

# Lifelong Learning 2010 Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: The Contribution of the Education System

Subproject 5

## **The access of adults to formal and non- formal adult education**

Country Report: England

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1. Policy background

The main ‘driver’ for English policy on adults’ access to higher and further education since the mid-1990s at least has been global economic competition, and the perceived need to respond to the need to raise skill levels in the workforce. This has, of course, been overlaid by concerns about social cohesion and social inclusion, and by concerns about tensions arising from migration – both from former British colonies and dominions, and, more recently, from countries of the European Union, chiefly the newer member states.

While the term ‘access’ dominated policy discussions in the 1980s and into the first half of the 1990s, under the Labour government after 1997 the term ‘widening participation’ has been in vogue. The Conservative government’s 1987 White Paper (leading to the 1988 Education Reform Act<sup>1</sup>) proposed three routes of access to higher education: academic qualifications, vocational qualifications and access courses for adults. It also recognised the right of institutions to admit people from other routes ‘if fully satisfied of their capacity to benefit’. This development opened routes to growth in intakes and ‘mass’ participation in higher education.

In 1997, the Dearing Report<sup>2</sup> recommended further growth. This was broadly implemented by the new Labour government, which set a target of 50 per cent participation. It also proposed that ‘the opportunity of higher education’ should be offered to ‘all those who have the potential to benefit’, and that courses should ‘satisfy both students and employers’.

The Labour government’s chief concern in widening participation policy has been social class. In order to address the perceived skills deficit in the workforce, substantial funding has been directed towards ‘foundation degrees’: a new, shorter, more work-focused qualification below the level of the traditional undergraduate (Bachelors) degree. Foundation degrees tend to have much more flexible entry qualifications, and in many cases, students taking foundation degrees are able to transfer credits to Bachelors study; foundation degrees therefore function, in some respects, as access programmes. However, students on foundation degrees still represent a small proportion of the total: 18,050 students were awarded a foundation degree in 2008/09, which would equate to just 6.5 per cent of the number of first degree graduates (276,145) (HESA 2010).

Key *foci* of political debate have been around the proportion of university entrants from state (as opposed to private or ‘public’) schools, and the proportion of such students gaining entry to ‘elite’ universities. (The latter being variously interpreted: for instance, as Oxford and Cambridge, or as twenty or so the ‘research-intensive’ ‘Russell Group’, or slightly more widely as ‘pre-1992’ universities – post-

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts1988/Ukpga\\_19880040\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts1988/Ukpga_19880040_en_1.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <https://bei.leeds.ac.uk/Partners/NCIHE/>

1992 universities being those formed as a result of powers introduced in that year which roughly doubled the number of institutions recognised as ‘universities’.) As a recent review of widening participation policy reflected:

Competing ideologies of access and participation inflect these policies and practices. Concerns about ‘working class’ entry to elite universities enjoy high visibility. Debate about the diversity of student participation in a diverse higher education system, or about non-participation, is less common. (ESRC, 2008a)

## 1.2. Background Data

Under the Education and Skills Act 2008<sup>3</sup>, government legislated to raise the ‘education leaving age’ in England to 18 years. As a result, young people are required to participate in education or training until their 18th birthday through full-time education or training, at school, college or in ‘home education’, or in work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship, or (if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering more than 20 hours a week) through part-time education or training.<sup>4</sup> Previously the ‘school leaving age’ had stood at 16 years (having been raised from 15 in 1972).

A study prepared for government found the proportion of 16-17 year olds in education and training

fluctuated between 1996 and 2006, rising from a low of 78.3 per cent in 2001 to an estimated 82.4 per cent in 2006. The total number of 16-18 year olds in education or training ... increased over the same period, from 1.4 million in 1996 to over 1.5 million at the end of 2006, the highest number ever (DfES, 2007b). In 2006, 14.4 per cent of 16 to 17 year olds were either NEET or in JWT<sup>5</sup> (DfES, 2007a). (Speilhofer et al., 2007, pp. 14-15).

However, there was greater variation by age. The proportion of 16 year olds, then the first post-compulsory year, in education and training rose gradually from 82.6 per cent in 2001, to 87.2 per cent in 2006; the proportion of 16 year olds within *full-time* education rose more steeply, from 70.2 per cent in 1998 to 78.1 per cent in 2006 (DfES, 2007b). The proportion of 17 year olds participating in education or training fell 1999-2002, from 76.8 per cent to 73.7 per cent, but rose to 77.5 per cent by the end of 2006. At age 18, there has been a significant fall-off in participation: the proportion of 18 year olds in education or training declined from a peak of 57.8 per cent in 1996, and stood at roughly 54 per cent in 2005 and 2006. (Speilhofer et al. 2007, p. 15)

Speilhofer et al. (2007) summarised the literature on young people not in employment, education or training as ‘consistently described as being most likely to:

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga\\_20080025\\_en\\_1#Legislation-Preamble](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga_20080025_en_1#Legislation-Preamble) (accessed 6 April 2010)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/educationandskills/> (accessed 9 April 2010)

<sup>5</sup> NEET: Not in Employment, Education or Training; JWT: jobs without training.



- have achieved no or very low qualifications when leaving school at 16: several studies show that educational achievement at 16 is the main predictor of post-16 participation (Bynner, 2004; EdComs, 2007; McIntosh 2004); furthermore, 35 per cent of 16 and 17 year olds who are NEET have no qualifications and 44 per cent have qualifications below Level 2 (DWP, 2006).
- have not enjoyed school, have a history of truancy and/or exclusion and feel that they were not treated as adults in school: various studies establish a strong link between negative experiences of school and the likelihood of not engaging in learning post-16 (Coles et al., 2002; EdComs, 2007; Maychell et al., 1998; Payne, 2000) – one study (Rennison et al., 2005), for example, found that young people in the NEET group were over three times more likely previously to have been excluded from school than young people overall.
- be male – statistical data (DfES, 2007b) shows that boys are twice as likely to be NEET at 16 (4.2 per cent of girls compared to 8.6 per cent of boys in 2006).
- be white – analysis of the Youth Cohort Study (Payne, 2000) revealed that ‘low achievers from ethnic minorities were much more likely to stay on in full-time education than low achievers belonging to the white majority’ (p. 53).
- come from lower socio-economic backgrounds – several studies (Payne, 2000; Rennison et al., 2005) have shown a consistent link between low levels of participation in learning post-16 and disadvantaged family backgrounds and parents’ levels of employment.
- have low levels of career exploration skills and self-awareness – a longitudinal survey (Morris et al., 1999) of young people before and after completing compulsory education found that a successful transition into learning post-16 was dependent on young people’s career exploration skills and awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses.
- have parents with low qualification levels, aspirations and awareness of post-16 options – analysis of quantitative data (Rennison et al., 2005) collected as part of the evaluation of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) revealed a strong link between non-participation and parental characteristics. The study found, for example, that parents of young people who were NEET were more likely than other parents to agree that they did not ‘know enough about modern qualifications to give proper advice to their child’ (p. 25). (Speilhofer et al., 2007, p. 18)

‘Job-seeker’s Allowance’ (JSA) is the name given by government to the main form of benefit currently available to the unemployed in England (and the UK as a whole). An applicant for JSA has a meeting with a ‘personal adviser’ at the ‘Jobcentre Plus’ office, and agree a ‘jobseeker’s agreement’: this often involves undertaking training of some kind.

In relation to higher education, Higher Education Statistics Agency (2010) data show that the total number of higher education enrolments at English HE institutions stood at 2,005,845 in 2008/09, representing an increase of 4% over 2007/08. Of these, 1,267,675 were full-time, also an increase in numbers of 4% over 2007/08. However, the number of part-time enrolments increased by 5% over the

same period. The number of full-time first year enrolments increased by 8% between 2007/08 and 2008/09; in contrast, part-time first year enrolments increased by 7%. The great bulk of these enrolments were from the UK. The number of non-UK European Union (EU) domiciled students increased by 4% (from 89,010 to 92,885), while the number of non-EU domiciled students increased by 9% (from 195,250 to 211,900). In 2008/09, 97% of English domiciled first year undergraduates studied at English HEIs (excluding the Open University), the same as in 2007/08. (HESA 2010)

Social class issues have dominated in recent widening participation debates, perhaps because evidence shows that ‘women are more likely to participate in higher education than males’ and that this remains true ‘even after allowing for the higher achievement of girls in secondary school’ (ESRC, 2008b), and that, with one very small exception, and allowing for prior educational achievement, ethnic minority students are more likely to go to university than students from a ‘white British’ background (ESRC, 2008b). A recent study of participation by gender showed that although historically women have been under-represented in HE:

By 1992 ... the Age Participation Index suggested that young women’s participation rates in England had caught up with those of men. The 2005/06 Higher Education Initial Participation Rate figures for 17-30 year olds showed a 7.2 percentage participation gap, in favour of women - a gap which appears to continue to widen. ... In 2005/06, the probability that a seventeen year old male would participate in higher education by age 20 was estimated to be 30.5%. For a seventeen year old female, this probability was estimated to be over seven percentage points higher, at 37.7%. (Broecke & Hamed 2008, pp. 1, 3)

Similarly, a study for the Commission for Racial Equality based on Labour Force Survey data showed that the proportions of people of working age studying for a degree in 2002 by ethnic group were substantially higher for non-whites than for white people (see Table 1, p.9).

**Table 1 Percentage of People of Working Age Studying for a Degree, by Ethnic Group 2002**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage studying for a degree</b>
White	16.9
Mixed	19.7
Asian of British Asian	35.2
Black or Black British	31.3
Chinese	63.4
Other Ethnic Group	39.5

*Source: Quoted in Tolley & Rumble 2006, p. 11.*

Tolley and Rumble (2006) summarised the data in relation to black and minority ethnic (BME) participation rates in higher education as follows:

- In 2004-05, female BME participation mirrored the national picture in that it exceeded male participation in terms of total numbers and female participation in HE is higher than males in all ethnic groups except for Asian/Asian British females;
- BME female participation exceeds BME male participation in both full-time and part-time study;
- The highest participation rates as measured by the HEIPR<sup>6</sup> are Black/Black British females (66%) and male Asian/Asian British (62%);
- The largest group actually participating in HE is Indian students (4.1% of the student population in 2001-02) followed by Black African (2.5%) and Pakistani (2.2%);
- The highest HEIPRs are for Asian other (83%), Black African (73%) and Indian students (71%) whilst the lowest HEIPRs are for Black Caribbean (45%) and Bangladeshi students (39%);
- Female Bangladeshi participation (36%) is below female White participation (34%);
- Among the Young HEIPR Black Caribbean participation drops significantly to 17% compared to the White Young HEIPR of 29%;
- The latest Universities & Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS) data shows a 13% difference between the level of White applications accepted (83%) than from those Black groups (70%). (Tolley & Rumble 2006, p. 13).

The emphasis has therefore been chiefly on social class. Social Trends data shows that young people in manual social classes continue to be under-represented in higher education throughout Great Britain. 'Despite increasing from a participation rate of 11 per cent in 1991/92 to 19 per cent in 2001/02, participation remains well below that of the non-manual social classes. Participation rates for the non-manual social classes increased from 35 per cent to 50 per cent over the same period.' (Office for National Statistics 2010) A recent study concluded:

Broadly, the reason why poorer students do not access high education to the same extent as their more advantaged counterparts is not because of choices being made at age 18, but because disadvantaged students do so poorly in secondary school. Poorer children tend to attend lower achieving secondary schools. ...[D]ifferent types of students are accessing schools of different quality, and this is likely to be part of any explanation of the lower academic achievement of poorer children. ... The gap in higher education participation between richer and poorer students is largely explained by the weak academic achievement of poor children in secondary school. ... [W]idening participation in higher education requires intervention well

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<sup>6</sup> Higher Education Initial Participation Rate.

before the point of entry into higher education to increase the attainment of children from poorer backgrounds at earlier ages. (ESRC, 2008b).

A marked feature of 'widening participation' debates in England has been their emphasis on entry to university (or higher education) at or around age 18. Despite the co-incidence between these debates and renewed interest in lifelong learning since the mid-1990s, the stress has been strongly on the 'traditional' student – in age terms, at least.

The prison population of England and Wales grew by an average annual rate of 3.8 per cent between 1995 and 2009, resulting in a 66% increase in the prison population between January 1995 and January 2009 (from 49,500 to 82,100). The principal reason for this appears to be that the courts sentenced more people to prison each year (1995-2002), and offenders have been staying longer in prison. These are because of a trend toward 'tougher sentencing', with more offenders given custodial sentences and an increase in the average time served in goal:

From 2000 to 2008, the average time served in prison increased by 14% (from 8.1 to 9.3 months) for those released from determinate sentences. This was due to a 15% increase in the average custodial determinate sentence length handed down by the courts between 2000 and 2004, and a decline in the parole release rate from 06/07 (which meant that offenders had served longer by the time they were released). (Ministry of Justice 2009)

An analysis of official data on long-term unemployment by the Trades' Union Congress (TUC) in December 2009 showed that the number of people claiming Jobseeker's allowance (JSA) for over 12 months had increased from 103,930 in December 2008 to 201,015 in November 2009. The TUC expected the number to continue to rise into 2010. However, the TUC also pointed out that most long-term unemployed people do not claim the JSA: the number of people claiming JSA for at least 12 months is just over 200,000, but the total number out of work for at least a year reached 620,000 in October 2009, and is expected to increase further. (TUC, 2009)

### **1.3. Objectives**

The strategic aim of this subproject is the analysis of the role of education institutions and non-traditional educational contexts in the promotion of the access of adults to the education system, particularly those adults from backgrounds of social marginalization. A key goal is to evaluate the main obstacles to establishing mechanisms for the recognition of prior non-formal learning and work experience for opening access of adults to education system.

### **1.4. Target groups**

Although the higher education in England has gone through profound changes in terms of numbers enrolled to the institutions of 4<sup>th</sup> level education the participation of traditionally under-represented

groups is still poor<sup>7</sup> (Mayhew, et al., 2004, p. 71). “[H]igh participation rates do not *automatically* imply that the functions of higher education in social selection and reproduction are obsolete, or that issues of access and equity can be regarded as features of the past” (italic by the author) (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002, p. 309). As the participation of traditionally under-represented groups has not changed significantly in the last decades this project focuses on groups as follows:

- Ethnic minorities,
- Disabled,
- Long-term unemployed,
- Early school leavers,
- Prisoners.

## 1.5. Funding sources

Broadly speaking, funding for lifelong learning in England comes from four sources: from the government, from students, from students’ employers, and from the ‘third sector’ – not for profit bodies, including charities. Schuller and Watson (2009) estimate that for the UK as a whole,<sup>8</sup> total expenditure on post-compulsory learning, including by government, employers, the third sector and individuals, expenditure on adult learning provision amounts to approximately £55 billion or 3.9 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Roughly £26 billion of this is spent from the public purse, £20 billion is spent on training by private and non-profit organizations, and £9 billion is spent by individuals, including the self-employed. They comment that this investment is ‘heavily skewed towards young people (aged 18-25), and those who succeed initially’: ‘of the £15 billion spent on teaching provision and student support for colleges and universities, the weighting is heavily in favour of young, full-time students’. They estimate that 86 per cent of the total expenditure is made on those aged 25 and under (with 11 per cent on those aged 25-50, 2.5 per cent on those aged 50-75, and just 0.5 on those aged over 75). Of the total of £55 billion, £3.7 billion comprises the public subsidy to vocational training through various forms of tax relief. (Schuller & Watson 2009, pp. 5-6).

Funding from government for learners over the age of 18 originates, of course, in various forms of taxation. This is allocated by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) chiefly through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (which provides funding to universities and other bodies for the provision of degree-level teaching) and (until 31 March 2010) by the Learning and Skills Council

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<sup>7</sup> „...in absolute terms their participation rate has increased....[however] the relative chances of lower socio-economic groups have hardly altered” (Mayhew, et al., 2004, p. 71-72).

<sup>8</sup> The United Kingdom comprises Great Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland) and Northern Ireland. England is governed by the Parliament at Westminster. Legislative authority for, and government of, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have been devolved to varying degrees to national parliaments and assemblies, and governments (though these do not have revenue-raising powers). However, England is very much the largest of the constituent parts of the UK: according to the Office for National Statistics, the estimated population of the UK in mid-2008 was 61.38 million; that of England was 51.44 million, or 84 per cent of the total (see: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=6>). Generalisations about the UK tend, therefore, to be applicable to England.

