

# A Lifelong Learning Local Authority

IFLL Sector Paper 4



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## Foreword

This is the fourth of the Sector Papers to be published from the Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning (IFLL). The Sector Papers will discuss the implications of lifelong learning for each of the sectors involved in providing learning opportunities: early childhood, schools, family learning, further education, higher education, private training providers, voluntary and community organisations, local authorities, learning cities, cultural organisations, and local learning ecologies. The goal here is to encourage innovative thinking on how these parts do or do not fit together, as part of a systemic approach to lifelong learning.

The Inquiry was established in September 2007 and will produce its main report in September 2009. It is sponsored by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), with an independent Board of Commissioners under the chairmanship of Sir David Watson. Full details of the Inquiry can be found at [www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry](http://www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry).

The overall goal of the Inquiry is to offer an authoritative and coherent strategic framework for lifelong learning in the UK. This involves:

- articulating a broad rationale for public and private investment in lifelong learning;
- a re-appraisal of the social and cultural value attached to it by policy-makers and the public;
- developing new perspectives on policy and practice.

### **IFLL: supplementary papers**

The Sector Papers are complemented by several other strands of IFLL work:

- *Thematic Papers*. These relate nine broad themes, such as demography, technology or migration, to lifelong learning. Each one reviews evidence submitted to the Inquiry, and then draws together strands from the debate into a synthesis of the issues, with key messages.
- *Context Papers*. These will provide a broad overall picture of expenditure on all forms of lifelong learning: by government, across all departments; by employers, public and private; by the third sector; and by individuals and households. The goal is to provide a benchmark for mapping future trends.
- *Public Value Papers*. These will look, from different angles and using a variety of techniques, at the 'social productivity' of lifelong learning, i.e. what effects it has on areas such as health, civic activity or crime. The goal is both to provide evidence on these effects, and to stimulate a broader debate on how such effects can be measured and analysed.

- *Learning Infrastructures*. Unlike the others, this strand consists not of a series of papers but a set of scenarios, designed to promote debate and imagination on what the infrastructure for learning might look like in the future. This challenges us to integrate the physical environments of learning, the virtual environments or learning technologies, and people's competences and behaviour.

Published papers are available from the IFLL website:

[www.lifelonglearninginquiry.org.uk](http://www.lifelonglearninginquiry.org.uk)



Professor Tom Schuller  
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Sir David Watson  
Chair, IFLL Commissioners

## Introduction

This paper examines the role and different contexts of any local authority determined to take lifelong learning seriously.

In preparing the paper I have made two assumptions. The first is to interpret the activity of 'learning' broadly. Clearly not all human activity is learning and taking part in the same activity can be learning for some and not others. Some forms of what might be called recreation – for example, entering the lottery, gambling or playing bingo – are clearly not learning. Others – for example, learning and practising a new technique in athletics – are. Going to a place of worship to worship may not be; going to learn about the religion arguably is. In my interpretation of the meaning of lifelong learning, I have tended to rely on the fact that local authorities since the 1930s have been legally enabled in whatever action they think appropriate to 'encourage the physical, mental and social well-being of their local communities'.

The second assumption is that local authorities will be well aware and need no reminding of their requirements to track progress in the deficit area of adult basic skills, and will have in place arrangements to ensure that those responsible for providing courses for this are doing so. As a consequence, I have not dwelt on that aspect of the local authority's lifelong learning activity.

The paper has three sections. The first highlights the importance of identity and context, and explores the key strategic role of the local authority in acting as guardian of its local community to ensure that all agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors play to the full their role of contributing to the promotion and practice of lifelong learning. It is for the local authority to make sense of the ever-changing kaleidoscope of 'what is' as far as lifelong learning is concerned and make coherent sense of it, and of 'what might be', for its population.

The second focuses on the various internal practices a local authority can take to ensure lifelong learning internally is effective.

The third argues for creating an accessible and changing bank of interesting practice so that any public, private or voluntary body can consider ways of extending the reach and range of their own practices in lifelong learning.

