups, including people who can/cannot afford to pay
  - using effective local partnerships to bring together key providers and relevant local agencies and services
  - devolving planning and accountability to neighbourhood/parish level, with local people involved in decisions about the learning offer
  - involving volunteers and Voluntary and Community Sector groups, shifting long term, 'blocked' classes into learning clubs, growing self-organised learning groups, and encouraging employers to support informal learning in the workplace
  - supporting the wide use of online information and learning resources
  - minimising overheads, bureaucracy & administration.

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<sup>2</sup> [New Challenges, New Chances Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan: building a world class skills system](#), BIS, Dec 2011



## Community Learning: policy commitment



Courtesy of Morley College

7. Government has already introduced freedoms and flexibilities for community learning, because local people, organisations and providers are best placed to decide how to secure a balanced offer in their communities.
8. We have a big, ambitious vision for community learning. We want it to foster a strong sense of belonging among those it touches. We want the experience of learning to feed the desire to learn and create the thirst to learn more. The new community learning aims and objectives, which will apply to all BIS-funded community learning from 12/13 onwards, reflect this vision but recognise that the details of the learning **offer** needs to be determined locally and support a balanced range of outcomes, including improved confidence, successful parenting, employability skills, progression to formal courses, better mental/physical health, a stronger sense of citizenship, acquisition of digital skills and improved democratic engagement and social integration.
9. We want to see local leadership and decision-making behind each area's community learning offer. The offer will be expected to take account of:
  - the views of local communities and organisations
  - relevant data and impact evidence
  - local progression routes into formal (i.e. qualification-bearing) learning
  - relevant local services such as IAG, health, family and disability services
  - local non-formal and informal learning funded in other ways, or privately funded.



## An Emerging Mutual

One Local Authority is developing an innovative approach to securing more and better adult learning services for local people by working towards becoming a staff-run Mutual. The new company will be partly owned by staff, the Council, the Chief Executive of the organisation and external entrepreneurs, bringing together a range of commercial, charitable and enterprise skills to improve the planning, expansion and delivery of adult learning in, and for, local communities. It intends to establish a Staff Innovation Council, elected from staff and by staff, which will table papers to influence the Board of Trustees. A Student Leadership Forum will influence local planning and decision-making to meet community needs, feeding reports directly to the Chief Executive in order to plan a rich mix of learning and enable even the smallest local voice to be heard. A pricing strategy and bursary scheme will ensure that people pay fees if they can afford it but prevent finance becoming a barrier for those in greatest need. The organisation will attract new funds to meet priorities and add to the local funding pot for adult learning. Using this model, new and different services will deliver improved outcomes for the wider community, including the health, social and economic benefits of keeping people active and learning.

10. Publicly funded providers will be accountable to their communities - for example through the publication of accessible information about classes and feedback from previous learners, so that people can make truly informed choices.
11. Within the over-arching purpose of creating a local infrastructure to support a thriving, universal, community learning offer, the objectives also include a new, clearer commitment to using the public funding subsidy to support access, and progression in its widest sense, for people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate.



## Community Learning Trust Pilots: the invitation



12. This prospectus invites community learning providers who are directly funded through the Skills Funding Agency's Community Learning (previously Adult Safeguarded Learning) budget to work collaboratively with other community partners to submit proposals to become part of the 2012/13 Community Learning Trust pilots in England. We expect to select between 10 and 15 pilots. Note that trusts do NOT have to be legal entities.
13. Pilot trusts must focus on putting **local** communities in the lead. National organisations offering local provision can apply to become pilot trusts, as long as they are able to show how local people will be enabled to take this lead. Depending on the nature of the transformational change to be achieved, the trust footprint may be sub-local authority, so that it can respond to the unique local circumstances of its neighbourhoods and communities.
14. In each case, you will need to work with partners to agree exactly what overarching transformational change your proposed pilot will achieve and how it will deliver the new community learning aims and objectives. We particularly welcome pilot proposals that are community-led and backed by one or more community learning providers directly funded by the Skills Funding Agency. It is likely that many other partners will also be involved.