(for courses below degree level, principally in colleges of further education). Government does, however, provide more modest funding for a variety of other learning opportunities for adults through other sources and other government departments. For instance, the Department for Communities and Local Government has provided funding for various 'Neighbourhood Renewal' programmes. Between 2001 and 2010, for example, £2 billion was spent on regeneration in 39 areas with a total population of 400,000 people: some of this went on learning activities of various kinds. Similarly, the Ministry of Justice finances educational opportunities for prisoners in England and Wales (of whom there were roughly 85,000 in early 2010 – and of these, rather fewer than 5,000 were women).

### 1.5.1. Formal education

Public funding mechanisms for the formal education for adults in England differ as between higher education (education at degree level and above) and further education (broadly, education below degree level). Structures for funding higher education have remained relatively stable over the past two decades – although there has been a good deal of turbulence at the level of the specific objectives of funding and the kinds of activities and programmes encouraged. Funding structures for further education, in contrast, have been subject to something akin to a permanent revolution.<sup>9</sup>

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. *Inter alia*, that Act created a single higher education sector by abolishing the division between universities and polytechnics. Previously, in England, universities had been funded by the Universities Funding Council (UFC), polytechnics and colleges by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC), while three institutions had been funded directly by government (through the then Department for Education and Employment).

HEFCE allocates public funds to universities and colleges in England which provide higher education. Most goes to around 130 universities and higher education colleges. However, HEFCE also funds higher education courses in around 120 further education colleges – though the chief source of public funding for such colleges was (until March 2010) the Learning and Skills Council (see below).

Legally, HEFCE is a 'non-departmental public body' (NDPB). These are organisations which have 'a role in government processes', but are 'not part of the Government or one of its departments'. They work at 'arm's length' from the government ministers who are ultimately responsible for their effectiveness and efficiency. It 'work[s] within a policy framework set by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation

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<sup>9</sup> The reorganisation of funding structures for further education is additional to the frequent renaming of, and reallocation of responsibilities between, government departments (as government ministries are now known in the UK). Further and higher education has been a particular victim of such administrative restructuring. Until 1995, it fell under the Department for Education: in that year the Department for Education merged with the Department of Employment to form the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). From 2001, when employment matters were transferred to the Department for Work and Pensions, this became the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). In 2007, when Gordon Brown became Prime Minister, the DfES split: education for those aged under 18 fell under the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), while the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) took responsibility for higher education, and those aspects of further education relating to adult learning. In 2009 DIUS was itself merged with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) to form the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

and Skills' (BIS), but is not part of the Department. Its website describes it as having 'distinct statutory duties that are free from direct political control'.<sup>10</sup> Informally, HEFCE (and the other UK higher education funding councils) are often described as 'buffer' institutions: as providing a mechanism by which government can fund higher education without interfering in the autonomy of individual self-governing universities, or infringing academic freedom. Originally, the 'buffer' was provided by the University Grants Committee (1919-1989) which had a great deal more autonomy; how far HEFCE provides effective protection of academic autonomy is much-debated. (Shattock 1994) For example, the legislation reserves to government the authority to 'instruct' HEFCE in certain matters: in 2007 it used this right to instruct HEFCE to phase out funding to HEIs and FE colleges for the teaching of students studying for a qualification that equivalent to, or lower than, a qualification they have already achieved. (This prohibition on funding for 'ELQ's had a particularly pronounced and adverse impact on part-time, mature students.)

HEFCE works within a broad policy framework agreed between HEFCE and the relevant government department (currently BIS). Its current (2006-11) 'core strategic aims' are:

- Enhancing excellence in learning and teaching. To ensure that all higher education students benefit from a high-quality learning experience fully meeting their needs and the needs of the economy and society.
- Widening participation and fair access. To promote and provide the opportunity of successful participation in higher education to everyone who can benefit from it.
- Employer engagement and skills. To encourage transformational change in the higher education sector that will enhance the capability of higher education institutions to establish long-term, sustainable relationships with employers to stimulate and meet their demands for highly competent and skilled employees.
- Enhancing excellence in research. To develop and sustain a dynamic and internationally competitive research sector that makes a major contribution to economic prosperity and national wellbeing and to the expansion and dissemination of knowledge.
- Enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society. To increase the impact of the higher education knowledge base to enhance economic development and the strength and vitality of society.<sup>11</sup>

HEFCE funding to universities and other higher education institutions for 2010/11 will comprise £4,727 million for teaching (of which £144 million is for 'widening participation' and £269 million for 'teaching enhancement and student success'), and £1,603 million for research. (In addition, there will be £150

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/aboutus/history/#note> (accessed 4 April 2010)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/aboutus/mission.htm> (accessed 4 April 2010).

million for 'business and the community', £294 million 'special funding' and £562 million 'earmarked capital funding'.<sup>12</sup>

The main source of public funding for further education for adults over 18 is now the Skills Funding Agency. This was established in April 2010, replacing the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The LSC had been established only in 2001, replacing the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The FEFC had also enjoyed only a relatively brief life, having been established in 1992 to take responsibility for the funding of further education when the PCFC was abolished.

The Skills Funding Agency is an agency of BIS, responsible for funding and regulating adult further education and skills training in England. Its funding strategy is 'informed by policy set by BIS and by the needs of businesses, communities and regions, and sector and industry bodies'.<sup>13</sup>

The SFA was established under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 which dissolved the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and transferred its functions on 1 April 2010 to local authorities and two new agencies: the Young People's Learning Agency (responsible for education and training for 16-19-year-olds) and the Skills Funding Agency. The SFA 'provides the basic skills that are needed for today's economy, as well as providing skills to take advantage of new growth sectors and new industries that will secure our future', and 'strive[s] to ensure that the economy is not just supported, but taken to higher levels by increasing skills and creativity'.<sup>14</sup> According to its website, the SFA 'is an agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The Chief Executive of Skills Funding is a civil servant and a statutory post holder personally reporting to the BIS Permanent Secretary. This model places the Skills Funding Agency at a "shorter arm's length" from BIS, allowing a fast and effective response to policy, while reinforcing the autonomy of the FE sector'.<sup>15</sup>

In light of the inevitable constraints on the public finances over the coming years, skills policy will focus resources even more closely on skills that underwrite our economic growth and support high value-added employment. We will invest £4 billion in colleges and learning providers and other training organisations to provide the education and training needed by employers, employees and future employees to progress and improve what they do - increasing the chances of success for all. We plan to:

- support our continuing commitment to Apprenticeships - the National Apprenticeships Service will invest a total of £400 million for those aged 19 or over in the 2010-11 financial year,
- invest £983million in the 2010/11 academic year through the Train to Gain programme,

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/finance/recurrent/2010/> (accessed 4 April 2010).

<sup>13</sup> <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/aboutus/faqs/> (accessed 4 April 2010)

<sup>14</sup> <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/aboutus/faqs/> (accessed 4 April 2010)

<sup>15</sup> <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/howwework/> (accessed 4 April 2010)



- invest nearly £600 million in Skills for Life provision delivered through Adult Learner Responsive and Employer Responsive routes for 19+ provision ,
- invest £210 million in Adult Safeguarded Learning.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.5.2. Non-formal education

Other than through the direct provision of training for its employees, the government's funding for non-formal education in England is limited to a range of relatively small, targeted, and generally transient programmes in areas such as community regeneration. A number of local authorities, further education colleges, 'third-sector' NGOs and private sector bodies bid for such funding, often in competition and/or collaboration with one another. Some of these are organizations with national coverage, such as the Workers' Educational Association; others restrict their work to a particular locality.

One example is the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF): 'the principal funding mechanism deployed to drive forward the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR) at the local level' in England's 88 most deprived local authorities, aiming to 'improve services and narrow the gap between deprived areas and the rest'. During 2001-2006, £1.875bn was allocated to eligible LSPs, and a further £1.05bn was made available in 2006-2008. (Cowen et al. 2008, p. 13) An officially-sponsored evaluation of the programme found the NRF had 'achieved a range of positive achievements', but that its 'cumulative impact and effectiveness' had 'not been maximised' for a number of reasons, including:

- 'evidence use in the planning of programmes and interventions' had 'not been embedded', so that 'the level of sophistication in targeting NRF was often poor',
- interventions had been 'inadequately evaluated, or not at all, meaning there has been a limited understanding of what does and does not work',
- 'data on performance, outcomes and impacts' had 'not been collected in a robust fashion, resulting in an inconsistent understanding of progress, with the issue of impact a particular concern' (Cowen, et al. 2008, p. 68).

Whilst this is only one example, these are problems not untypical of such programmes.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/aboutus/faqs/> (accessed 4 April 2010)

## Chapter 2 Formal adult education

### 2.1. Background information on formal adult education in England

Adults are found throughout post-school educational provision in England: most of all in Further Education colleges, but also in Universities. They are also to be found in the adult education programmes offered by local authorities, private and independent learning providers and voluntary organisations including trades unions, though such provision tends to be informal and is discussed in Chapter 3 below.

Further education (FE) colleges are the major providers of post-school, mainly vocational education for young people and adults. A report from NIACE in 2005 claimed that eight out of ten students in FE colleges were adults, accounting for 50 per cent of taught learning hours and 85% of the funding provided by the LSC for adult learning went to colleges. Colleges vary greatly in size, in the communities they serve – from rural to inner-city – and in their curriculum. Some are virtually the only post-16 providers in their communities and, therefore, have larger proportions of young people (16-19); in areas where there is extensive school provision for 16-19 year olds, they are much more adult-focused. Some are specialised in their curriculum offer, but most have a wide spread of subjects and career routes on offer.

Significant numbers of adults attend universities, mostly part-time; the tendency for this to be concentrated in the newer ('post-1992') universities. There are also two institutions which focus almost entirely on part-time, adult students: the Open University and Birkbeck College of the University of London. The total number of higher education enrolments at English HEIs in 2006/07 was 1,957,195 according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Most (1,187,635) were full-time, but nearly 40 per cent (769,560) were part-time.<sup>17</sup>

While there is no restriction on numbers of adults (as distinct from the more traditional 18-21 year-old student intake), there is less financial support available for adults; in addition, the government has recently ceased supporting adults taking a second qualification at a level equivalent to (or lower than) one they already hold. Although there are some exceptions related to specific vocationally-oriented courses, this appears to be restricting the numbers of adults wanting to make a career change mid-life who can benefit and to be having a disproportionate effect on those institutions, including (but by no means only) the Open University, which serve relatively large proportions of adult learners.

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<sup>17</sup> HESA SFR 117 *Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Institutions in the United Kingdom for the Academic Year 2006/07* (<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/1100/161/>; accessed 5 April 2010).

A small number of adult residential colleges, such as Ruskin College, Oxford, with roots in the labour or other social purpose movements, offer long-term residential opportunities aimed at those previously ill-served by initial education.

The present research explored strategies of three categories of institutions: two universities (one an older or 'pre-1992' institution, the other a newer, 'post-1992'), and a further education college.

## 2.2. Brailsford County College<sup>18</sup>

Brailsford County College is a Further Education college, offering a diverse curriculum in vocational training and education, aimed to fit the needs of both employers and the local community. The FE college opened in the mid-1970s and has since "spread out" into several nearby sites (Senior). Around 2003, Brailsford began to rebrand itself through a change of name "because we felt we'd broadened beyond the town, then we changed the name to Brailsford County College because we had a presence within the county" (Senior). In 2007, there was a reorganisation, which one participant stated, "came a little bit too early because the following September and through that year all the funding methodology changed and then we had a new principal come August 2008, so I suppose that was quite significant changes and I think she felt that the reorganisation although at the time appropriate, with the current funding and changes in methodology, it was more appropriate to change again. So part of the realignment in March was to bring up in line with new funding streams...we have adult responsive, employer responsive, higher education and work-based, so it all changed in line with that" (Senior). These recent reorganisations and realignment included different thematic groups, including "an equalities thematic group, which is very new, but it's very action-based...the equalities thematic group has actually come out of our realignments. One of the criticisms of groups was that they were talking about it groups rather than doing it groups, so there's a range of thematic groups across the college now that come from the support areas, that they're very, very action based (Inclusion manager).

The college underwent reorganisation in order to deal with the expansion of the 16-19 age profile. As one participant reflected, "at one point [we] recognised, there was so many of them and with such specific needs we reorganised to make a post 16, a 16 centre, so that actually all those people were together and they were taught by sort of similar groups of people who wanted to teach that age group" (Senior). The college has also become more accessible for individuals with physical disabilities to create a more barrier free environment. As stated by a representative of senior management, "when I first worked here the doors you had to push open but now they're all automatic and there's ramps and lifts. So it's kind of geared up for people in wheelchairs. And we've had students who are blind and those difficulties and we've accommodated them" (Senior). The Inclusion and Diversity manager perceived more support dedicated to emotional and behaviour difficulties. She stated, "there's much more now

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<sup>18</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

for people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, which probably when I first came it was mostly learning difficulty and disability, and I think that's really, really changed".

The college has experienced extensive growth in recent years. As one senior staff member stated, "when I first came in 2002, we had a turnover of £4 million as a college, that is now at the round about 13 million pound mark with a strategic plan to go to 20, so it's seen fairly rapid growth over a short period of time and I suppose the staffing has increased to reflect that". Roles were also realigned to meet national legislation focused on equality and diversity. For example, in an interview with the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, she reflected on the evolution of her role, stating "changes have been really legislation wise, as I say the pace of legislation over the last few years has been huge...another big change is just the amount of excluded young people that are coming to us, that is terrific...I think the role has a need now to be more creative. And I also think it is about, increasingly about young, severely excluded, disadvantaged people" (Inclusion manager).

### 2.2.1. Institutional strategies and history

According to a senior staff member, the university has "four strategic priorities...growth to £20 million, developing links with employers, developing our staff, excellence in teaching, learning...we're ambitious for a small college, I'd say we're medium sized now and fairly ambitious". The mission statement of the college is to provide excellent and innovative vocational learning to improve the life chances, employability and economic prosperity of learners. The college operational development plan reflects these goals, as do the various initiatives in the college to assist learners. It provides specialist programmes for individuals with disabilities, learning difficulties, English as an Additional Language and English as a Foreign Language for learners from overseas. In addition, the college's objective is to help support disadvantaged individuals between the age of 14 and 16.

The college perceives inclusion and diversity to be a significant aspect of their overall objective and purpose. The college has an Inclusion and Diversity Manager, who "started here as learning support services manager, so there was no overall equalities person if that makes sense. So it did evolve into this role. Inclusion and diversity would be some of the obvious things, so I've got responsibility for all of the equalities legislation which obviously over the last few years has been very very quick in its pace. So I've written the single equality scheme for the college, before that gender and disability equality and race equality, so it's now in the one overall piece of legislation. So that's a major part. What else do I have? I do a lot of networking and representing the college at various meetings outside of the college, so various disability groups, equalities networks, so and so forth. I've got a lead for child protection, there is, the deputy principal has overall responsibility but I now lead between the stuff like this. Every learner matters, our response to Every Child Matters is part of my, actually you forget everything that you do don't you?! What else do I do? I suppose NEETs, young people not in education, employment and training, I have strategic lead for NEETs and also I have a strategic lead with Connexions<sup>19</sup>. And I'm the FE county lead for teenage pregnancy and sexual health" (Inclusion manager).

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<sup>19</sup> Connexions is a public organization providing information, advice and guidance (IAG) for young people. It is well connected with local authorities, schools and communities.

In the college governance, “there is a standards and diversity committee, and that’s like board of governors level, I attend that, where that really does monitor everything we’re doing, very good, they want to know” (Inclusion manager). The purpose of the standards and diversity committee is “to make sure that those whole access, widening participation, equalities issues were being acted to” (Inclusion manager). The dedication to issues of widening participation and access is shown through the college’s range of activities. As stated by a senior management representative, “we try and go out into the communities, we go out into schools, we’ve got an international website so you know we try and encourage people from abroad to come and study here”. Part of the aims to be inclusive is the college’s objective to respond to the needs of its local community: “we do go out and work in communities where the need is, and it is almost always successful. If you go out and work with people and I think that would be a major part of our tactic, if people aren’t coming in, go out and work with them” (Inclusion manager). This fits in with the overarching ethos of the college, as perceived by a senior manager at the college, which is to be as learner-centred and community-centred as possible.