The paper concludes with a summary of main points for action.

## Identity and the role of the local authority

### Identity and tradition: the critical importance of context

Local authorities are very different. It is not merely that there is a difference between the predominantly urban and the largely rural; it is also that there is a difference between a unitary authority on the one hand and, on the other, a two-tier set of authorities in the remaining non-unitary counties, where each tier has its role to play in setting an example and acting as guardian of lifelong learning. The rural/urban split is obvious and has implications for how to go about a lifelong learning strategy.

Even within one or the other of these, however, there are different histories and expectations. Among apparently similar cities there are huge differences of identity and of tradition. There are the small ecclesiastical university cities such as York and Oxford. There are largely mercantile cities, such as Bristol and Liverpool, which prospered and are identified with an age when the country prospered as a result of trade based on Britain's role as an island with an expanding empire. And there are very large cities, like Birmingham, where there has been, from its beginning, immigration from all parts, first of the UK, then other parts of Europe, and finally from Asia and other continents. It is a city that once set itself up as a haven from the restrictive influences of the medieval guilds, boasted that it was a 'city of a thousand trades' and is proud of a population which puts its 'Brummie' identity on at least equal footing with its many other founding identities, such as Pakistan, Wales, Bangladesh, Scotland, India, the West Country, the Caribbean or Central Europe. It sees its ready access to local 'Brummie' identity as one way of binding together its multi-faith, and multi-lingual communities with so many different cultural traditions. Finally, there is the capital city, London itself, where there is yet another set of issues, some of which may be shared with other cities such as Birmingham or Manchester, but when taken together present a unique challenge to making lifelong learning a coherent reality.

Anybody will accept that there is a world of difference between, say, Herefordshire and London. But the point being made is that two apparently similar-sized cities such as say, Hull and Oxford, are very different in their readiness to take lifelong learning seriously. Context is crucial when it comes to defining a local authority's potential role.

#### **Snapshot: Hull**

Hull is now a port with an absence of seagulls, which is an eerie reminder that it was founded on the north bank of the Humber as a result of being a thriving diverse port with a healthy fishing fleet. Now not only have most of the seagulls gone, but so too has the economic prosperity that led most of the present, largely white, population to settle there over the last hundred years. It's 60 miles from anywhere and is surrounded by the estuary on one side and on the other by a sparsely populated and largely rural set of communities, where the middle class have settled in places like

Beverley so that their children can go to schools which don't serve the children from Hull's poorer districts, of which there are many. True it's a city proud of its association with Wilberforce: and to wander the Guildhall's darkly oak-panelled corridors is to encounter many busts of city fathers who contributed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to its vibrant life and to a time when it believed in itself. It is also the case that Hull is now served by a university which was founded as an offshoot of the University of London and became a university in its own right almost 50 years ago. It also has a strong college which is leading and contributing to the drive to make lifelong learning a reality.

Hull is now a city which is seeking to re-invent itself. Its city council has a set of officers and politicians who know that education and learning are vital to its regeneration. They are examining each and every way to build on the strong sense of identity, with its disarmingly humorous tendency to self-deprecation, to fashion a change of mood: from acquiescent resignation to 'that's the way things are in Hull' to one of proud confidence in the successes of its present and future citizens. For Hull lifelong learning is an urgent necessity.

### **Snapshot: Oxford**

Oxford is in stark contrast. It's a city with a long history where the buildings are a constant reminder of the rich story of its place in national and international life. The city council shares its guardianship role for the local citizens with the county council. It's the county not the city which has the prime role and responsibility within Local Government for promoting education within the city. There are in consequence competing and potentially confusing claims to the use of identity as a means of confirming a sense of shared purpose.