15. Pilot proposals will need robust strategies that set out their approach to:
  - identifying and targeting disadvantaged groups and/or individuals
  - transforming people's lives by engaging them in learning and enabling them to progress
  - generating fee income, through the universal offer, from those who can afford to pay
  - using fees and other sources of income to widen subsidised access to community learning for people who are disadvantaged and can't afford to pay, as defined locally.
16. We also invite you to identify in your proposal **one or two themes** you want to explore or develop in depth, linked to the transformations you are seeking to achieve. These need to be relevant to your area, your target learners, the local communities and partners involved and/or your proposed ways of working. Where possible, we may bring together pilots with similar themes in order to begin developing **communities of interest** across England. Feel free to identify your own interests and priorities.
17. If you decide not to apply to become a pilot, or are not successful in your application, you can still be actively involved in the development of the community learning trust vision through workshops and other activities to be held during 2012/13.
18. Community learning trusts will have natural links with a wide range of other national, regional and local policy initiatives. [Click here to see a selection.](#)



Courtesy of NIACE



## Selection Criteria

19. All directly-funded providers in receipt of an allocation from the £210m Community Learning (previously Adult Safeguarded Learning) budget are eligible to work with partners to put forward a proposal. This process is NOT a competitive tender because providers are not bidding for extra financial resources from BIS / Skills Funding Agency. In 2012/13, all providers will receive the same funding allocation as in 2011/12 and should assume that there is no additional funding for pilot areas.
20. We are keen to test a range of approaches and models. Providers submitting proposals should be aware that, while the selection process will involve scoring proposals to ensure they meet a standard threshold against key criteria, final selection will reflect the fact that BIS and the Skills Funding Agency wish to pilot different delivery models in order to test the community learning trust vision and implementation options.



Courtesy of Morley College

21. **All proposals must:**
- a. Identify the **transformational change/s** you are seeking to achieve and how the proposal will contribute to those changes, including outline arrangements in relation to governance, commissioning, equality and diversity, quality assurance and strategic development.
  - b. Set out how you intend to **widen and grow participation, focus public funding on engaging and progressing disadvantaged learners and maintain a universal offer** that serves the wider community, with due regard to equality and diversity.
  - c. Detail your **proposed financial strategy** to maximise the value of public funding ('Pound Plus'), (for example any innovative approaches to volunteering, match funding, pooling resources, business sponsorship and using fee income from people who can afford to pay in order to reach those who cannot), setting out:
    - your funding model
    - your estimate of other income, including contributions made by other partners and fees, specifying the target increase
    - your estimate of its likely impact on increasing/widening participation.
  - d. Describe how **local people and organisations are, or will be, engaged in decision-making** to secure a mix and balance of provision within your trust,

and your strategy for ensuring that the trust is **accessible and accountable**, closely involving your communities.

To supplement your proposals in relation to these 4 key objectives, the application form will also ask you to:

- e. Specify your local footprint (i.e. the area that your Community Learning Trust will cover).
- f. Describe the extent to which the proposal has been jointly agreed, and is supported by, community learning providers directly funded by the Skills Funding Agency within the trust area, as well as relevant indirectly or non-Agency-funded providers (we are particularly interested in proposals that widen the provider base by involving voluntary and community organisations in outreach and delivery roles).
- g. Suggest an overall description for the proposed operating model, for example (but not limited to), 'mutual / social enterprise', 'community-led / provider-backed partnership', 'lead accountable body', managed partnership of two or more directly-funded providers' etc, setting out partnership agreements that are already in place and partnerships that will be in place by July / August 2012.
- h. Describe how the Community Learning Trust will support and measure a wide range of progression outcomes, such as those set out in the new community learning objectives.
- i. Detail your strategy for widening your provider base (e.g. through sub-contracting, partnerships or indirect support), describing new providers and how they will be supported.
- j. Set out how you will evaluate and measure the impact of your community learning provision against your identified priorities.
- k. Describe the specific themes that your trust proposes to explore (NB: this will NOT be scored during selection).