The Inclusion and Diversity manager stated the importance of “being needs led, being genuinely inclusive”. The Senior manager stated, “the whole college is about the learners are central. So when we look about teaching learning we’re more interested in the learning really that takes place than the teaching” (Senior). The college aims to reach out to its local community: “I just think the college has it embedded into it, the fact of where we are and what we do, it’s just very much part of our norm really. And perhaps there is an element of saying perhaps we should stop and think about it a bit more but I think we probably have done in the fact that we’ve appointed people, you know we’ve got policies about it and you know we recognise it’s an issue. But perhaps it’s more so because it is about where we are and the community that we serve really. And I think for us the new build makes us more important in the community, we’ll be more visual and have more of a presence, so I think going forward it will be, I think we’ll be even better at it” (Senior).

The college aims to provide guidance and advice to students about qualifications, financial support and learning support. Every students “is screened, there is a basic skills assessment” (Senior). At the college, there is “a learning zone which is open generally office hours, 9 till 4 so you can drop in, but also you could have specific learners, additional learning support. If it’s more than I think it’s 50% of the group that need it then they have it within the class, the whole group have it, but generally you can have it on a one to one basis. Or the Learning Zone is where you can just drop in, so if you think oh I’m struggling with my assignment, there are people in there who staff it and can support you. And I think that’s a really good service that’s offered” (Senior). According to a lecturer in the college, ESOL support is provided through the Learning Zone, where “there is a referral procedure where we refer them. And also the mentors are there to help them”. In addition, there are significant “peer supports that come from the student body, they get quite an extensive training package. We’ve had both actually, we’ve had peer mentors and peer supports, they’re usually people who have struggled themselves, who have then wanted to give something back really. A lot of work, we’ve done a lot of work with the student liaison team who offer enrichment activities” (Inclusion manager).

As described by a senior management staff member, “we do a financial help fund, again it’s means tested and...the ceiling, I think it’s £15,000, if you earn a joint income of less than that then obviously

there's some financial support, it's not a huge amount, about £150 towards. We run payment in instalments, generally it's in three instalments of consecutive months, we do have [...] discretion [...] to say. We also have a fee remission policy on LSC funded courses, so most courses have a price and then a price in brackets, so it's like a lower rate if you're on means tested benefit. Obviously 16 to 19 is all free anyway".

The college offers free advice and information about career routes and options for careers to individuals. The senior management stated that "a lot of careers advice is built into tutorials, we have the careers officer, we run an internal UCAS fair". With the UCAS fair, which is targeted towards higher education, the college aims to assist students in gaining the confidence to attend the UCAS. One of the participants reflected, "we did [the UCAS fair] this year and some learners just won't even go in! You know universities are in there. Come on, come on we're going in. And it's amazing that kind of barrier, they don't think, they've never thought about it. And then it was lovely to see them afterwards with their little carrier bags and thinking yes I could go. And then we also take them to the National UCAS Fair, so we increase tutors and we take them on a coach, so I went twice this year. You know just to try and, I think for us it would be about increasing expectation to make people feel that actually, you know you might never have talked about this at home but it's not to say you couldn't go. And obviously with some families it's a financial issue but you know we do kind of encourage the expectation really. And I think we're doing that more so, so this year when we did the internal fair we had 125% increase on attendees because we really pushed it and I don't, some people would say because I was involved and I'm more senior and people know me quite well that I kind of pushed it and people responded and came. So it was good" (Senior).

The college also aims to reach out to local employers in order to provide needs analysis, advice and guidance and access to training. There is a free and confidential counselling service and a mentor service. There is also a strong community within the college, both of students and staff. In addition to students being able to "access a counselling service, we've got mentors so you might be referred to a mentor if you've got problems, who will text you to get out of bed in the morning. I just think the college is actually really good about that. I mean one of the things that's come through, one of the Ofsted inspectors said is you know that sort of friendly supportive environment and somebody's commented that the reason they think it's like this is because the college was opened as new and all the staff were new in the 70s and it's almost like, I don't know if you've ever moved on to a new housing estate and everybody kind of bonds and gels, and they said that ethos has kind of carried through. And I think people were concerned that as the college grew we would lose an element of that and actually we haven't, we've retained that. So I think students feel well supported and I think the support that the lecturers give, you know one to one support, telephone support, e-mail support is phenomenal, you know the whole tutorial system. But it's kind of beyond that, I think if you asked any learner and probably the student satisfaction surveys would support that, that you know that I get good support from my tutor, I think most of them would agree with very strongly".

In addition, the college's central objective is to provide progression for learners on any kind of course and increasingly seeks to be more flexible. There are preparatory and foundation courses offered at the college. The senior manager believes this to be a well developed area of the college's work. She stated,

“we run every, from kind of low level, Skills for Life, so I don’t think there’s, I think you could come on, you know imagine you came for interview, we always think that no matter you didn’t your GCSEs we could get you on a course in that curriculum area, be it at a lower level, and I think what we’re trying to do is build a curriculum map whereby we map the kind of journey level to right through, and we’re just currently doing that at the moment just to see where we have got gaps. I suppose a lot of my responsibility is at the top end but we’ve got lots of provision at the bottom end and we’re looking at the foundation learning tier now and that’s being introduced. So you know we are looking at building it up...I think we’re a good college, we treat it as normal and I think that was the thing when Ofsted came, you know lots of stuff that they picked on and they said was outstanding. Well for me it’s just about curriculum mapping, so ensure internal progression. If I had to kind of be succinct it’s looking at you know are you able to offer somebody something in the vocational curriculum area that they would like to be in and to be honest as well I’m always very good, well I think I’m good in the fact that if you came to me and I couldn’t provide it, I could point in the direction of somebody else that could, so I’m not that precious that I would put you on something for something’s sake, it’s about good advice and guidance, I think that’s perhaps what encapsulates it, it’s about you know the information and advice, initial advice and guidance we give is accurate and it gets you in the right direction really. Yeah I think it’s always looking at progression, I mean we’ve run, we’ve had 2 last week progression evenings, so we look at internal students really because sometimes you take your eye off the ball you’ve actually got an internal market that can progress, so we ran 2 progression evenings. The first one actually wasn’t that well attended and I think the first one was better, and tutors were advised to perhaps bring groups along because to make people think about you know what’s my next, you know like a sort of exit? I’m coming to the end of this course what am I going to do next really? Especially because there’s not jobs out there for people to go to, so you know think about continuing with study really. So you know and hopefully getting them enrolled before they go so that they know they’re coming back in September”. (Senior)

In addition to providing learners with different progression routes, the college aims to offer different flexible course options to widen participation and access. One of the new areas for development in the college is short courses and multiple entry points. This is further discussed in 2.2.13. Connection to SP3. As stated above, one of the college’s strategic goals is to help develop and support its staff. There are over 400 staff members at the college, according to 2009 data. The college has a “well-established core of long term, long serving employees, we have people who have been here for 20, 25 years...there’s a huge core of people” (Senior). The majority of employees (81%) are white British, including 88% of managers, 79% of teachers, 78% of assessors and 81% of support staff identified as white British. At the college, 8% of total employees are Asian or Asian British of Indian origin. There are more female employees than male employees at the college; 63% of total employees are female and 36% male. 60% of managers, teachers and assessors are female and 70% of support staff members are female. The majority of staff members are between the ages of 36 and 55. There are staff members with physical and other disabilities. Due to “government targets to get everybody qualified”, the college supported its staff in gaining teaching qualifications (Senior). It is compulsory for staff to attend at least one staff development session focused on inclusive classroom practice (Lecturer). There is also a staff induction for all new staff members, which is focused on inclusion (Lecturer). These sessions are led by the Inclusion and Diversity Manager. The lecturer believes that the college is very successful in helping

instructors become better teachers: “I think the way the system is, it really does try to target you so that you are a better teacher”.

### **2.2.2. Institutional climate**

The institutional climate is described by the participants of this study as focused on “the widening participation [deprived] area” (some of the top ten most deprived wards in the county) and “ethnic diversity improvements”. According to the staff members interviewed “the major emphasis ... is NEET and exclusion”. The students’ body consists of “a lot of young people from very poor backgrounds, very poor”, and it reflects on the college’s activity. According to the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, she reflected, “going back to it, senior commitment, history and tradition, the college has always has a very strong history in being supportive to different groups. So again when it comes to referrals from Connexions with young people, they know that they will be supported in this college...there’s a very, very strong learning support department here”. As one of the participants said: “You’ve got dyslexia workshops, staff development, again wide, so our learning support is massively strong”.

College prepares a “diversity report yearly which shows if any ethnic group is performing less well”, which provides information about particular needs for action. The study’s participants when asked about the present challenges referred to the college climate says that “there’s much more now for people with emotional and behavioral difficulties which probably when I first came it was mostly learning difficulty and disability”. As part of the local community the institutions do some work at the Muslim Academy, and Eastern European people, which tend to be an example of a good practice. The college also encourages students to active participation in a diversity fair.

The perception from senior management is that the formal role of the Inclusion and Diversity Manager makes the college more developed in terms of access than other colleges. According to the senior manager, “I would say we’re more developed in the fact we have the Inclusion and Diversity Manager in post. I think we, I mean one of the other managers quoted once that we actually delivered teaching 364 days one year, so we go out into the community you know, we deliver at times to suit, you know we work with underrepresented groups, you know I’ve gone out and done presentations in the Somali Centre to look at them perhaps having their own group there on site. So you know sometimes we think well they’re not necessarily going to come here and that’s a barrier, but we actually are very good at going out there into the community”.

### **2.2.3. Outreach**

According to the Diversity Manager flexibility in relation to multiple entry points plays an important role in outreaching traditionally under-represented groups. “[B]eing needs led, being genuinely inclusive” is one of the most important rules in terms of access widening strategy. The partnership with other local institutions (i.e. Connexions) is crucial to attract disadvantaged groups, like young parents, etc. Local cooperation and participation of the college employees in meetings and networking helps to reach the most vulnerable groups. Courses’ accommodation referred to the schedule of working adults is a very important part of the outreach strategy. “Most of our professional provision is in the evening”, to accommodate demand. Participants of this study pointed out the existence of strict connection between students’ demands and college services. In order to learn the students’ expectations the



college provides “learner guidance service, [which] monitor every enquiry and they do a report for us so we know who has enquired”. Such detailed information helps to project most suitable courses and allows reaching the traditionally under-represented groups.

#### **2.2.4. Opportunities for social interaction to promote social networks support**

The college staff considers promotion of social networks as one of their strengths. As an example of such tactic they recall a common refectory where international learners disable students and staff, share this space during meals. It is an opportunity to feel a sense of team spirit, and “creates a whole kind of tolerance and acceptance and sort of let’s all live together really, like in society and as we should”.

The activity of the students’ union is another example of social interaction promotion. It is much left to the students and not much of adult’s interference is involved. The union’s members organize a range of activities including: proms, ice skating, and pinball. One of the good strategies for social interaction intensification is peer mentoring and peer support, and enrichment activities. All the students may also use the college facilities, like fitness centre, where a common space is shared by adult learners and the youngest students. It creates areas for personal interaction within internally diverse body of students.

#### **2.2.5. Target groups**

The college has a very active recruitment team, which aims to target particular groups of individuals. There are different recruitment strategies, including “things like prospectuses, course leaflets, we have a website which is always under development really because it’s never as good as anybody ever wants it. We do schools events, we do events here with sort of like open days, we target specific open days, so we might have one for care managers, we might have one for professional people, we lure them with wine and nibbles! We send out Oscar looking invitations to employers! We work with the Connexions Service you know those kind of organisations to try and attract young people and have a referral system. So we do loads of stuff to try and get people” (Senior). The following groups are targeted specifically:

- The 16-19 age group is specifically targeted through the above strategies, as well as: “we do an event that’s held at the football stadium which is run through the Connexions, the careers service and we, so we have a presence there. We do a full time prospectus, because again it’s generally the youngsters that do the full time courses... so they get a full time prospectus that goes out and we sent that quite early because people are thinking about options for the following year. We’ve just done a leaflet that was aimed at 16 to 19 and ended up recruiting adults! I’m not quite sure where we went wrong there! When we looked at it we said it wasn’t kind of hip and cool enough, but you know we do try and think about the target audience and you know who are we aiming at and who do we want to try and recruit. So with something like, for the higher education we decided putting a free sheet in a newspaper like a leaflet wasn’t the way that people would recruit onto higher education, so we scrapped all that and just did it through the website, you know so we have sort of different strategies for trying to attract different people”. (Senior)
- The college targets individuals who may not have had a great deal of success in education previously, including early school leavers, excluded individuals, or individuals with lower grades.

The senior management reflected, “I mean in the past we’ve been known as a college that would you know kind of like last chance saloon, so often we might accept entry at sort of slightly a lower level than perhaps other colleges, and when we’ve had people who come to check us and we’ve looked at the distance travelled and value added and things like that, quite often our people come in with a lower profile but actually get, so they’ve kind of travelled further. That’s one thing that they picked up on Ofsted that we’re quite good at so...I mean what we’re now analyzing that data is actually to look at it a little bit more closely to see if we can pull them up a grade because they tend to be you know travelling some distance but what we want to do is actually improve their grade profile, so we’re actually probably still slightly lower but you know that’s kind of one of the measures that we look at.”

- Linked with the above, one of the new target groups for the college are secondary school students who have been excluded. The Inclusion and Diversity manager stated, “we have a group that we call the inclusion group, which is all 14 to 16 year olds that have been excluded from city schools, and we also have some of those on mainstream”.
- Social class and deprivation is a concern for the college. One participant stated, “because we’re already in the deprived postcode area and we as a college have targets” (Senior). This means that the college aims to increase access to meet government set targets for areas of deprivation. This includes initiatives to assist individuals who have recently been made or are facing redundancy, as discussed below. The college is located in a very deprived city and targets young people and adults from low socio-economic backgrounds: “there is a lot of support within the college, and a lot of literacy and numeracy support because people’s levels will be so low” (Inclusion manager).
- One of the college’s recent target groups are individuals who have been made redundant or are facing redundancy. They recently secured “some funding through the European Social Fund for targeting those either made redundant or facing redundancy, and obviously we have things like fee remission policies in place so that if you come and you’re unwaged or on means tested benefit you know you get a reduction in your tuition fees” (Senior).
- The college does not work with prisons, but does target individuals in Young Offenders Institutions (YOI). As the senior management staff member stated, “we can’t touch prisons, but what I’m working with, because we’ve got a YOI down the road, we’ve done quite a lot of work them, again we don’t get any kind of financial gain for it but I think 60% of the young men that are in there, I think it’s 16 to 25 they reckon are local young men. So I work with the head of skills and development and what we did was, they have quite a lot of kind of work workshops, so they have a plastering moulding unit, they have people who repair Red Cross equipment, and we had a chat with him about whether we could kind of badge up some of their competencies for you know kind of like team working, arriving on time, working productively, and we created like a little skills and competency booklet and there was a bronze and a silver I think they did,

and the idea is that they, it's the inmates' responsibility to get it signed by the instructor, you know I've done this today, I've done this, and they can achieve and they can advance, and then when they've done it we're going to award certificates, so we're just waiting to do our first one because somebody's gone through that. But you know there's no money attached to this, it's, I suppose you could argue it's a marketing exercise because if they've had a good experience or somebody comes down from the college, they're given their certificate, there's a bit of pomp and circumstance they might well come to college".