The city starts with many natural advantages. Its two universities are both very large. The older one is a world renowned institution with an international reputation for research and teaching. Oxford University is a magnet for the best postgraduate students, scholars and researchers in almost all higher education disciplines. It has massive endowments through its colleges and should be able to contribute to the vibrant life of a truly learning city. Oxford Brookes too has built on the foundation of an extremely successful and well-run polytechnic to become a large institution with more than a regional or national reputation. Between them they account for a huge swathe of land and building ownership and are together the largest employers in the city. The city too has another major employer in the range of prestigious hospitals, some of whose titles are associated with John Radcliffe, one of the many benefactors who have enriched what is available to today's citizens. Its employees benefit from medical training and research partnerships with the two universities.

There is however another side to Oxford. The creation of the car industry in the 1930s and 1940s in particular led to a car works plant on the city's edge that at its peak provided well in excess of 20,000 jobs. Although that plant still exists with a tiny



fraction of the jobs, and although there is no shortage of jobs for semi-skilled and high skilled workers, Oxford has its share of outer-ring estates where the habit of work has been partly lost. In that respect its Barton, Blackbird Leys and Wood Farm estates would recognise what they have in common with Marfleet or Orchard Park in Hull.

The point being made is that Hull and Oxford are both different and similar. In one, there is a large learning deficit which has to be overcome. Regeneration and its future health, social and economic well-being depends on it. In the other, learning is a key part of the city's economy and the majority of its citizens' way of life. Both cities will embrace lifelong learning but in very different ways and with different starting points, practices and priorities.

These brief and oversimplified snapshots of Oxford and Hull therefore illustrate the key importance of understanding the differing starting points and contexts for local authorities determined to make a fist of lifelong learning. Each local authority needs to start with a deep understanding of its unique and differing inheritance and present condition. Above all, the local authority will be aware of the need to harness the strong sense of identity and ownership, which comes not just from membership of, and loyalty to, the city, town or village itself, but also from employment; from belonging to churches, mosques, temples and other places of worship or none; from participation in societies and clubs; from taking part in a variety of leisure activities; from being a supporter of a major soccer or rugby club or other sporting or artistic activity. Lifelong learning opportunities will affect and need to be tailored to the needs of the able-bodied and those with disabilities, male and female, black and white and young and old alike. Vitally, they also need to be tailored and funded according to the socio-economic needs of various parts of their communities.

There is one final point of context which affects all, namely the age in which we now live. There is a well-rehearsed agreement that learning, reflected especially in the need for higher levels of education and training, is crucial to the continued well-being of all societies. It is also the case that e-learning and the internet have transformed the capacity of countries to extend their grasp and reach of what learning can offer. For the local authority and their partners that means making e-learning accessible to all their citizens not merely to the well-off. There exists a national charity, the e-learning foundation, which has undertaken pioneering work with some local authorities as well as schools in overcoming that barrier.

### **An understanding of what is lifelong learning**

Any worthwhile and thorough local authority strategy, preferably endorsed by the Local Strategic Partnership, will encompass the lifelong learning needs of all its citizens and the potential of all institutions/organisations to contribute. First, the local authority will seek to define what is meant by lifelong learning in a way that includes rather than excludes individuals, organisations and activities.

The case for interpreting it widely rather than narrowly is well made by Javed Khan, Director of Community Services in the London Borough of Harrow, as follows:

“Lifelong learning can provide the glue that binds communities together. These services attract people, just as much as our schools, clean streets, housing and transport. Our libraries, parks, museums and open spaces are treasure troves of knowledge and inspiration, providing interpretation and understanding of the world around us. Art, drama and music help us to explore our emotions and to understand what makes us human. We cannot thrive without these experiences. They help us to gain a deeper sense of ourselves and our shared heritage, and remind us that we cannot preserve respect or a sense of worth for communities with police and anti-social behaviour orders alone.

Lifelong learning, especially for the vulnerable, is as much about promotion of self-worth and mental and physical therapy as it is about gaining qualifications. This has to be the cornerstone of our support for developing places that are cohesive, tolerant and economically prosperous for all.

We cannot allow learning and cultural engagement experiences to be confined to the select few. We need to take our commitment to culture, creativity, knowledge and understanding deep into every community. We need to explicitly value the contribution that lifelong learning makes to education, creativity and economic vitality, health and well-being, social regeneration and community cohesion.”

