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### Partnership with a college of further education: London Borough of Newham

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#### Brief description

This example shows how exceptionally strong partnership arrangements between an adult learning provider and the local college of further education generate considerable benefits for learners at both institutions.

#### Overview – the provider’s message

‘Newham Adult Learning Service’s (NALS) partnership with Newham College of Further Education (NCFE) is long-established and the benefits for local people have been significant. Before the partnership, curriculum planning for adult education in the Borough was largely uncoordinated and did not engage all of Newham’s diverse communities. NALS now works as an associate faculty of the college. We manage the delivery of NCFE’s community-based part-time adult courses. Our staff work with college managers to plan the curriculum to avoid duplication of provision and to enable learners to progress between different levels. Learning is delivered in centres that we share and, in some cases, jointly own. The partnership has provided local people with a wide choice of adult learning opportunities at convenient locations throughout the Borough delivered in well-equipped, high-quality learning centres.’

*Rob Murphy, Group Strategic Manager for Post 19 Learning, Newham Adult Learning Service*

#### The good practice in detail

So what are the benefits of this partnership?

##### Widening participation

The partnership has been a significant factor in helping NALS to achieve their commitment to widening participation in adult learning. As a direct result of the partnership, courses run in purpose-



built accommodation throughout the Borough, in a way that would not otherwise have been possible. Without the partnership, the courses would probably have been delivered on school premises or in other buildings that are not designed for adult learning. 'Our experience has shown that adults who have been out of learning for many years, are more likely to re-engage with learning if centres are accessible and purpose built,' says Rob.

The learning centres deliver both college and NALS courses. The range of provision is therefore considerably enhanced and both providers are better placed to meet the wide variety of learners' needs. Joint planning builds on the knowledge and understanding of local communities and on the specialist skills of the staff. Managers from the college are directly involved in the NALS management team which results in much more effective collaboration than would be possible with two separate management teams, even if they liaised effectively and held regular meetings.

## Infrastructure Development

'The partnership has helped us to develop a network of high-quality adult learning centres across Newham, which is something we would have struggled to do on our own,' says Rob. Newham Foundation, a registered charity jointly owned by the college and Newham Council, has been established. As a result, funding for building new centres has been secured; something that each partner would have found difficult had they acted individually. Joint provision is offered in five centres in Newham, four of which are purpose-built for adult learning and all of which provide a high-quality learning environment.

## Learner progression

Joint curriculum planning means that the range of courses, from non-accredited to level 3, delivered by NALS or by the college, provides better opportunities for learners to progress to other courses at the same centre. For example, learners studying English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) can start at pre-foundation level with NALS and progress to an accredited level 2 course with the college without having to move to a different centre. Information and communication technology (ICT) learners can take a pre-foundation course with the college and progress to a level 2 programme with NALS, again at the same centre.

Learners who come to study one subject are made aware of a wide range of options that are available to them at the same centre. Many take additional courses and then progress into different areas of study. Joint curriculum planning promotes this type of progression. At one of the local centres the college's ESOL programme includes 'Introduction to the Language of Childcare'; a course specifically designed to support progression to NALS accredited courses in childcare.

A further benefit of courses being delivered in each of the local centres is that progression rates have improved from NALS courses to courses on the main college campus. Learners are in contact with college tutors and systems in the local centres and as a result they are more prepared to make the transition to the main college than they would be otherwise. A progression agreement with the college means that all local centre learners are guaranteed a place on an appropriate course at the college.

## Efficiency and value for money

The partnership provides a range of opportunities for both organisations to run more efficiently. As well as sharing the capital costs of the buildings and their maintenance costs, the management of the college's associate faculty programme is integrated with the NALS management structure. The manager with overall responsibility for the NALS programme also acts as director of the college's associate faculty of community education and line manages the college's local centre managers. Another example of this integration is the NALS tutor coach team, who are responsible for all classroom observations in the local centres whether the courses are run by NALS or by the college. In these ways, the college is able to reduce its management costs compared with its other faculties and NALS gains income through the management fee received from the college.



Within the local centres, efficiencies include: sharing some administration costs, such as staffing reception; sharing caretaking costs; and joint use of equipment such as photocopiers. Learners are jointly enrolled and there is shared responsibility for initial assessment of applicants for ESOL, one of the largest curriculum areas, with applicants being placed on the most appropriate course regardless of which partner is responsible for the course.

## Provider background



Newham Adult Learning Service (NALS) provides learner responsive provision and learning for social and personal development based at five main sites in Forest Gate, Manor Park, Beckton, North Woolwich and Canning Town, and at a range of community venues. Newham is the sixth most deprived area in England and Wales and the third most deprived in London. Some 43% of the local population is classed as living in poverty and 35% are economically inactive. Approximately 20% of the working age population have no qualifications.

Some 75% of residents are under the age of 45, and 70% are from Black and minority ethnic communities. The Borough has the largest transient immigrant population in London.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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