- The college also targets its own students to become mentors. This is perceived to be a positive practice for the college: "usually they're people who have been students, so have come through the system themselves and then, I think they might do something while they're here as a student as a peer mentor, and then some of them go on to get actual employment. But you'll see them, well you won't know them but I can point them out to you! OK and they dress appropriately, they're in kind of suits and, you know it's kind of appropriate so they can relate to the younger people" (Senior).
- The college targets mature learners and employed learners through offering "most of our professional provision in the evening" (Senior). She perceives that the college aims to meet students' demands for scheduling of courses: "we look at things like, people never want a Friday, and college shuts at half 4 so we don't offer Friday! But we've done Saturday morning things you know, generally I mean we're, I think we're quite sort of accommodating with what people want but we have to look at, you have to weigh up between demand and viability, so as long as the demand and the course will run viably then we put it on really" (Senior).
- The college also targets employers through the Business Skills Academy, in which "loads of training goes on in the workplace and those students never come into college. I mean they are college students but they don't actually ever come in" (Senior).
- Central in the college's recruitment strategy is targeting young people in secondary schools. One of the purposes is "so people have an informed choice really, because I think I mean schools are in the luxurious position of having those students anyway, they're already there, they're familiar with the organisation and you know for going into 6<sup>th</sup> form they'll be able to keep those students, but I think for us it would be about well these are your options and you know we've got vocational specialists and I think sometimes we probably don't sell ourselves enough of the things that a lot of our people have actually been in the industry and come out. You know if you want to do travel and tourism you're not going to have a geography teacher, you're going to have somebody who has worked as a tour rep, you know had worked for Thompsons and you know all of that. So you know we should probably flag that up a bit more really. But I mean most of it at the minute has been we've been doing loads and loads of stuff with the diplomas, so we've had huge opening evenings so parents can come, we've had school links...we're looking to develop Brailsford County College Skills Centre and that would be a collaborative project with

the schools to look at you know that whole hope for the schools to link in, but there's just been problems with the building and stuff so we're not quite there yet". (Senior)

- The college aims to help engage student through a new sports academy. The perceived idea behind the sports academy is to "get learners who might be thinking about college but you know if you've got this hook of I can join their sports academy, people will be trailed and then you know allocated certain teams. And then part of the timetable is to allow people to take part in the sports academy. So we've timetabled around some central sports sessions. I think the first one is going to be mainly the football, boys and girls, and then we're looking to develop that further, so possibly looking at other sports. So it's a kind of a reward system for you know your academic, but it might be an attraction to get people in. And we'd look at developing that over time with perhaps in terms of dance or you know some other things. But that's fairly new and will take place in September" (Senior).
- The college also aims to target parents, particularly lone parents and young parents. As perceived by the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, "we've been doing a huge amount of work with young parents, not just lone parents, young parents over the last three years, a lot of work because they just weren't going to anything". One of the ways that the college supports learners who are parents is by offering childcare services. The facilities are located at the college and "in new build we're doubling the size of the nursery, so I think we can take 40 children going forward, I think we can only take 20 at the minute...it's always a popular facility really I suppose and people might have to wait for a place, so I suppose it does limit it if you need childcare, but we also have lists of local child minders so if we couldn't support you in that respect we might be able to refer you to somebody who is a registered child minder, you know so rather than you not coming at all. And I know that lecturers have been very eager to facilitate, you know somebody says well I've got to leave at 12 to pick my child up, provided they've got the work and they know what they've got to do, you know I think we'd all say we've accommodated that. And we look at things like half 9 start for certain courses where it's predominantly women who have got children and got to drop the kids off at school, and you know we think about finish times" (Senior). The college is also working with eleven parents through the Children's Centre: "they've actually retained all of them, which is astonishing" (Inclusion manager). Moreover, the college is seeking funding to target set up a programme, in which "those young parents will become like peer supports for getting new young people in. So that peer support thing is very, very powerful at ways of targeting groups" (Inclusion manager). The college current leads an FE network geared toward teenager pregnancy, in which the college is engaged in extensive networking (Inclusion manager).

#### 2.2.6. Funding

According to college documents, the college operates within a £13 million annual budget, with an operating surplus of £70,000. The college has "had some growth in allocation from the LSC" following a successful Ofsted report (Senior). She perceives that the college is not "shrinking, we're looking for

growth. And we've got a new build planned for September 2010...that will increase our square metreage in terms of rooms and capacity, give us I think a bigger presence within the local community" (Senior). Student fees are a funding source for the college, particularly its full-cost provision for overseas learners. According to the five-year strategic plan for the college, it is seeking to further develop and market a number of programmes in India and China, including media, business and English language programmes.

In 2008, the college received Learning and Skills Council funding in order to further advance the college's work in equality and diversity. There are additional support funds provided through various outlets: "without additional support funds, I think every college's support would plummet, it's essential" (Inclusion manager). The college receives financial support from "the learning support fund, which funds childcare and also [the regional development agency] makes a lot of difference to access" (Inclusion manager). With the college's partnership work with other organisations, such as Connexions and the National Health Service (NHS), there are additional funding sources to support some of the college's work. The Care to Learn programme helps to provide funding for childcare for parents engaged in learning at the college. Other funding is provided through projects and grants, as well as the European Social Fund. Moreover, the college launched a programme in 2004, which is dedicated to employer engagement. This helped the college increase their numbers of employed learners, increasing the college's turnover by roughly £1m in its first year. The college also currently has a Business Innovation Unit, aimed at accessing funding to target individuals out of work, which is another source of funding for the college outside the Learning and Skills Council.

Funding for the college stems largely from the Learning and Skills Council, although with the economic climate for the learning and skills sector having changed, the strategic plan for the college stated that opportunities for income growth from further education allocations have decreased. The Learning and Skills Council no longer supports any non-priority growth in adult provision. Therefore, the college aims to target its growth in a number of priority sectors in order to increase its funding from the Learning and Skills Council. One of these priorities is to develop the college's curriculum to ensure that it is responsive to the skills need of the economy and directly relevant to the priorities of the Learning and Skills Council. The college also aims to reduce its reliance on the core Further Education funding of the Learning and Skills Council and in turn, aim to diversify its income.

### **2.2.7. Numbers of participants**

According to the college activity report for 2007-2008, there were over 7000 learners at the college. Of these learners, just under 5484 were adults, 1829 were between the ages of 14 and 18, 2267 were from ethnic minority groups, 1996 were from disadvantaged areas, 3364 were sponsored by their employer and 1168 were engaged in obtaining the Skills for Life qualifications. The self-assessment report (2007-2008) for the college stated that their learners are predominantly engaged in part-time programmes, with 15% of learners studying full-time, with the number of full-time learners (particularly age 16-18) is growing each year. The college has an apprenticeship programme, in which 229 16-18 year olds and 393 adults were engaged. The self-assessment report also highlighted that there is a growing number of non-white British learners, who in 2007-2008, made up 31% of the college's population.

As described by the senior manager, “in 2007-2007, we had a total of about 7,000 students, but we take, we have schooling, so we have children who come from the age of 13 who just come for odd tasters you know to get a sort of feel for vocational education, so they come and do motor vehicle or construction, some holistic, so they come here sort of on odd days. We quite often get the children that are probably what you’d say disinclined or disaffected in school, so they come here and you know, so that causes some problems [with the figures]. We have inclusion groups, so you get children who have actually been excluded from school, so we get some quite sort of young people at that end of the spectrum...We also have right through to adult provision and professional courses, and lots of community stuff that goes in sort of libraries and communities, like the Somali centre ...”.

As perceived by a senior manager, “we tend to have, although we’ve got things like accountancy, marketing courses, we actually still get a higher profile of females”. She also perceived that the college is “still largely white because the sub-region has that profile, but with a, I think the ward area is a 3% ethnicity and I think we’re about, we mirror the borough” (Senior). As far as age, she stated, “we definitely have got more 16 to 18s and I would say we’ve got, we’ve always had quite a cohort of international students and that fluctuates really, I think that’s probably gone down slightly, and then, but we’ve probably grown into areas where we’ve got immigrant populations, so generally we deal a lot with the Somalian community” (Senior).

#### **2.2.8. Location**

Participants described the location of the college as between a major urban centre and the county in the Midlands region of England. There are multiple college sites, including one further south in the county in what was described by the Inclusion and Diversity Manager as a “white middle class market town”. However, the majority of the college’s work and its main campus is located in “a widening participation postcoded area...in a deprived area”, including in some of the top ten most deprived wards in the county (Senior). As perceived by the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, “the city it is located in is “a real area of deprivation...a lot of young people from very poor backgrounds, very poor” (Inclusion manager). This corresponds with the student population, in which one third of the college’s students are from areas of high deprivation (Ofsted report). The county is about 85% white British, with growing proportion of Asian or Asian British residents. More than one fourth of students at Brailsford are from ethnic minority status.

#### **2.2.9. Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

All of the interview participants at the college believe that Brailsford County College is more developed in terms of access and widening participation. According to the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, she reflected, “going back to it, senior commitment, history and tradition, the college has always has a very strong history in being supportive to different groups. So again when it comes to referrals from Connexions with young people, they know that they will be supported in this college...there’s a very, very strong learning support department here. So I mentioned peer supports earlier, you’ve got college learning mentors, you’ve got a diverse learning support team, as in learning support assistants who [...] support our discrete [...] provision, but increasingly young disabled people on mainstream courses,

and then you've got an absolute array of literacy and numeracy support. So you've got support in the classroom, you've got the learning zone in the library where people can go in to get support with science and so on. You've got dyslexia workshops, staff development, again wide, so our learning support is massively strong. And without that you would have no access...we have a separate ESOL support, so we have both and it's you know straightforward literacy and numeracy support, but there is a wide variety of ESOL support. So the support's across the board. Also looking at ways that we can support in different settings, so we don't just have this building, we've got buildings elsewhere, so we've done some outreach mentoring. Mentors make a massive difference because if somebody's not attending, they follow that up, and often that's all you need! They give pastoral support, they give overall support, they know if there are young people in danger of dropping out".

The perception of the senior management is that the formal role of the Inclusion and Diversity Manager makes the college more developed in terms of access than other colleges. According to the senior manager, "I would say we're more developed in the fact we have the Inclusion and Diversity Manager in post. I think we, I mean one of the other managers quoted once that we actually delivered teaching 364 days one year, so we go out into the community you know, we deliver at times to suit, you know we work with underrepresented groups, you know I've gone out and done presentations in the Somali Centre to look at them perhaps having their own group there on site. So you know sometimes we think well they're not necessarily going to come here and that's a barrier, but we actually are very good at going out there into the community".

Participants perceive the college to be very active in celebrating the wide range of diversity within the college. One of the examples of this strength is the annual diversity fair, which is "run by peer support, so it's run by students and it's all about celebrating diversity and it's for staff....there was somebody who talked about what it was like to be a Muslim within the college, somebody with Asperger's, somebody who had depression, and somebody who had been a looked after child...And they talked to staff about what it had been like for them within the classroom and what would have helped. It was so powerful. The most powerful thing about it was that they all made a DVD, you can imagine how awe inspiring it would be to stand up in front of that many staff, so they played the DVD and they were there to answer any questions with the backup of the staff. I just think that celebrated the college, the college is very proactive" (Inclusion manager). The college's perceived strength is in its ethos of the importance of diversity, according to staff at the college. The Inclusion and Diversity Manager stated, "it's learning from others' experiences, it's also tolerance and to move away from that, racial hatred, faith hatred and so on and so forth. So it's more than just the curriculum, the formal curriculum, but it is massive community cohesion as well, because all those ridiculous rumours that go on about different groups, hopefully a young person here will have the understanding of that, will then be able to argue that within their own family. So it's not just the benefits actually at the college. It benefits within community, hopefully".

A perceived strength is the physical, barrier free setting of the college, which the participants believe enhances community cohesion: "the physical lay-out increases community cohesion, everything barrier free" (Senior). At the main college site, there is an open café and seating area, which serves as a social area for the college learners and staff. As a member of senior management stated, "we sit in the

refectory and we have no division for students with learning disabilities, we have no division for the international learners, they have to eat and drink all in the same area and for me that is great. So staff, everybody are all in together...the refectory really is at the heart of the college, so you can't come into reception without seeing it and bumping into people, and I just think that creates a whole kind of tolerance and acceptance and let's all live together really, like in society and as we should" (Senior).

According to a lecturer the college has taken significant steps toward increasing access and widening participation. However, his reflections illustrate his desire to bring and infuse what is on paper into the classroom: "from the college policy, really from the top, you know we're clear that the college is all inclusive, we should not exclude any particular groups on the grounds of disability, ethnicity, gender, etc. But I think there needs to be more information which is given how exactly how do you implement it. So you know I think that's something that I still don't find, I know it's there and I shouldn't but I would say that the fact that I know I can go and speak to the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, I know who to go to, I think it's an important step, but for me to actually say I can tell you what it is, I'm finding it a bit difficult to you know disseminate you know, and if somebody had to say to me tell me what the college's policy is, I can only say that yes, they do encourage this, but how to and at what levels".

In addition, there are other perceived areas of improvement. For example, one of the biggest challenge for the college is sustainable funding for widening participation and access. The Inclusion and Diversity Manager stated, "the lack of flexibility is huge. Family pressure obviously. I think anything that's too rigid, anything which is too rigid is a real barrier. Short term funding, massive barrier. Lack of relevant support, sometimes if you couldn't get the specialist support that you needed that can be huge" (Inclusion manager).

#### **2.2.10. Priority needs for expansion**

Funding was one of the most significant priority needs to expand the access and widening participation agenda of the college. The Inclusion and Diversity manager perceived a number of ways that the government could provide further incentives to colleges to increase access. First, she argued that they could reduce "their short term funding. I think often you get project money in, you do some really good work, and your aim is always to mainstream it but sometimes you just can't. So I think that would be massive to stop the short-term funding, stop throwing money at things and put in sustained measured funds so you can continue to do work" (Inclusion manager). She went on to stated, "I certainly think it's not throwing money at things. I've seen a lot of that in the past and I don't think that's where it's effective...I just think it's mainstreaming that funding, making sure, I've seen so much waste where there's been a huge amount of money put into things that in the end are just shelved, only to be started again ten years later. And I think that's the major waste in my eyes. Allowing for, I'm banging on about it, but allowing flexibility...less national curriculum...being able to actually teach people in the way they need to be taught. And I don't think national targets help! I don't think they help at all, particularly when you're talking about very, very hard to reach communities, they don't want a qualification, they will want one but that will be down the line. So the Skills for Life targets for example, you're no longer able to do that very important work because you've got to be working up to a level 2 qualification. So I think flexibility within funding, and Skills for Life for me is a classic example. You used to be able to go out and work with communities, now you're so worried about getting a certain amount of people through at



different levels, that I think it diminishes the work that was there. So I'm not saying no national targets, but flexibility within that target" (Inclusion manager).

According to senior management, the college requires more funding for part-time education, as part-time education is central for non-traditional, mature learners. She stated, "the government could do a lot more if I'm honest. I mean just, if I look at it from my perspective, say we wanted to widen participation for people coming into higher education, there is no, the funding for somebody part time, wanting to do part time HE study is rubbish, most of the money goes to the full time ones who are doing a 3 year degree from 18 to 20. And it's interesting there's nothing really for part time youngsters, so people say who have done an apprenticeship, earned a bit of money actually can't afford to then go into full time education, there's not really anything for them, youngsters or adults really, they can't access the grants you know, and even if they get a grant you know they're still going to be what at least £12,000 in debt when they come out. So I do feel they're disadvantaged in that respect. You know when we would lobby Parliament to look at the funding allocation but you know, when you actually look at, I think the statistics show that there's still the same profile of middle class people going into HE and it's still not widened it to the lower levels, so I think they've got something to answer for in that. So yeah I think they could do that. I mean we do get some money for contribution in things like Aim Higher, so organisations like that we get some money that helps fund, our career officer's job, so we go out, we take students to UCAS events, he goes into school. So we have some money for that but I mean Aim Higher I think had their funding cut which probably means ultimately we'll have our cut. HEFCE are on a cap so you know that means we can't promote courses. And in a way the FE colleges are the best people to get out, you know to offer something locally for people who can't travel, need to stay at home, you know and can't afford to go into full time education. I have told people this! In powers that be! And they told me there's a review due in 2010 but it isn't going to say what we want it to say, so, and especially with the recession because each government department is going to be fighting their own cause aren't they?" (Senior)

Moreover, in order to have greater success in widening participation and access, greater flexibility in funding schemes to extend beyond the strict target-driven frameworks. A representative of the senior management staff at the college stated, "if we could perhaps gain more LSC funding for courses that weren't for level 2 so that we weren't so driven by the level 2 NVQs or the full qualifications because it's a shame because there's a lot out there that I think could enhance people's life really. And I think sometimes for somebody to come in and do a big chunk of qualification is quite daunting, so you might start with something more...I mean there is some funding for modularised stuff now, so that perhaps has improved it, but for us that would be something. I think that would be my main, the main factor really, because we're so target driven really". There is also a tension between widening access and the college's need to ensure financial stability. Senior management perceives that "ultimately we're responsible to our paymasters and commissioned work, if we don't hit it this year it has an impact on next year's target, and you know I think all colleges are probably feeling the pinch and the strain of having to achieve those targets" (Senior). It is necessary to expand the targets and funding schemes to mature students and adults. For example to more work-related education or "soft skills that might get

people back into work, unless there is a qualification that is for level 2 attached to it, you can't draw any funding down. And I think that might bite us on the bottom at some point" (Senior).