In short, learning is the way of balancing economic structural regeneration with the rebuilding or sustenance of social capital. There exists a ‘form of mental slavery which is as real as any economic form’ that the local authority will be anxious to alleviate both for its communities and citizens.

Any local authority – not just those with education and social care within their remit – will probably see lifelong learning as having four purposes:

- economic – usually expressed through the need to secure and update skills;
- moral – securing and sustaining the highest common factor of agreed values in a pluralist society;
- cultural – sustaining the traditional culture and encouraging its continuing enrichment with the arrival of new communities and the unfolding changes in contemporary society; and
- environmental – supporting healthy well-being.

(Nowadays, it is probably worth those authorities responsible for the education and care of children rooting these in the five outcomes of the *Every Child Matters* agenda and extending them to an ‘Every Citizen Matters’ agenda).

Of these four purposes, the economic purpose has dominated. Many funding organisations – especially those like the Learning and Skills Council and the Regional Development Agencies, which receive their remits from Central Government – have

requirements that sometimes preclude consideration of the other three purposes unless they satisfy the first.

Having defined purposes in this way, the local authority will identify the organisations which have a stake in any or all of them.

In the descriptions of Hull and Oxford, it was worth mentioning the universities because, of all local institutions, they are the most deeply involved in the reality of lifelong learning. However, they have often been seen as disconnected from the regular life of the locality in which they are sited. 'Town and Gown' is a well-worn phrase which epitomises that separation. Universities now, however, are more attuned to their local obligations, and in the cases of both Hull and Oxford that is obvious from their activities in a way it was not in the past. Universities will play a leading part in the contribution to a local lifelong learning strategy and its realisation. And, as one of the examples mentioned later in the paper illustrates in a structured way, the Open University has a huge potential contribution to make to any local authority's lifelong learning strategy.

So too will be that of other institutions of learning in the authority, colleges of further education, primary and secondary schools, whether in the public (largely) or private (few in number) sectors. All these institutions, along with the adult education and youth services, are especially obligated to support lifelong learning. As will be illustrated in examples below, they can do so best, not merely by enriching the experiences for those for whom they are primarily intended, but also by making connections between themselves and by connecting to the other players in the locality, whether employers or leisure/special interest providers.

The learning sector, however, should not be seen as the only player on the local authority map for lifelong learning. As we have seen, there are employers who do, or do not, provide professional development opportunities for their staff. It is readily seen that a doctor or nurse needs access to further training and education on a regular basis to make effective use of the ever-changing state of knowledge their job demands. The same is true for other employees in the health service, in education, in the police and among architects, engineers, human resource specialists, data specialists, lawyers and accountants, whether in the public, private or voluntary sectors. The same is also true for those working for small and medium-sized employers.

A large part of the Local Strategic Partnership's description of lifelong learning will therefore consist of the lifelong opportunities that come with employment in the different sectors of employment. Through all the channels, such as the Chambers of Trade and Commerce, the trades unions, professional associations and directly, employers will be asked to sign up to a lifelong learning charter promoted by the local authority; so too with the voluntary sector and religious and community groups.

The final group of importance to the local authority is the media. The local papers, the presence (or not) of local television and radio are potentially powerful voices of support

for lifelong learning and need to be brought on board if the local strategy is to be successful.

All these factors – history, identity, scoping the interested parties, creating a well-understood vision of what lifelong learning involves – have to be taken into account by the local authority in making the case for lifelong learning, creating a widely supported strategy and taking the first steps in implementing it. The strategy may find expression in a variety of actions which are considered below, as well as in some cases branding itself and encouraging its various constituent parts to brand themselves a ‘learning city, a learning town, a learning community, or a learning village’.