[Click here to access the application form.](#)

### FE and HE Working Together to Develop Community Leadership Skills

An FE College, in partnership with a local University, delivers a resident research and leadership programme in deprived areas of the local community. Courses are based in areas of highest deprivation and encourage local residents to become more active in their communities by campaigning on local issues and researching the learning needs of local people. One course supports black and minority ethnic residents to take on leadership roles in their housing association. Course content includes exploration of the concept of 'community' and its needs, the skills for effective community leadership, research methods for community development and opportunities for leadership roles within the local community. The courses are run by FE and HE tutors experienced in working with adults in the community and/ or in social science research. Positive outcomes include significantly increased participation in the voluntary and democratic life of local communities.

## Support and Evaluation



Courtesy of St Mungo's

22. The outcomes of the selection process for the 2012/13 community learning trust pilots will be announced in June 2012. NIACE<sup>3</sup> will develop and run a support programme offering:
- two road-shows in May for trust applicants
  - online information through community learning trust web pages
  - mediated online chat on specific themes
  - support for pilot trusts from a named NIACE contact
  - workshop to agree consistent data collection and impact evidence approaches
  - workshops on specific 'communities of interest' such as mutuals/social enterprises, impact measurement, income generation, developing digital opportunities and 'e-reading rooms' or addressing equality and diversity issues
  - visits to review the progress of pilot trusts and discuss strategies for impact measurement and data collection, in addition to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR)
  - pilot trusts will be expected to take part in, and/or facilitate, workshops and other similar events to share their learning and experience during the pilot year.
23. We will commission a separate external evaluation of the pilots. The evaluation will help prove the concept and assess the different models' potential to deliver the objectives and outcomes set out in 'NCNC: building a world class skills system'. We will involve the external evaluators from the outset. The evaluators will produce a report on:
- the relative success of the different trust models in delivering the new community learning objectives and ways of working
  - the relative success of pilots against non-pilots working to deliver the same objectives and outcomes

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.niace.org.uk>



- data collected via Individualised Learner Record (ILR) returns, pilot trusts' own data/impact evidence collection and evidence from any other relevant sources
  - challenges, strategies, solutions and innovative approaches developed by the pilot trusts
  - lessons learned, e.g. approaches to income generation, engagement / reach, partnership arrangements, innovative delivery, data and impact evidence collection
  - any unintended consequences arising from the pilots
  - recommendations on, and options for, taking forward community learning trust models.
24. The consultation and policy development phase of the community learning review is already supported by a published [initial screening Equalities Impact Assessment \(EQIA\)](#). A full impact assessment will be prepared at the end of the pilot phase to provide proper consideration of obligations under Equality legislation.
25. The findings of the NIACE support programme, combined with the full EQIA and the external evaluator's report, will provide a sound evidence base to inform the next stage of implementation.

### Delivering Progression Outcomes

Community learning is an important access route to accredited vocational training and other formal courses, providing learners with the confidence to learn and motivation to move on. To reach the communities it serves, one FE college has established a dedicated Community Learning Team based in community locations. It has also developed a community learning framework, in collaboration with a range of local statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations, which is supporting the development of skills for employment and lifelong learning. The community learning framework helps provide aims, structure and quality assurance in non-accredited learning programmes, with a check list of good practice that helps all organisations meet common quality requirements. The framework is helping community learning to fulfil its potential to increase social capital, smooth social mobility and enrich people's lives.

## Key Dates

Prospectus published	11 April 2012
Deadline for receipt of full applications	25 May 2012
Announce successful pilots	Early July 2012
Pilots begin	August 2012
Interim evaluation report	February 2013
Final evaluation of stage 1 pilots	June 2013



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