Lastly, a priority for the college, according to the Inclusion and Diversity Manager is to expand the ethnic diversity of the staff and governors of the college. She stated, "we're still in the middle of a drive to improve the ethnic diversity within governors, we were very white-based. I think you will see within the college, we really do reflect the city and county".

#### **2.2.11. Methods of feedback and evaluation**

There are different methods of feedback and evaluation, both formal and informal. There is also a formal Ofsted inspection, which issues of equality and diversity, as well as overall effectiveness is evaluated. There are formal teaching/lesson observations, as well as equality and diversity training and learning materials development to create more multicultural lessons. There are curriculum managers at the college, who reportedly meet regularly with learning programme managers to discuss and monitor quality and effectiveness issues in teaching and learning. According to senior management, "every member of staff is observed once a year and I almost don't say it but it's a [formal performance]PDR target that you get a good which is a grade 2. And that was agreed as a college that we don't want to be satisfactory, so as a college we all you know, we agree a 2. So every lecturer has to, otherwise they don't get an incremental pay rise, so they'll get their cost of living pay rise if we get awarded one, but it's almost like saying well we're not going to reward the people who are not good practitioners, which I think seems quite reasonable to be honest, I'm quite an advocate of it. But that was probably a difficult thing to implement but has come in now. And what we try and do is if people get less than that we will look at it being a planning grade and we will work with them and support them, because you'd have to argue that most people should be able to do it as a one off, even if they can't do it regularly, they should be able to do it for an observation! But I think we do it in a supportive way, it's not like a policing exercise" (Senior). This is centrally organized and monitored in the college. The senior management representative stated that "lesson observations are very geared towards looking at the learner being central, participative activity, you know productive learning takes place, we're not about people lecturing to you know, like say university".

One of the unique features of the college is the well-developed self-assessment process. The college has an annual self-assessment process and report, which drives development for the following year. "It starts off at a low-level, everybody writes a course review, so if you manage a programme area, then that feeds up into the SSC [specific subject category] review and then that feeds up into the, eventually it ends up in a college self-assessment report with all of the data at the back" (Senior). Moreover, "as part of the self-assessment process will be to flag up any under achieving groups" (Senior). In the internal self-assessment report that is completed at the end of every academic year, staff completes an analysis of statistics, including both admission and retention of students. As stated by a senior manager, "one of the things we look at is we look at the ethnicity and profile within our centers. We split it all into subject specific categories which the LSC use and I think there are about 15 of them, so I write 13 and contribute to 15. So you can imagine at 13 it's all to do with education and training, within that SSC I examine and sort of identify you know what's the ethnicity, what's the profile like, we look at retention, achievement, success rates and we look are there any variations between the different ethnic groups, so

we're quite good at sort of interrogating the data". The college also collects data on progress of students to higher education. The self-assessment extends to all learning and support areas and is linked with development plans for greater quality assurance. The self-assessment report collects perspectives and views of both students, staff, and employers, using a range of different data, including internal and external audits, lesson observations and feedback from the various stakeholders. During the recent Ofsted inspection, the self-assessment report was referred to as comprehensive and detailed. Data also include course reviews, feedback from lesson observations and data on teaching, learning and student achievement.

The self-assessment report is regarded as being positive for monitoring the effectiveness of a range of the college's activities, including the provision of education and issues related to access and widening participation. This includes "targets for different groups of people, and it will change according to, well it changes regularly obviously with the big push at the moment with the current economic partnership that will be getting people back into work, which for the last few years hasn't been a priority. Suddenly it's going to be an enormous priority. So it's shifting to meet need and the LSC will set our targets" (Inclusion manager). Stemming from the self-assessment report is a consequent development plan, "it's the development plan that comes from a self-assessment report" (Inclusion manager). "There's a separate equality section within the self-assessment report. The overall thing is the self-assessment report, that's formed from course reviews that are done by all staff. So it comes from there, again action is taken because of what's identified there" (Inclusion manager).

There are opportunities for students to provide feedback, for example, according to the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, there is a "learning involvement strategy and there's the LSC students survey which happens yearly. There's a lot of feedback within lessons themselves. But formally we have boards of study where each course group meets biannually to feed back on their course, what's worked, what hasn't, what they'd like to see changed. But we've also piloted and I'm much more excited about this, with student liaison, a learner representative team linked into the student union. Now we've started that with some courses this year, and that's much, much more that peer support type thing, it's the learner representative finding out from fellow students and then making sure that's fed back in. So for next year, we want to really broaden out that whole learner representative movement because they then will be our consultation body as well...like with the single equality scheme...you will have a body that can feed that back to all students, so you can really elicit view...that's what the board of study was intended to do, and some of them do, but there's others that I think the basic flaw with it is that it's run by their lecturer, so I don't think students feel comfortable saying [certain things] to their lecturer". Moreover, the college has a learner guidance service, which also provides students with the opportunity to feedback their interests and needs to the college management staff. With the "learner guidance service, they actually monitor every enquiry and they do a report for us so we know who has enquired, did they enquire for something we don't run? When do they want it? When do they want to start? And that's a fairly new initiative but we're trying to make us more demand led, because then if we get 10 people who say I want to start now and I want to do this, we'll try and accommodate. Whereas before I don't think we really, I mean there was kind of a you know I could go in and say do we get asked for something that we don't run, and there was a kind of a feel but now it's actually recorded on the

database. So we look at what we don't run, and also there's some, you know like somebody had asked for a TEFL, well we run ASelta but they put that we didn't run it, but actually with advice we now know that you should tell them that we do this instead. So it kind of flags up any gaps" (Senior).

#### **2.2.12. Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession**

The university has "not had to make any redundancies and there are none planned...we've been fortunate in our targets for next year" (Senior). According to a senior management staff member, she perceives that there is a possibility the recession may increase employer engagement in the FE sector: "I've heard some colleges who with their construction staff have had to make redundancies...there are different theories on the recession, if you read, there was a credit crunch report that came out that if people think it's short and over and done with then training is affected but actually if it's a longstanding thing they actually think 'well, we've got time to invest' and you know retain people...if it looks like a fairly ongoing long term recession, I think actually colleges might do OK out of it, not in a mercenary sense, but in a positive sense" (Senior). The college plans to monitor "whether we see more adults on the full time, especially with the recession because people have got time to do it, I don't, that might be something that you know could happen" (Senior).

#### **2.2.13. Connection to SP3**

According to LLL2010 research, 92% of ISCED 5 level institutions provide open lesson days 'very often'. As described by a representative of senior management, "we have open days where people can come and talk to lecturers, find out about courses, you know we might sometimes get some old students in and show examples of coursework, but we wouldn't drop into a lesson...we have lots of open days and events through the year. We're just looking at doing Saturday mornings now to try and, because we just feel sometimes you know if you're working you might not get, I mean we do evening ones, I mean the college is open till half 9 at night but we're now going for 2 Saturday mornings, or you know run a day when the GCSEs come out" (Senior).

When asked about educational fairs, which 94% of ISCED 5 level institutions provide 'very often', she stated, "we attend like the Connexions one, they do a fair, we go to that, I go to things with, oh I go to loads of things, the LLL Networks run employer fairs, we're represented on that" (Senior). According to LLL2010 SP3 research, 75% of ISCED level 5 institutions award special student grants and loans. When asked whether and how this operated in the college, the representative of senior management at the college stated, "we don't have a bursary system" (Senior). Moreover, LLL2010 research shows that 97% of ISCED 5 level institutions organise remedial classes, in which the senior management reflected, "the remedial ones would be done through the Learning Zone so you know it's not stigmatised I don't think in that way, using the word remedial, the Learning Zone just means you can just drop in, and I think when you see it, it's in the library so you know you can just go when you like really" (Senior). 94% of ISCED 4 level institutions organize preparatory programmes to facilitate increased access for traditional underrepresented groups, though only 27% of ISCED 5 level institutions do so. The college senior representative stated, "we're looking at some short courses...what we're trying to do, we're trying to develop a curriculum really this year to look at perhaps shorter courses that run more frequently through the year, exactly really for that purpose because you know the sort of September start is a bit of a put off. We've always had multi entry and some programmes are what we would call roll on, roll off

which are kind of again harder to manage but we do have some of those in the college. But I think now we're looking at shorter more, you know like a 6 week programme for people, kind of, I mean we've got a huge agenda towards you know attracting what they call the NEET, Not In Education or Training, and trying to get them into college, but again looking at short provision" (Senior). The Inclusion and Diversity Manager also reflected on the need for flexibility in the Further Education sector: "if you're not flexible with the provision, it won't work. I think FE used to fall into that dreadfully static if you don't start in September, you can't start until the following September, and the adult learning service were always far better at being reactive, and that's a big shift in FE, I think we've realized now that if you're not flexible, then you can't meet need".

### 2.3. Pickworth University<sup>20</sup>

Pickworth University is a pre-1992 research driven university in England. The mission statement of the university says that its success as a university is not because it is simply for the privileged few, but rather due to its provision of high quality education in an inclusive and accessible culture. One of the key objectives of the university is widening participation, as indicated in the following statement: "Pickworth University is very committed to widening participation; it's quite unique in that I think as a research university, it is genuinely committed and we do it" (Director). There is a focus on widening participation in the strategic plan of Pickworth University. The Director stated, "Pickworth University has a strategic plan and there is a widening participation focus in that. It is clearly underlined in the strategic plan".

One of the key institutions within the university is the Institute of Lifelong Learning, which is both a separate "department and it's also overarching the whole university in terms of its responsibilities" (Professor). This means that aside from an academic department, the Institute of Lifelong Learning is "a university-wide role" (Director). The Institute of Lifelong Learning includes a wide range of areas, such as professional development, adult education, a counselling and psychotherapy programme and different social and cultural events. Fostering regional partnership is significant for the Institute of Lifelong Learning and one of the key objectives is to work closely with Further Education (FE) colleges, public-sector organisations, voluntary and community organisations, and private companies in order to meet different education and training needs of the region. There are part-time degrees, diplomas and certificates, offered during the daytime, evening and there are also distance learning opportunities. There are non-accredited short courses and Saturday schools, which are intended to be "taster courses". Financial assistance is provided through government schemes and bursary funds.

In the 1990s, university management "decided that for a research university there was no future in lifelong learning and was running it down" (Professor). The following vice-chancellor "came in very committed" and set up an advisory committee, which said "we must blow life into lifelong learning" (Professor). The Institute of Lifelong Learning began during this period, aimed to help the research university "have a reciprocal arrangement with their region and gain from it as well as contribute [as] a two-way process" (Professor). There used to be a "board of lifelong learning and the board of lifelong learning was chaired by the vice chancellor, but it was very difficult to get faculties to commit and send

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<sup>20</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

people, and it was always difficult to get an agenda that was strategic, so it tended to be quite nitty-gritty, it tended to be reports received on initiatives” (Professor). The Institute of Lifelong Learning opened at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as means to support the university’s overarching goals for lifelong learning and work to engage the local and regional community (Institute of Lifelong Learning, 2008).

### **2.3.1. Institutional strategies and objectives**

The objective to widen participation is carried out by the Institute of Lifelong Learning and the university through a number of different initiatives, including partnership with regional businesses, employer engagement, distance learning, and the development of foundation degrees, among others. For example, the university’s strategic vision for the next five years includes a focus on partnership with business, industry and regional associations in order to generate capital and create a highly skilled workforce. Moreover, participants highlighted distance learning as a central mechanism for the university to provide access, including at the foundation degree level. The university is engaged in “distance learning work, we also do distance learning now at foundation degree level. Our flagship has always been at undergraduate level, the part-time BA and humanities which has about 50 students” (Professor).

In order to widen participation and access, the university’s work has targeted “a number of foundation degrees that are delivered by distance learning” (Director). The perception of university staff members is that the Foundation Programme has been central to providing greater access to mature students without A-levels or other formal study, students who left formal education a long time ago, students who have A-level grades that are too low, and international students. In an interview with the director and lecturer in the three-year foundation degree in managing voluntary and community organisations, he stated that the main objective was “working with practitioners in the voluntary and community sector, upskilling them, trying to give them, draw a picture of the kind of things that affect the environment that they work in. With some of it, it’s very vocational but we also go off into social science, social policy” (Lecturer).

The university, and the Institute of Lifelong Learning, are active with “employer engagement work” (Professor). According to the director of the Institute of Lifelong Learning, the university is undergoing extensive restructuring and “in terms of lifelong learning, I suppose the big shift has been a shift towards, nationally as well as for this university, is the big focus on employer engagement for HE” (Director). One of the central remits for the Institute of Lifelong Learning is “learning on employer engagement across the university. The other area that we lead on is partnerships with FE, so we have a college’s network as a partnership of the university with a number of colleges across the region where we look at the progression of students and the development of staff, so they’re two big priorities” (Director). Employer engagement is a mechanism for widening participation: “the current push on employer engagement [is] actually widening participation...if you can engage with employers, it’s very likely that a lot of those students who we’re engaging with will be people who have not had higher education before” (Director). She went on to state that although universities in the UK who engage with employers are typically the post-92 universities, there are a number of pre-92 universities, which are active with employer engagement: “we would argue that actually employer engagement fits in very

neatly with our overall mission...we just saw it as being about developing long-term relationships with employers that would benefit out teaching and research, it would fit into the whole picture" (Director).

According to the perceptions of staff members in the Institute of Lifelong Learning, the university holds the Institute in high regard in terms of meeting objectives for widening access and increasing participation. For example, as perceived by a long-standing professor in the Institute, the vice-chancellor "sees us as an agent for change...he sees us as a vehicle for change and development" (Professor). The objective of the Institute of Lifelong Learning is "to encourage the Pickworth University to offer its knowledge, understanding and ability [and] skills to the regional, national, international community" (Professor). He went on to state, "we do see widening participation as an important part of what we do...we see our role in lifelong learning here in each of the four dimensions of the university, teaching, research, widening participation [and] engagement, knowledge transfer and public engagement". The Institute of Lifelong Learning aims to develop relationships with its local population. Because "adult education in this university has a very long history, there are very well-developed networks or conduits. Now that isn't to say they're into all communities, they're not. The way we go about it is, so (a) there is a long history, (b) we put a lot of effort into publicity...and through our projects and particularly all our employer engagement work we're developing a lot of new networks as well" (Professor).

### 2.3.2. Target groups

As shown in its objectives, the university aims to widen participation and be an inclusive educational environment. One of its targets is to meet government benchmarks for inclusivity amongst state school pupils and lower socio-economic groups, which it feels that it is successful in doing. The university targets potential students through marketing and advertising strategies aimed at different groups. It also disseminates information "through networks to get a message out" (Director). One of the key target groups for the university and the Institute of Lifelong Learning is employed individuals. Distance learning is perceived to be helpful in recruiting people in work: "Distance learning is something we've been targeting and people in work, they're employer links and people who are working an looking to develop their careers" (Director). She explained that there are "a number of foundation degrees that are delivered by distance learning. So one example would be, we have a foundation degree in managing voluntary and community organisations that is targeted at people working in voluntary, community and charity organisations where there is a need for professionalization" (Director).