The local authority therefore is responsible for setting the strategy, and in doing so will distinguish its own and its partners’ various roles in:

- enabling everyone to understand the full range of lifelong learning practices;
- promoting lifelong learning itself and encouraging all other public, private and voluntary bodies within its boundaries to do the same. (It will run an annual award ceremony celebrating institutions and individuals contributing to lifelong learning);
- providing lifelong learning opportunities itself and working closely with other bodies whose prime task is to provide education and who have an interest in, or even a prime duty to provide, lifelong learning. These will include the universities, colleges, early years educational providers, schools, the Workers’ Educational Association, the Universities of the Third and First Ages and Children’s Universities;
- endorsing and supporting bids for resources made by these providers (and others such as community associations or parish councils) who may be seeking resources from major charities, the Lottery or the Regional Development Agency, The Learning and Skills Council or Central Government itself;
- monitoring overall progress and sharing the outcome of that process with the major providers;
- reviewing present and future possibilities; and
- securing the provision of a local bank of examples of lifelong learning in practice.

It is of course the case that the local authority will have roles both in providing and securing provision. Additionally, it has to take a lead in reviewing provision. It will be important that the internal organisational arrangements in discharging these three potentially conflicting roles demonstrate appropriate checks and balances which partners can see will minimise the dangers involved. Additionally, decisions about additional budgets will best be taken in a partnership body of all the players.

## **Internal measures and the infrastructure for lifelong learning: persuading others to see that they have a contribution to make**

If the local authority is the leader for lifelong learning as a whole, it's clearly necessary that its everyday behaviours are consistent with ensuring its own actions are supportive of the enterprise.

If there is no elected councillor with clearly stated responsibility for the promotion of lifelong learning, it is unlikely that it will receive priority. Yet that is still sadly the case within many authorities, and even where it is, there is often the tendency to see it as just one of many competing priorities at budget time rather than, as it should be, a part of the core purpose of every budget holder. So every cabinet member should have a specified role in the championing and the provision of lifelong learning, even if only one will have the lead role. One county authority has imaginatively appointed a cabinet member with responsibility for 'place', with the expectation that the holder will among other things act as a conscience in the promotion of the well-being of the various communities within the county. Clearly that person has a special responsibility in thinking how lifelong learning opportunities can contribute to that well-being.

From time to time, perhaps once in a four-year council cycle, there will be a thorough review of progress by scrutiny committees.

The same will be true of officers. A chief executive, who doesn't have lifelong learning incorporated specifically in their job description or their specific targets of performance management and annual review, is unlikely to be as assiduous in contributing to the overall thinking about lifelong learning as he/she should. Similarly, unless the job descriptions of each strategic director contains reference to their role in supporting lifelong learning, the strategic director who has the 'lead responsibility' is unlikely to make the connections and exploit all the opportunities for making lifelong learning a present reality rather than a future ambition. It will also be true for all the leading managers within each department of the council. Continuous professional development (CPD), which is an underpinning part of lifelong learning, is a vital part of all jobs and therefore of job descriptions, performance management and appraisal schemes. However, if lifelong learning is to really take root, the perception of it needs to go far beyond CPD or, for that matter, courses related to employability, or the targets for Level 2 qualifications and for adult basic skills which are part of the target regime for local authorities. Each job holder needs to see how it has potential to contribute to the lifelong learning needs of others, whether through being a host of work experience, volunteering for work shadowing, or promoting in their communications to the public or other workers the opportunities for lifelong learning.

The wise chief executive therefore may wish to start by asking each major service in their local authority to come up with ideas of just what is lifelong learning in their particular service. This might be followed by a conference for the pooling of ideas as a prelude to collecting an ever-expanding set of illustrations of lifelong learning.

As leader of the Local Strategic Partnership it will then be possible for the local authority to go well beyond the present restricted range of indicators of lifelong learning seen in so many local agreements. The final section of this paper sets out simply just a few examples of those 'hard to measure' but vital signs of real lifelong learning activity.