The Institute for Lifelong Learning and the university aim to widen participation and access to the non-traditional student through Foundation Courses. For example, "the University does run some foundation courses with FE colleges particularly in the science area, which is a year nought, a year people do a 4-year engineering degree, so they come in for a year into the FE college and then move through. Here in the Institute of Lifelong Learning, we do run a number of preparing to study type courses, we run those from time-to-time. All of our courses anyway, well a lot of our institute courses are open to people with no traditional academic qualifications, so they are designed for people to come on to them when they haven't actually had an academic qualifications backgrounds" (Director). To target different groups, there are "a lot of open days for students to come in and see what's on offer, that's quite a large feature of our recruitment strategy" (Director). There are also "progression agreements with some of the local

colleges where there are specific arrangements in place for students to progress from a course at the college to a particular course in the university” (Director).

On the Foundation Degree Programme in voluntary and community organisations, recruitment of students is an on-going process and there are various strategies to target students. A lecturer stated, “I used to work in the voluntary sector before I came here in 2004, so I know who I’m working with. I will arrange open days, I will go out and meet with groups...I tend to make use of students we’ve already got to go and visit them and hold an open day. I’ve got a friendly face, I’ve got a venue...I have to go out, they’re not going to come in here, and recruitment is one of our biggest challenges, they’re out there but I have to work exceptionally hard to get them to come in”.

Once students are admitted to the university or Institute of Lifelong Learning, there are various supports in place, which are targeted to different individuals and groups. The university and the Institute of Lifelong Learning supports students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds through a “bursary scheme that students can apply to, and there’s also through the welfare office there is a financial hardship type scheme that students can also apply to and get funding to help them as they’re studying” (Director). As students in the Institute for Lifelong Learning are “part-time and mature [they] need so much support. In the university, there is a big department called student support development services that has a counselling section, it has a teaching and learning support section, there is a welfare office, a careers service that not only gives advice on careers, but also runs quite a lot of non-accredited programmes around employability and preparation for work” (Director).

#### **2.3.3. Funding sources**

The majority of university funding comes from Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) grants, the major funder of Higher Education Institutions in the public sector. The other major source of funding is from tuition fees. According to university figures, the annual turnover is over £200 million. The Institute of Lifelong Learning also runs a lifelong learning network, as indicated during an interview with a professor: “we have a lifelong learning network that is £3.5, £4 million. The employer engagement is based here and that is just got its second funding, I think it’s about £1.2 million each time”.

#### **2.3.4. Number of participants**

The university has 21,000 students, which according to the director of the Institute of Lifelong Learning, is “characterized by two things, 1) post-graduate, it’s heavily dominated by post-graduate students, about half our population, and over a third of our student population is on distance learning as well”. The university “hits all its widening participation benchmarks, in fact it exceeds them” (Professor). The university’s undergraduates are perceived to be “very, very largely full-time and traditional...they’re basically A-levels” (Professor). About half of the university student population are “post-graduates, and a significant proportion of the post-graduates are part-time...and quite a lot of them, 5,000 or 6,000 of the post-graduates are studying distance learning” (Professor). From the Director’s perspective, the “university has about 7,000 students a year on distance learning projects, distance learning courses”, which is an area that the university has developed its expertise in over time (Director). With the surrounding city being quite ethnically diverse, the university “doesn’t represent the city, but then you



wouldn't expect it to because it's drawing on [the] national", rather than the city (Professor). However, from the perception of a lecturer and director of a Foundation Degree Programme, he believed that Pickworth "is a very diverse city and I think that we've hit most of [the main groups]".

In the Institute of Lifelong Learning, there are roughly 3,500 enrolments, "nearly all of them on accredited courses and in addition, we have over 4,000 people who enrol on non-accredited events" (Professor). Compared to the university, the Institute of Lifelong Learning "is much more characterised by part-time adult students. So we would not be talking about the 18 year olds, all our students would be adult....and they're all studying part-time, so they're quite a different group of people than you would tend to find elsewhere in the university" (Director). The age range of people who enrol in courses at the Institute of Lifelong Learning is perceived to be from "early 20s to I've known students well into their 80s, getting a qualification as well. It varies very much according to the programme, so the age profile of the 200 students on our distance learning MScs is probably mainly in their 30s, late, between 35 and 45 because they're doing this mid-career, they're getting their employer to pay for the fees [which are] very high and this is a career development move and they're buying our expertise and information...if you went to our evening certificates at Tailor College, the average may well actually be 50" (Professor). As perceived by the lecturer about the Institute of Lifelong Learning and the type of students engaged: "we're often dealing with adult learners, older learners and better suited and better able to meet that agenda".

There are different motivations for student engagement in the Institute of Lifelong Learning. Although in the past, there were "a higher proportion of older students on non-accredited courses for pleasure, because we don't offer many short courses and hardly any non-accredited courses now...there are more and more people doing them for professional reasons and for career reasons" (Director). The profile of learners in the foundation degree in managing voluntary and community organisations is largely female, "about 85% female. They are from, certainly on the course [here], from a very diverse ethnic background. On the distance learning, well age-range, we occasionally get a young person in their 20s, but I would say that the average age is probably 40" (Lecturer). The "majority will be project workers aspiring to greater things" from very diverse organisations (Lecturer). In addition, on the distance learning course, "because it's all delivered online, they can be absolutely anywhere, we've got a fair selection from England, three students in Northern Ireland, two in Scotland, one in Nigeria and one in Kenya, so although they're relatively small numbers, potential is enormous" (Lecturer).

#### **2.3.5. Location**

Pickworth University is located in a city, which according to 2006 figures, had population just under 300,000. The city is in the Midlands and the county population (not including the city) is roughly 600,000, according to a 2001 census. It is an ethnically diverse city. Approximately 150,000 (or 60% of the total population) are White British, 72,000 are Asian or Asian British (or 30%), 5% are Black or Black British and 2.5% are of mixed heritage. The city is becoming increasingly multicultural, with a recent influx of Poles. The city experiences high unemployment rates. According to city council statistics, the unemployment rate in 2008 for the city was 13.2%, which is significantly higher than the average for the United Kingdom, which for the same period was 5.9%. The city's unemployment figure was the second

highest in England. The city has significantly higher number of anti-social behavior incidences than the national average.

### 2.3.6. Perceived strengths and weaknesses

Overall, one of the university's strengths is its student completion rates, which is one of the highest with over 90% of students leaving the university with an award according to government performance indicators. Distance learning is also a perceived strength of the university, which is looked as a mechanism for increasing participation (Director). The director explained, "most distance learning courses have some element of face-to-face to them, so they have summer schools or study schools, one week here, weekends here and there, not always compulsory but certainly all of them would have that as an option" (Director). This, she believed, helped engage non-traditional student groups. Another strength is the university-wide initiative to increase staff development. The Director noted, "all new staff are obliged to take a post-graduate certificate of academic practice. So that's compulsory for new teaching staff...that probably started about 7 or 8 years ago" (Director). However, according to a lecturer who joined the staff in 2004, this is not compulsory for part-time staff, which the Institute for Lifelong Learning relies heavily on: "it wasn't compulsory for me, I did it because basically I came into this without a teaching qualification, and for my own benefit, I think I got a huge amount of knowledge and benefit out of doing that...as a department, we rely heavily on part-time staff and they aren't required to do anything like that" (Lecturer). The diversity of the student population in the Foundation Degree Programme is both a challenge but also an asset. As the lecturer stated, "you're going to get a far richer environment to try and explore...it sounds a bit sort of cheesy but it does enrich the environment".

Interview participants perceived a number of weaknesses. According to a professor, "we don't have enough information, we don't collect a lot of information" about age range, ethnicity and background of students who enrol in the Institute of Lifelong Learning. This would be important to monitoring and retention rates. One of the most significant weaknesses perceived by a university faculty member is one which is embedded in the national scenario of adult education in England. According to the professor, "the biggest problem [in access and widening participation] is funding and the Tory government abolished the responsible body funding in the late 80s, early 90s...there were about 20 universities...which were funded...and they had a pot of money, it was about £1 million that could only be used for adult education. So the university couldn't raid it to prop up chemistry or something, it had to be spent on adult education...then the Tories took that away and that was the beginning of the end for proper adult education. And my view is that universities have a moral responsibility but also there is a prudential case for investing in courses in the community. I think we have an obligation. The biggest thing that has destroyed all this is the Research Assessment Exercise, which has now become a disaster in Britain; you can't get anybody to do any lifelong learning, any full-time staff because the entire promotion prospects depend upon getting research grants and publishing".

One of the challenges in the Foundation Degree Programme is the diversity and level of support for students for whom English is an Additional Language. A lecturer and director of a Foundation Programme stated, "we have challenges over English, they might speak English but writing English is more difficult, so although we try and have as much open access as we can, there will be a minority of people that will struggle with it. So there are great challenges". When asked about the different support

services in language or literacy that EAL students may turn to, he stated, “there is, particularly ESOL help area. I don’t know how well they are geared up to our kind of students, adult learners need different things to young undergraduates that come from another country”. Moreover, according to his perceptions, with the lay-out of the university campus, often the student support services are geared more toward traditional undergraduate students, whereas the students engaged in the Foundation Degree Programme are “isolated from some services” (Lecturer). Although he feels that recruiting and widening access is positive, more support and attention to the retention side of widening access is needed. The lecturer stated, “Right from the beginning, we’ve been successful in recruiting the kind of people that you’re talking about. But they are, they really are on the edge of support services. So fine recruiting them, trying to give them all of the things that they need, you know it’s find having an open access policy, and we have, and we’re getting as many people as we can, but then we need immense support and I don’t think we’re particularly geared up to that kind of package”. He gave the example of a Somali student, who required English and writing support for an assignment and stated, “we do occasionally run support sessions at Pickworth College for students, study skills and things, but this is more intense than that and it does tend to rely on myself and other tutors to try and support. To a certain extent, there is a feeling of being on our own trying to do this. I can’t link in to a huge study skills regime, and it’s interesting” (Lecturer).

#### **2.3.7. Priority needs for expansion**

There were different priority needs for expansion, identified by the university. One of the key objectives is to “increase overseas students, post-graduate students” (Professor). From the Institute of Lifelong Learning’s perspective, the government “could provide funding for non-accredited learning because often there is a fear of going straight on to a formal accredited courses that seems like a big step” (Director). The “government could generally just look to universities for much more and support them much more to engage with their communities and provide funding for that. At the moment, there almost seems to be a discouraging of that and pushing universities into very traditional agendas like research and teaching degrees. And also widening participation becomes much more challenging when they cap growth” (Director). Another priority need is greater support in place specific to non-traditional, adult learners in the Institute of Lifelong Learning, particularly those engaged in the Foundation Degree Programmes, as indicated by the lecturer and director of one of the Foundation Degrees

#### **2.3.8. Methods of feedback and evaluation**

Regular formal observations of teaching and student evaluations of courses take place. The university has a specific scheme to improve teaching and assist individual instructors in their professional development. There is a staff development centre available to all staff at the university. There is also a formal annual appraisal system in place, which is included in the strategic plan for the university. This is viewed as central to workforce (staff) development. There are different support networks in place for students to provide feedback. From the Director’s point of view, although there are not specific targets for at risk groups, the university has “processes for monitoring the demographics of students”, but no specific targets (Director).

### 2.3.9. Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession

For the Institute of Lifelong Learning, the perspective is that the recession will have an impact on their key priorities, “particularly employer engagement, and the recession means that some employers who might have been willing to engage in training for staff might suddenly decide that now is not the best time to do that, and we are seeing a little bit of that” (Director). There is a concern that there will be university-wide cut-backs:

“universities will cut things that are making too big a loss” (Professor). A lecturer believed that the current economic situation would impact on some of the aims and goals of the department, particularly working with adults who are older learners. He stated, “we’re already starting to see in the sector that we work in, in some areas if you were to work for a CAB [Citizens’ Advice Bureau] you would see that there’s increased funding come in to, because things like debt referrals have increased by 120%, but it’s extremely stressful environment to work in, whereas other organisations there’s an increasing agenda for organisations to merge and get bigger and things. That will have an impact. Again there will be less money going in to local authorities, public spending will be cut, all of my organisations are funded by central or local government, it will have an impact. Sometimes it will be a positive impact because there will be additional funding because of the crunch, most of the time it will be negative, and that’s probably going to have an indirect effect on other courses that are running in this department...It’s a big concern”.

### 2.3.10. Connections to SP3

According to LLL2010 research, 92% of ISCED 5 level institutions provide open lesson days ‘very often’. As described by a representative of senior management, “we have a lot of open days for students to come in and see what’s on offer, that’s quite a large feature of our recruitment strategy” (Senior). When asked about educational fairs, which 94% of ISCED 5 level institutions provide ‘very often’, she stated, “I think our open days are a combination of that with some sort of, with some exposure to individual departments as well. So they would tend to be a hybrid I think of those 2 things” (Senior). According to LLL2010 SP3 research, 75% of ISCED level 5 institutions award special student grants and loans. When asked whether and how this operated, the representative of senior management stated, “it does yeah...there are certainly schemes for people to be able to get support” (Senior). She went on to state, “there’s a big, there’s a bursary scheme that students can apply to, and there’s also through the welfare office there is a financial sort of hardship type scheme that students can also apply to and get funding to help them as they’re studying” (Senior).

Moreover, LLL2010 research shows that 97% of ISCED 5 level institutions organise remedial classes, in which the senior management reflected, “we don’t operate remedial classes at all. What we would have is a student support service that would offer support where it’s needed to individual students for specific needs they might have. But I’m not aware of remedial, that’s not something we would do”. When asked whether the Institute or the University offer summer or evening classes to assist students who might be employed full-time, she stated, “we, I mean the university less so, through the institute most of our courses are evening. They’re all part time, lots of them are evenings, and we do run some summer schools as well. And a lot of the distance learning courses, their face to face study schools would be weekends or in the summer for, you know, in blocks, that sort of thing” (Senior). 94% of ISCED

4 level institutions organize preparatory programmes to facilitate increased access for traditional underrepresented groups, though only 27% of ISCED 5 level institutions do so. A senior representative stated, “there are a number of..., the university does run some foundation courses with FE colleges particularly in the science area, which is a sort of a year nought, you know a year where people do a 4 year engineering degree for instance, so they come in for a year into the FE college and then move through. Here in the Institute of Lifelong Learning, we do run a number of I suppose you’d call them preparing to study type courses, we run those from time to time. And all of our courses anyway, well a lot of our institute courses are open to people with no traditional academic qualifications, so they are designed for people to come on to them when they haven’t actually had an academic qualifications backgrounds” (Senior).

## 2.4. Stonegrave University<sup>21</sup>

The university is a post-92 university, which was a formal polytechnic college in the North East of England. Its vision statement includes a commitment to social inclusion, raising aspirations, and widening access to higher education, providing quality learning experiences for students and to contribute economically, socially and culturally to the success of its surrounding region. A lecturer referred to Stonegrave as “the opportunity university because we saw that we offered an opportunity to everybody who could benefit from learning and it was a lot of mature students, ethnic minority groups, disadvantaged students”. According to the university, “there are some places where access is with a little ‘a’, well ours is a big ‘A’. So we decided as an institution back in 1993 that we would be an accessible institution. That was probably the first time a formal statement had been made about HE being accessible for all who could benefit, and that was a statement in our formal plan at the time” (Senior).

### 2.4.1. Objectives

The university’s objective is to provide individuals and organizations with high quality excellence in educational opportunities. The university believes that “it is part of the ethos and the culture of this organisation to actually try and engage a greater proportion, make HE accessible and actually make people believe that they can actually do that” (Senior). The university’s mission is underwritten by the belief that widening opportunity is achievable in the higher education sector and necessary for the success of the region. This includes providing a wide range of qualifications, including Access, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Level 3 programmes, certificates and diplomas, foundation, ordinary and honours degrees, master’s programmes, postgraduate professional qualifications, teaching and research-based doctoral programmes and other doctoral programmes by discipline and research. Part and parcel of Stonegrave’s approach to widening access is its support for part-time and vocational education, aimed at non-traditional adult learners. As a lecturer stated, “we’ve always had a lot of mature students, a lot of people who are trying to hold down jobs, we’ve never had a very traditional

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<sup>21</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

profile, we've always been dealing with a lot of diverse students, so we're used to having to be flexible and bendable and approachable, but we like all that, it suits our strengths".

Workplace development is a key objective of the university's objective to widen participation and increase access. The university has a Centre for Academic Enterprise, which employs individuals aimed at "engaging with companies and encouraging mostly local companies to let their staff be involved with HE level learning and to come to university or us to go to them, write something new for them or them be involved with something that's happening already, and sometimes it's their own training that we then accredit...we're building these relationships with companies and people out there in the real world and the region is full of small companies so they're often people who really do need that bit of help and assistance and information" (Lecturer). Workforce development is "a priority for us, it's just another strange for us of widening participation" (Senior). The "primary purpose is the employment focus and then the learners and some of the work that goes on across the university is focused on employees or just adults out there and bringing those two things in close vicinity" (Senior). The university offers a "work-based studies degree, which is an unusual degree programme in that it's totally aimed at employed learners and a lot of the modules are run on an evening so they can attend after they've been at work all day, so it's very flexible in terms of the content and when and where it's offered. We can offer it on company premises and a lot of it can be distance learning, so it's really a hybrid degree and suits the kind of learner that wouldn't get here without it" (Lecturer). On the work-based studies degree, individuals "can claim up to 300 credits" (Lecturer).

One of the challenges is the fact that "some staff see it as an easy option or it's not going to be a real degree because you let them have a chunk of it, but I think that is a lack of knowledge" (Lecturer). This degree "used to be called the negotiated learning scheme and this inference was on the fact that you know, negotiation...but some things are not negotiable! You have to have your 360 credits, you just might have got some of them from a non-traditional way, but you're still meeting the same standards and you're still going through the same sort of QA [quality assurance][Quality Assurance] rigour...it's not second rate" (Lecturer). In addition, the university currently is one of a few Further Education sector specialist colleges in the UK. Through links and partnerships with regional businesses, it aims to provide higher education opportunities. Partnership with local and regional businesses is a large priority for the university: "it's about building partnerships and being more humble" toward knowledge emanating from companies (Lecturer). Stonegrave University is very active with "accreditation of prior learning, which means that people can come into the university and tell us all about, and evidence, what they've learned from elsewhere in their lives and we have ways of mapping that across...there is no point trying to make people go through what they know already, if they can show that they have learned from the experience. I think that's part of being adaptable, flexible and realistic" (Lecturer).

#### 2.4.2. Target groups

The university perceives that it has "ways aimed at the likes of SMEs [small and medium-sized enterprises] or people who are perceived as being underrepresented" (Lecturer). The university has a "framework that is a concept of promoting accessibility" which starts "with you people at key stage 1 and it runs right through to adults...[there] are various key stages that we input into and these are the kind of activities that we deliver to promote accessibility" (Senior). There are various initiatives:

- The university offers Summer University short-courses. These courses are designed and aimed towards individuals who return to study after a break from education. The aim is to boost confidence and develop the necessary skills for future courses at Stonegrave University. Each of the Summer University courses carries recognized Stonegrave University credits and a University Certificate of Continuing Education is awarded after 20 Summer credits and these credits towards other University qualifications. A wide range of courses are available, including Business, Employment and Learning Skills, Mathematics, Languages, English, Art, Computing, Education, History, Media, Performing Arts, Science, Social Sciences, among others. Summer University “is looked at as a big widening participation initiative” (Lecturer). The Summer University courses “are great for employed people because they tend to be short snap courses over a couple of days, which a lot of employers can see their way to letting them come to that” (Lecturer). These courses are also of interest to non-traditional adult learners, as the courses offer “quick short sharp skills that they can pick up and maybe build on to something else, because they carry credits, but they’re all free” (Lecturer). These courses are targeted toward individuals who “have qualifications that are 20 years old and then they’ll look at a discipline that they haven’t studied before and take a taster, a 20 or 30 credit taster through Summer University” (Senior). She went on to state that “it’s a bit of a talent spotting exercise and actually the confidence that a couple of summer courses gives people” allows them to go on to part and full-time HE courses (Senior).
- With the objective to engage with employers, build partnerships with businesses and develop the local and regional areas, the university targets employers for workforce development: “there is more than enough really around us, there is almost more demand than we can adequately cope with” (Lecturer). The workforce development team targets employers according to “nine key sectors” in the region (Lecturer).
- Stonegrave offers a Passport Scheme to young students who are at school or college and considering higher education. It aims to help students make a successful transition to higher education. It is a scheme, which targets the “post-16 transition into HE, you young people and adults have joined that scheme for over 10 years and it’s support for first generation university families where in addition to their own school or college, they have access to the university and evenings at the university, university staff go into colleges, they can make up one-to-one advice and guidance interviews with our staff here at the university” (Senior). The university also offers an Adult Passport Scheme to target potential students, who require assistance in making the transition to higher education. The Adult Passport programme allows adults to sample from university life, aiming to support and encourage successful transition into higher education.
- Stonegrave University aims to support local and regional businesses to invest in employee training and workplace development through a number of schemes. One is the OneDoor scheme, which targets businesses by making higher education and training more affordable.

- Social class is a big area of concern for the North East region of England and the university prioritizes “white, under achieving boys” through a range of initiatives aimed at raising aspirations among young people from deprived communities in the region (Senior). The university targets young people age 5-11 through its Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Inspirational Activities. The university targets young people age 11-16 in local and regional schools through a range of different programmes. These include mentoring activities, such as through the Meteor Student Associate Scheme Aimhigher programme. HEFCE (2007-08) recognised the Meteor model as an example of good practice in the way that the university works with both primary and secondary schools.
- This programme aims to raise aspirations and promote the benefits of higher education. It provides subject tasters, curriculum support, student mentors, arts workshop, science club, film club, STAR awards, summer school, transition activities, celebration of achievement, discovery days, speakers into schools, and lecture series. Another activity for this age group is the National Science Week CREST Awards Science Clubs and Science and Engineering Ambassadors. The work that the university does with young people from the age of 10-11 has been successful in “influencing attitudes of young people” (Senior). The university works with “children from the most deprived communities across the sub-region” to help raise aspirations, increase accessibility to higher education among the more deprived communities and help break the cycle of chronic unemployment (Senior).
- Students in Year 10 (age 14-15) are targeted through schools and colleges liaison activities, such as speakers into schools, students into schools, masterclass series, motivational visits, and residential summer school (Aimhigher).
- Students in Year 11, 12 and 13 (age 16-18) also are targeted through schools and colleges liaison activities, such as through open days, discovery days, design degree shows, speakers into schools, students into schools, masterclass, and student ambassadors.
- The university targets teachers, lecturers and advisers through academic liaison evenings, training/personal development events, teachers and careers advisers’ visit day, enrichment days, subject networks, honorary graduate lecture series.
- Local and regional parents are targeted through festive family fun day through the Meteor programme, film club, celebrations of achievement, star awards, school option evenings, parents’ evenings at school or college, information evenings for parents, higher education parents’ evenings, student finance, bursaries and scholarships presentations, passport awards, summer university, Aimhigher activity.
- The university targets young people of various ages through a range of different schemes intended to help raise aspirations in the local and regional community. The university targets



Year 10 students in a programme, Year 10 Higher Education summer school, in which Year 10 students from the region attend Stonegrave University, at no cost to the student.

- The university above all aims to target individuals in the region to improve aspirations and enhance the region economically: “because of the situation we’re in the region, they were our neighbours so it was an [attempt] to make it easy for those people to get the best out of us and if they could benefit from being engaged with HE, then we wanted them to at least try it” (Lecturer).
- Within the university, there are various academic resources aimed at certain target groups. For example, for students who require support, there is a section within the library that “supports people putting their assignments together, gives them extra help” (Lecturer).
- Stonegrave University has also worked with “Sure Start to engage mothers, particularly in schools where there is a high ethnicity population, where English may not be their first language” (Senior).
- The university has also worked to “help communities embrace technology, so one example of the work that [we] did was to link steel communities, former steel communities, where people, adults, men usually, have been made redundant because of the decline in manufacturing and steel, and actually got them together on a project to learn them how to use technology and then get them to produce materials about their working life in the steel industry and get them to talk to other communities” (Senior). This has sparked the development of online communities and sparked “an interested in some historical aspects of the region, of industrial archaeology, where they never would have been engaged with that” (Senior).
- Finally, the university targets voluntary organisations in the community “to upskill them in terms of the level of skills that the volunteers have” (Senior).

#### **2.4.3. Funding sources**

The majority of university funding comes from Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) grants, the major funder of Higher Education Institutions in the public sector. The other major source of funding is from tuition fees. In addition, specific to widening participation and issues of access to underrepresented adults, the university has a “widening participation grant [which] in the current year is worth £8.5 million to the institution” (Senior). Moreover, the university has an access agreement, which indicates that “38% of our access agreement goes back into bursaries and supporting the infrastructure to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds, so that’s quite a high proportion” (Senior). This provides underrepresented or vulnerable students with annual support.

#### 2.4.4. History

Stonegrave dates back to the 1930s, opening initially as a technical college to support the local and regional industries. In the late 1930s, the student population grew to around 2,500. It became a polytechnic college in the late 1960s. As it was a polytechnic college, Stonegrave has “always had a very strong vocational background, we’ve always been developing people to go out there and be professional, to get into careers” (Lecturer).

In 1992, along with 13 other higher education institutions, it became a university.

In the 1990s, Stonegrave experienced a lot of expansion, growing in student numbers (just under 10,000 in the early 1990s) and expanding the campus with new buildings. There was rapid growth in the student population: “in 1980 we had 2000 students and of course we have about 25,000 students now” (Senior). However, the student profile did not change extensively, according to interview participants: “we have always had a quite diverse [student] profile in that we have not attracted the standard 18-year old entrant” (Lecturer).

Its approach changed slightly although the university remained dedicated to part-time, non-traditional adult learners through its vocational education focus. With its university status, it “delivers a lot of very traditional degrees, humanities degrees...but we’ve always kept that very strong vocational strand” (Lecturer). She went on to state, “we’ve gone a long way from that model [of hierarchical knowledge, driven by disciplines] to now realise that there is knowledge out there, sometimes at a much more sophisticated level than it is in here” (Lecturer). In the early 1990s, Stonegrave University “changed to a modular system in the university and I think that was probably one of the more significant things that we did as an institution because it enabled within the modular structure for students to take other options from other degree programmes, whereas hitherto there had been a range of options with their core programme but they weren’t able to step outside of that” (Senior). She went on to state that the modular programme was introduced and “that began to promote more cross-school collaboration on programmes and the development of programmes...we still have very vocational programmes, programmes that lead to a particular career or destination, but increasingly since the early 1990s, we’ve developed programmes...[such as] psychology or criminology or investigative studies...I think that opened up the curriculum in a really meaningful way that made it more accessible to people coming in, but the fact that it opened up our curriculum and our offering to a greater number of students was one of the more significant things”.

Compared with the previous ten years, the university has pressed for more of its staff to gain teaching qualifications to become more effective instructors. There is now “a [university] policy that when teaching staff are taken on, they either have to have a teaching qualification or they go through our own post graduate certificate and that’s within two years of joining” (Lecturer). As it is compulsory and free to staff, it has made the percentage of teaching staff with teaching qualifications very high. In the past, “there was much more focus put on how good your subject qualification was...all the focus was on the content” (Lecturer).

#### 2.4.5. Number of participants

Currently, the university has over 20,000 students. This includes roughly 7,000 full-time undergraduate degree students, around 1,500 part-time undergraduate degree students. Approximately, there are 1,500 full-time non-degree undergraduate students and a very large part-time, non-degree student population, with just under 11,000 part-time non-degree undergraduate students. The most typical students at Stonegrave University are “part-time, mature students” with a majority of students coming from the North East region (Lecturer). Nearly 60% of all students are currently studying on a part-time basis, evidence of the university’s strong support of part-time and vocational provision. Roughly 1,000 students are full-time postgraduate students and around 1,500 are part-time postgraduate students. Stonegrave also has around 400 part-time further education students.

From the university perspective, “we are a non-traditional university in terms of our intake. There is more of the intake that is non-traditional than traditional” (Senior). There are more female students than male students, with the total numbers of female students (full-time and part-time) just under 14,000, whereas there are approximately 10,000 male full-time and part-time students. The lecturer stated that “in the work-based studies degree, which is very heavily on an evening, we used to get a high proportion of women. It was the kind of course that attracted people who had got through whatever they had to get through, they couldn’t afford or wanted to or needed to go to university when they were 18 or they have dependents and we used to get big clutches of teaching assistants who wanted to be teachers so they needed to have a degree”.

Stonegrave has a high proportion of first year part-time students (approximately 11,000) and 4,500 first year full time students. A large percentage of students at Stonegrave are from the region, particularly the part-time student population, with just under 7,500 part-time students from the North East. Roughly 82% of part-time students and 79% of full-time students at Stonegrave University are White British, with small percentages of Black or Black British, Asian or Asian British and Chinese students. The “proportions of students from ethnic minority backgrounds reflects the population of the North East” (Senior). Over 300 full-time students and over 150 part-time students are known to have a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia.

In addition, through the Summer University, the university engages “around 900 adults” (Senior). Among these 900 adults, “every year about 190 students from Summer University progress on to full-and part-time programmes” (Senior). Summer University “is a route” into HE and “without Summer University, they wouldn’t have particularly come into the university, they wouldn’t have gone into a college or a sixth form” (Senior).

#### 2.4.6. Location

Stonegrave University is located in the North East of England, in a city of approximately just under 200,000. The North East has a population around 2.5 million people, which has remained stable since 1997, according to 2007 data. The North East region has had the highest proportion of people of White British ethnic origin, although the sub-region and urban area surrounding the university includes a small ethnic population, which is predominantly Asian or Asian British. Economically, the region experienced extensive change due to both industrialization and urbanization during the 19th century. Currently, the

region includes a lot of small companies; “there is not that many massive conglomerates, there is a lot of Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) and a lot of one-person entrepreneurial type of companies” (Lecturer). The area historically has been a “heavy industry area, which all died out, which in times of unemployment the figures around the North East always looked really bad” (Lecturer). With the state of the economy and industry in the region, the area “struggles to keep the brightest and the best people here” (Lecturer).

Unemployment rates are higher for the region than the national average. In 2008, the unemployment rate for the region was 7.5%, whereas the national average is 5.4%. Roughly 20% of children live in workless households, which is higher than the UK average of 16%. With deindustrialization, the region has experienced chronic unemployment: “Those very traditional barriers just to do with the nature of this region, once upon a time it had a great deal of manufacturing, ship building, iron and steel, and as that’s fallen away, there’s been nothing really that’s replaced that. So, you get a long history, second and third generation of unemployment and that within this sub-region is that deficit in terms of skills” (Senior). This has impacted upon the educational attainment of residents in this region. According to senior management at the university, “because of the region that we’re in which is relatively deprived but has some concentrations of deprivation, we get that mix of disadvantage where that’s manifest itself. So with young people and adults alike the participation rate for the region and that’s the big North East region, it still is only 26%, so that is a challenge” (Senior).

#### **2.4.7. Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

According to a lecturer, the “culture of higher education” is changing and that Stonegrave University has a number of strengths that are helping it to meet these new demands and changes. One of the perceived strengths is its long-time focus on the non-traditional student and impact the student population has had on the flexibility of the learning environment of the university and its success. With the non-traditional student body, “I think we’re better prepared than most to respond to the employer engagement agenda, which is what the Government are coming across quite strongly with now” (Lecturer). During the interview, the lecturer also stated that having a diverse student body allowed the university to “move with the times”, “be capable of evolving” and “be more customer focused...we respond to what people want of us, we’ve never been the university to say this is what we do, take it or leave it, we’ve been much more interested in what people want us to do and being part of the community”. The university’s outreach to its community has experienced a great deal of success and recognition. Two examples discussed in this case study are the Summer University, which has increased the numbers of vulnerable adults who engage in part and full-time education at the university and the Meteor programme, which has been successful in reaching out to young people and changing young people’s attitudes about HE.

Interview participants view the flexibility and willingness to adapt to change as a positive characteristic of the university. A lecturer stated, “because the post-92 universities have always had an awareness of what they’re not, they’re quite open about developing and enhancing what they are and what they might be” (Lecturer). According to a long-time lecturer at the university, it is a “vibrant, dynamic place to be”, offering a range of different support to its employees. In terms of the assistance provided to teaching staff to earn qualifications, the lecturer stated, “even part-time people can go on it, this is a

very good institution for developing the staff, they make it easier for you, they pay for people to do MAs". Assisting university staff with obtaining teaching qualifications is perceived to be a model of good practice, as "we felt if we were going to employ professionals in their field for their expertise that the least we could do was make sure that they could communicate that to the audience that they were teaching. It was really a pragmatic solution to us saying actually the best people to employ, the best people who know this subject, who know this discipline...but the downside of that was that they wouldn't have necessarily taught in HE" (Senior). From the university perspective, although some of the staff have left the university after obtaining their teaching qualifications, it is better to "have absolutely dedicated enthusiastic staff for a short period of time than have somebody that isn't for all of the time" (Senior).