The local authority will seek from its own example, to persuade its local strategic partners – the police, health service, the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, the lead member of the local economic partnership and, vitally, the bodies representing the voluntary sector – to adopt similar 'lifelong learning' ingredients in their internal organisations affecting job descriptions, performance management and appraisal, as well as contributing to a growing set of sector illustrations of imaginative examples of lifelong learning.

Without replicating inspection regimes, the local authority will seek to confirm that the major providers of learning courses, whether leading to personal accreditation or not, are being as imaginative and enterprising as they can be, both within course provision and in other exemplar activity. So the universities, the local college(s), the secondary and primary schools – all have a responsibility to ensure that any course of study has an element of credit towards further courses. The universities and colleges will need to ensure that they have a consistent and enabling approach to the approval of prior learning. The university will be involved in 'Aimhigher' ( a programme aimed at helping people into higher education), and may well contribute in other ways to encourage participation among youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds. The local college, on the one hand, will work closely with neighbourhood groups involved in community development so that activity can be accredited wherever possible. On the other, it will be active in co-operating with universities in order to provide more routes into higher education through Level 1, 2 and 3 courses into higher education certificates and foundation degrees. Besides this, the college is so often the cog in enabling job-specific further training for employers and their staff. Finally, the college provides the engine room of adult education provision. As local authorities resume their responsibilities for the funding of further education, they will be anxious to ensure that colleges have a good match of courses to the hotspots of local need as well as ensuring that all local schools and the college co-operate with each other and small, medium-sized and major employers in the 14–19 agenda designed to make a sea change in habits of lifelong learning.

As for the schools themselves, the *Every Child Matters* and 'extended school' agenda perforce involves all state-funded schools in a greater awareness and involvement in lifelong learning, and importantly in seeing it as more than simply attainment in examinable subjects or courses. The school is the main point of contact with families

with children and, as such, a major conduit for any strategies which other players in lifelong learning may have for involving adults. So, for example, they will be a major promoter of any broadband/wireless opportunities within local communities and, in doing so, key to making the connection to community centres and libraries which play a major role, especially with older generations in sustaining lifelong learning habits.

Some local authorities have organised annual awards evenings for various categories of lifelong learning as a public symbol of its importance. When these are done well, all the various promoting and providing agencies in lifelong learning contribute, and are encouraged to do so with illustrations of innovative practice.

What is implied for the local authority is a role of mapping and championing lifelong learning activity and opportunities in their area. Recognising the full range of possibilities is their task. Some examples of this are illustrated in the next section.

## Creating an accessible bank of interesting practice: some illustrations of lifelong learning

It is natural that those engaged in a particular priority within education should think first of that priority. So the university will be very concerned with research and teaching in higher education; the employer with updating their workforce; the primary school with the education of children during infancy and childhood; the secondary school with that of teenagers, either up to 16 or beyond to 18 or 19 if that is within their remit; the colleges for people of all ages; and the health service with primary and predominantly secondary health needs. Sometimes it is easy to miss opportunities to promote simultaneously lifelong learning opportunities.

A bank of interesting practice will help to extend the horizons of providers so that they see how others have engaged in activity similar to their own, but in a different way. It will also contain examples of the sort implied in the preceding paragraph – namely promoting lifelong learning as a by-product of their main activity.

It is for the local authority to collect and disseminate such practices and it is arguable that the Local Government Association (LGA) should commission a web-based set of examples drawn from and available to their members.

Most valuable will be those examples of interesting practice which are 'low effort and high impact'.

### Case one: Universities and primary schools

Visits to various degree awards ceremonies at a number of universities over the last few years have left one abiding impression. It is the unchanging pride among the recipient graduates, undergraduates, the staff and their families and friends. The occasions – themselves a vivid illustration of lifelong learning – are always marked by individual photographs of the recipients.

One university in a city in the north-east with a very large and successful faculty of education is pioneering a simple idea relating to such award ceremonies. Each successful candidate coming from the city itself is asked to provide two extra photos with the names of the secondary and primary schools respectively on each. The Faculty of Education then pledges to take them to their partner schools within the city – for teaching school-based training purposes – where they are persuading head teachers to start 'Achievement Walls' within either the school entrance or dining hall, where the photos can be displayed with pen-portraits, alongside illustrations of other achievements of the school's past pupils to act as subliminal stimulus to the present cohort of pupils. Now that 40 per cent of the age cohort attends higher education, often from first time, in higher education backgrounds, the university and its city partner schools see it as a worthwhile activity. Moreover, it has encouraged those



partner schools to visit the university and to host undergraduate mentor programmes encouraged generally by the university as part of their mission to extend participation.

**Comment:** *Once the local authority knows of this scheme, they could both encourage it to be submitted for their annual awards scheme in the category of ‘promoting’ lifelong learning and seed-fund its embedding in the everyday life of all their schools. The university interestingly could have tried this with half a dozen other nearby authorities, but have decided to restrict their initial activity to the city because of the concentrations of disadvantage in the estate communities on its periphery.*

### **Case two: Community development on estates with socio-economic disadvantage**

In an old university city with deprived estates on its periphery, two community associations have taken the initiative in creating community development courses. Money is provided from the Regional Development Agency and the city council to support this particular course. (It receives an annual grant from the city council towards their running costs).

The course/activity is billed as a ‘Resident Research and Community Development Project’. It recruits, through a community development worker, up to 18 local residents without Level 2 qualifications. Over six months they attend 20 three-hour formal sessions and are trained to carry out research into the needs of the local community for which each course member receives a grant of £200. Community development is then planned and carried out. Therefore, apart from empowering the local community, participation also carries accreditation at Level 2. They then receive guidance towards further qualification and employment.

**Comment:** *The key component here is probably the employment of a suitable community development worker, who commands the comfortable respect of local citizens and who can successfully recruit course members and broker input for the course from the local college and university. If it were to be categorised within the spectrum of the local authority’s list of tasks outlined earlier, it would presumably fall within ‘providing’ rather than ‘promoting’ lifelong learning.*

### **Case three: Looking to provide para-professional jobs and accredited learning opportunities**

In a large Midlands city where there have been generations of immigration, the city council has sought to provide, through its various services employment opportunities, what might be called para-professional jobs. For example, schools were encouraged to establish classroom assistant, teaching assistant and mentoring jobs. The local authority runs a pre-school worker team that are chosen for their qualities not their qualifications, and are based not in schools but in health clinics where they encourage

the use of story-telling and games among parents with children under the age of three. Most interestingly, a community education worker, in a part of the city where 95 per cent of the population is first- or second-generation Pakistani or Bangladeshi in origin, has over many years run school-based parenting courses for women. These courses, although school based, are linked in accreditation to one of the city's colleges of further education. Gradually, the levels of the school-based courses, so located to accommodate the cultural reluctance to attend coeducational colleges, have developed so that recently 'graduates' of the initial parenting course have taken university degrees and found employment in a range of jobs on the ladder of para-professional to high-level professional employment.

**Comment:** *This example illustrates the willingness of a local authority service to accommodate the particular cultural sensitivities of one of their communities and, importantly, to broker with a willing college, changes in methods of delivering learning.*

### **Case four: Old people's homes as a site of lifelong learning**

In a northern county area, a local charity which supports two old people's homes, one providing for people with dementia, has funded and organised the employment of two part-time workers in art and music to run weekly sessions for the residents. In doing so, they have enlisted sixth formers in a local school who have volunteered, for a year at a time, to support their work both in the timetabled sessions and at the weekend. The school recognises the students' individual contributions.

**Comment:** *There are now many such schemes. It is of course a moot point about what is therapy and what is lifelong learning. But there is little doubt that so far as the student volunteers are concerned there is learning. Moreover, in many schemes, though not the one cited here, the residents do pursue accredited courses. Clearly the local authority with its responsibilities for securing provision for old people has a duty to note and generate the best of these schemes from the viewpoint both of care and of lifelong learning. It illustrates well the need for all strategic directors to have a 'support' set of lifelong learning responsibilities.*

### **Case five: A health exchange**

The Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust recognised the health deficit of their largely poor and mostly immigrant population, and decided that if preventive medicine and primary care were to be effective they had to do something radically different. They have set up what they have called a Health Exchange working in partnership with the City Council. Put simply, GPs refer patients with long-term low-level complaints, which in due course are likely to lead to serious deterioration in health and lifestyles. (They will also be an expensive drain on stretched NHS budgets). Once referred, the patients attend four-week courses where they will learn more about their condition and how to manage, limit and in some cases reduce their symptoms and the effects

on their general well-being and health. The courses are run very close to their homes, often in libraries or community centres and, as part of the content, promote the use of local parks and cultural centres. The early evidence is uniformly positive.

**Comment:** *Examples of real collaboration in this field of primary and preventive care and education are hard to find. This one required the Trust to prioritise budgets and negotiate with a willing city council which needed little persuasion to contribute. It is a scheme that would be easily replicable in other inner-city areas.*

### Case six: The Open University

In Gateshead where The Open University (OU) has just occupied new regional offices, it has focused support on Gateshead's own determination to use lifelong learning as a part of regeneration. For example, in the Team area of the borough the Open University has joined with GPs, ministers of faith groups, family and community workers and of course staff of schools, in seeking to overcome social exclusion. More widely, the OU is working with Gateshead extended schools programme and is a member of the Adult Education Partnership, as well as being formally involved in the borough's skills renewal pledge.

**Comment:** *There is no obvious reason why such energetic contributions by the OU should not be part of other local authorities' plans to rebuild social capital in their communities.*

The few examples here are not intended to be more than illustrative of the range of practice which might be included in any local collection. The important point is that unless the local authority in its strategic role sees itself as responsible to set the scene of what is 'lifelong learning', nobody else will. In doing this, practical examples drawn from each stakeholder's fields are often more persuasive than abstract concepts. And in their obligation to promote the health and well-being of their community, local authorities will see examples of lifelong learning as a means of bringing together staff and volunteers, across many disciplines and agencies, who without knowing it, have common moral cause.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, what this paper has intended to do is make the case for 'lifelong learning' as more than an afterthought of the local authority's activities; it should be more a unifying umbrella under which all their actions may be seen as contributing to the continued regeneration, development and well-being of its community. The local authority will see it as vital to the lives of all its citizens. As Javed Khan of Harrow puts it:

"The learning age – as the expansion of knowledge accelerates under the influence of the technologies – demands that we take lifelong learning seriously. Education is no longer a 'you only get one chance' activity endured between nursery and sixteen. It is more a pleasurable habit acquired during and, if your parents help, before schooling. If you like, it is one incurable addiction worth having. The more we learn the better our chances of a healthy and fruitful life."

Finally, the paper has implied the importance of certain actions which are summarised in ten points.

The local authority should:

- define lifelong learning broadly and see it as a means of complementing economic regeneration with the creation of social and intellectual capital;
- build lifelong learning into the various different and overarching common identities of its community (e.g. the learning city, town, village or community);
- understand its different roles as 'enabler', 'promoter', 'provider', 'monitor' and 'securer of a bank of interesting practice';
- ensure the active support of all parts of the community, through the strategic local partnership, to an agreed lifelong learning programme. Invite all employers to sign up to a lifelong learning 'charter' which encapsulates good practices;
- ensure that cabinet portfolio holders and executive directors all have a role to play in delivering lifelong learning, with one person holding lead responsibility for it;
- review progress every three or four years through its Scrutiny Committee;
- include 'lifelong learning' entitlements and responsibilities in all council job descriptions and encourage similar practice by other employers;
- run an 'annual awards' ceremony and secure the support of the local media, both for it and as key promoters of lifelong learning;
- secure (and provide) resources for lifelong learning, especially innovative practices in lifelong learning and in overcoming social exclusion; and
- focus in particular on an e-learning entitlement and ways of ensuring that all, not just some, have access to it.