Distance learning is also perceived as a major strength, particularly for employed individuals engaging in HE. A lecturer stated, "it's a policy throughout the university that all new degrees will make the most of blackboard which is the on line, and obviously increasingly with employed people we need to use some kind of distance learning because they get moved around the country to different branches or they might be abroad, so we have to have more and more modules that they can respond to from a distance, even if they're not totally on line". One of the perceived weaknesses relates to the approach of workforce development, is that "we tend to aim for the employer [when] our clients really are students and if we don't have students who come and do the modules and do the assessment, we don't have outputs or we don't look successful, although a company can say [they] are going to send [us] 10 line managers, unless those people engage with the learning...I always have this little voice in the back of my head that says don't forget about the individual in all of this" (Lecturer).

#### **2.4.8. Priority needs for expansion**

The university perceives the current pressure of evaluation, such as the Research Assessment Exercise limiting to highlighting the "fantastic successes" Stonegrave has had with more non-traditional students (Lecturer). There is a need to "be judged in some slightly different way...we're all universities, we're all equally good, but we're good in different ways and in different things" (Lecturer). Another priority need is to expand the extent to which students have the opportunity to meet and interact with other students in the university. Although there are opportunities to join the student union and other social activities, interview participants highlighted the need for more creative approaches to community-building among students, particularly the part-time, mature students at the university.

#### **2.4.9. Methods of feedback and evaluation**

Access for the university and monitoring the progression of vulnerable students to ensure success is "a whole university activity rather than a bit in a corner, which is probably the reverse in others" (Senior). There is admissions and retention teams, which identified critical moments in the student lifecycle, where "people were vulnerable if they hadn't got the right information...[or] were most likely to fail at that point if there wasn't an intervention strategy" (Senior). The admissions and retention teams monitor widening participation data and indicators, including performance indicators by gender, region, disability, ethnicity, first generation students, and social class. There are also different mechanisms for students to provide feedback and evaluation, including informal and formal evaluation of courses and instructors. There are student services, including emotional support services, academic support services,

and additional support for EAL [English as an additional language] Additional Language] students. These outreach support services provide the students with assistance and the university with important feedback.

#### **2.4.10. Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession**

From the perspective of the university, the university's efforts in workforce development will be limited by the recession and companies' inability to fund learning opportunities for employees. This will drive the university to develop new initiatives to help companies fund workforce development opportunities and marketing plans. The senior management representative stated, "I think certainly there are a lot of small businesses certainly around here which we could like to engage, but it will be difficult for them, so I think that we have to be able to package what we offer and deliver what we offer that is a) low cost or no cost, and some of our external funded contracts will facilitate that, but that it adds something to their business, it gives them some profitability, a smarter way of working, to be able to do that....It's about giving people what they need to succeed, but it is a long process. I think it's a difficult time to be doing this but you've got to be able to see that there will be an end to this recession and just to keep, you've got to keep the faith really and just say well it is difficult, understand the difficulties of the audience that you're trying to engage". As many companies are strong in-house training programmes, the university aims to help companies with accreditation of training programmes already in place: "what we can add to that is an answer for some, looking at individuals and assessing their prior learning" (Senior).

A lecturer, who also works closely with employee and employer engagement, believed that the recession would undoubtedly have an impact on the university's work. She stated, "I think it would be naïve to say that it won't, because a lot of the government funding now is predicated around encouraging companies to pay to have their employees trained. So it's the core funding model. We've had some very successful projects but they've been funded, so we've been able to offer sort of really good deals to companies, which speaks to everybody, if it's going to be cheap or free. I'd like to think that they want that development anyway and a lot of them were at the point where they were writing their own materials, so obviously something was happening out there. But I think now if you're going out to people saying, 'oh we can do this, this and this for you, but it's going to cost X thousands of £s', even if it's not true, they have that default position of saying, 'oh you know there's a recession and we're cutting our [budgets]', and a lot of them have already said, 'we're cutting our staff development budget or we haven't got a staff development budget'. So I think [the recession] will affect things and we've sort of tried to combat that a little bit by setting up another little project, which is all about helping companies through the recession, so I mean if we say we're offering business solutions and we're trying to help employers and employees, it's obvious that within this environment you would give them even more help or specialized [assistance], you know how to survive the recession or how to do this, how to do that, because they try don't they and hang on to this hope that the companies who do still develop their staff and still believe in learning will come out of the recession better and they'll be the companies that survive and all the rest of it, which sounds great in principle, but it's probably hard to hang on to that when you're out there at the sharp end trying to make your company survive and

you've only got half a dozen staff and you haven't really got time to let one of them go on a Wednesday afternoon. So I think it will affect us".

#### 2.4.11. Connection to SP3

According to LLL2010 research, 92% of ISCED 5 level institutions provide open lesson days 'very often'. At Stonegrave, a lecturer stated, "they have open days to promote the university and encourage people to sign up but I wouldn't call it an open lesson day...but yeah they do have open days and as part of those they might have a sort of exemplary lecture going on that they could go and sit in on, so I suppose that is what that means really isn't it? That it's not exactly a mock up but they get a flavour of more than just being shown the buildings, there is activities happening. No but they might have a lecture, because you tend to have sort of either lectures or information giving events, then there'd be seminars where they'd discuss it and it would be hard to have a fake one of those because the people coming for the day wouldn't have read the text. But they can go in and listen to something and it might be a really interactive lecture you know, for example when they use these voting buttons or something to really draw in new students, lots of images and not just a dry sort of person standing there talking! You would hope that wouldn't be the example they'd give them!" According to LLL2010 SP3 research, 75% of ISCED level 5 institutions award special student grants and loans. When asked whether and how this operated, a lecturer stated, "there is, well the Government when they increased their fees so much sort of gave a bit of autonomy to institutions to add extra offers onto that didn't they, and everybody across the sector came up with their own little plan. Then within Stonegrave, I can't quote you exactly what it was, but our bursary ideas were quite generous, you know you could have like £1,000 for this or £1,000 for that. So yeah I mean again you could probably get exact details off Karen, but we did come up with our own ideas" (Lecturer).

Moreover, LLL2010 research shows that 97% of ISCED 5 level institutions organize remedial classes. A lecturer mentioned, "that's like summer university, there are things like essay writing and dissertation skills and sometimes students are told they must go to certain things to be allowed to come back in September if you like, although it might not be as harshly worded as that, that is the point, that you know if they're on their first year and they've been failing lots of things because of maybe, not so much the subject content but the fact that the format of their work isn't good, they might say well a prerequisite of you starting the 2nd year is that you must go and do essay skills at summer university" (Senior). She reflected on this being considered a good practice: "I think it's also good practice and I used to teach on quite a lot of summer university things a long time ago, and the amount of people that used to come and do those courses and then sign up to do a degree is really quite impressive, the sort of, there's a word for that isn't it, not retention, out of those sort of 100% of people who come, the percentage of people who actually turn into full time students is really quite impressive, but I'm sure Karen will tell you more of that" (Lecturer).

94% of ISCED 4 level institutions organize preparatory programmes to facilitate increased access for traditional underrepresented groups, though only 27% of ISCED 5 level institutions do so. When asked about this at Stonegrave, a lecturer stated, "I think it's a bit like summer university really, that would be the place where they'd get a flavour of what HE actually was. They have, we have tried in the past with project funding to reach out much more to communities who wouldn't typically come but there isn't so



much of that happening at the moment, I mean the section that was doing that was closed down. But it was part of Karen's department. But what their plan is for the future with that I don't know, because I mean the LLL agenda hasn't gone away, but our centre for LLL actually was closed and put into the recruitment. I can see that activities will still happen and they're just branded slightly differently but yeah we don't have something that's called the centre for LLL any more, although I keep getting lots and lots of things from Government websites being you know how high it is on the Government agenda now which seems quite ironic. But I suppose if we're doing it by any other name it doesn't matter".

## 2.5. Good practice 1: Aimhigher

### Aimhigher

#### Objectives of the practice

Aimhigher is a national programme<sup>22</sup> which aims to widen participation in higher education (HE) by raising HE awareness, aspirations and attainment among young people from under-represented groups. The role of Aimhigher is to<sup>23</sup>:

- ✓ Raise aspirations and motivation to enter HE among young people from under-represented groups,
- ✓ Raise attainment of potential students from under-represented groups so that they gain the academic or vocational qualifications that will enable them to enter HE,
- ✓ Strengthen progression routes into HE via vocational courses,
- ✓ Offer information, advice and guidance to potential students and their teachers and families.

Aimhigher is about making everyone aware of the benefits higher education can bring, whatever their background. Activities supported by the programme include<sup>24</sup>:

- ✓ visits to university campuses,
- ✓ residential summer schools,
- ✓ master-classes and open days,
- ✓ mentoring schemes (face-to-face or electronic).

#### Target groups

Aimhigher encompasses a wide range of activities to engage and motivate learners who have the potential to enter HE but may be under-achieving, undecided or lacking in confidence. The programme particularly focuses on young people aged 13-19 from lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC groups 4-8) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds who live in areas of relative deprivation where participation

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme\\_information\\_about\\_aimhigher.cfm](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information_about_aimhigher.cfm)

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/DG\\_073697](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/DG_073697)

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/DG\\_073697](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/DG_073697)



in HE is low (HEFCE, 2004). Special attention is also given to adults under 30 from groups that are under-represented in HE<sup>25</sup>.

The Aimhigher programme targets its activities and interventions at learners from the following priority groups<sup>26</sup>:

- ✓ lower socio-economic groups (i.e. groups 4-8 in the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification, NS-SEC) ,
- ✓ 'looked after' children in the care system,
- ✓ disabled learners or learners with a specific learning difference (SpLD).

Aimhigher plays a key role in bringing together practitioners from across education sectors to widen participation. As such, Aimhigher partnerships work with the following groups (Aimhigher Introduction Pack, 2008:4):

- ✓ parents and other family members (particularly of young people from under-represented groups),
- ✓ teachers/tutors in schools, colleges, communities,
- ✓ Aimhigher ambassadors in schools, colleges and universities,
- ✓ Connexions / IAG personal advisers and careers advisers,
- ✓ admissions staff in HE institutions,
- ✓ employers,
- ✓ training providers.

Local and regional parents are targeted through festive family fun day through the Meteor programme, film club, celebrations of achievement, star awards, school option evenings, parents' evenings at school or college, information evenings for parents, higher education parents' evenings, student finance, bursaries and scholarships presentations, passport awards, summer university, **Aimhigher activity** (Senior).

### Funding sources

The Aimhigher programme is run by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), with support from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The Government and HEFCE have allocated £239.5 million to the Aimhigher programme for 2008-2011<sup>27</sup>.

In February 2007, HEFCE announced that it would provide £10,5 milion over the period 2008-10 to continue the summer schools programme. This includes £7m for the Aimhigher summers school programme and a further £3,5m as match funding for institutional summer schools (Aimhigher Introduction Pack, 2008:11).

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<sup>25</sup> [http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme\\_information\\_about\\_aimhigher.cfm](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information_about_aimhigher.cfm) (accessed 7 April 2010)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/mkob> (accessed 7 April 2010)

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme\\_information\\_about\\_aimhigher/funding.cfm](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information_about_aimhigher/funding.cfm) (accessed 7 April 2010)

Aimhigher partnership activities are now funded by HEFCE and the Department for Innovation, University and Skills (DIUS) (NFER, 2009:1).

In [county]shire<sup>28</sup> the Aimhigher budget in 2009-10 is £2.066.400 and will be increased to £2.166.761 in 2010-2011.

### **History of the model**

The national Aimhigher programme began on 1 August 2004 as a result of the integration of two previously existing programmes - Excellence Challenge and Aimhigher: Partnerships for Progression. Funding is currently allocated to Aimhigher until 2011<sup>29</sup>.

### **Number of participants**

Aimhigher Associates is a £21 million mentoring scheme which will see around 5,500 university students recruited to provide long-term individual and face-to-face support to more than 21,000 pupils in schools and colleges across the country<sup>30</sup>.

### **Location**

Aimhigher Programme is operating on a national scale and its activities take place across 44 local areas in England. It is the responsibility of schools and colleges to provide the services funded by this programme. School engagement in the Aimhigher programme is a key priority for the funders. The targeting process for Aimhigher has the potential to complement the personalisation of the curriculum in line with the principles of Every Child Matters<sup>31</sup>.

Schools can use Aimhigher partnerships to enrich the curriculum, provide support for learners and make HE more accessible by providing ongoing, sequential interventions as part of the Higher Education Progression Framework<sup>32</sup>.

### **Methods of feedback and evaluation**

HEFCE has appointed the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake evaluative research into the contribution that Aimhigher and outreach initiatives to widen participation in HWIs, are making to learner attainment and progression (Aimhigher Introduction Pack, 2008:9). The resulting research will be based on:

- ✓ data about the outcomes for participants in Aimhigher/widening participation programmes,

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<sup>28</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme\\_information\\_about\\_aimhigher.cfm](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information_about_aimhigher.cfm) (accessed 2 April 2010)

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme\\_information\\_about\\_aimhigher.cfm](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information_about_aimhigher.cfm) (accessed 2 April 2010)

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme\\_information/about\\_aimhigher/working\\_with\\_schools.cfm](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information/about_aimhigher/working_with_schools.cfm) (accessed 2 April 2010)

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme\\_information/about\\_aimhigher/working\\_with\\_schools.cfm](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information/about_aimhigher/working_with_schools.cfm) (accessed 2 April 2010)

- ✓ evidence based professional judgment of head teachers and senior teachers with responsibility for school improvement,
- ✓ evidence based judgment of learners who have been engaged in Aimhigher activities.

The aims of evaluation at area level are to improve understanding of:

- ✓ The impact of Aimhigher programmes on target participants. This will involve exploring the quality of the interventions themselves, their impact on perceptions of, and attitudes towards, HE and their impact on outcomes of the learner, including their behavior and commitment to learning, attainment, and the choices available to them including HE.
- ✓ The impact of Aimhigher on providers. This needs to be explored at an individual and institutional level. For example, at the individual level, the evaluation might investigate the ways in which Aimhigher has impacted upon teachers' perceptions of HE and the relevance of this for their pupils. At institutional level, the evaluation could focus on the impact of Aimhigers on institutional (school, college and higher education institution) commitment to and action towards widening participation in HE.

The purposes of the Aimhigher evaluation, nationally and locally, are accountability and programme improvement.

## 2.6. Good Practice 2: Connexions

### Brailsford College and Connexions

#### Objectives of the practice

Connexions provides high-quality, impartial, information, advice and guidance (including careers advice and guidance), together with access to personal-development opportunities to help remove barriers to learning and progression and ensure young people make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. It also provides support for young people up to the age of 25 with learning difficulties and/or disability (LDD).

We have a strategic lead with Connexions and we work with those kind of organizations to try and attract young people and have a referral system (Senior).

Connexions significantly contributes the accessibility of education to the students from high-risk groups.

#### Target groups

Connexions is designed to help all young people aged 13 to 19 regardless of need, and those aged up to 25 with a learning difficulty or disability. However, there is a particular focus on those at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET), or of being socially excluded<sup>33</sup>.

#### Funding sources

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/connexions/connexions/> (accessed 3 April 2010)

From 1 April 2008, all Connexions funding will be paid to Local Authorities as via the Area Based Grant (Area Based Grant is a general grant allocated directly to local authorities as additional revenue funding to areas. It is allocated according to specific policy criteria rather than general formulae. Local authorities are free to use all of this non-ringfenced funding as they see fit to support the delivery of local, regional and national priorities in their areas)<sup>34</sup>.

### **History of the model**

The Connexions service was established in 2001 with the aim of providing a comprehensive service to meet young people's needs for information, advice and support. The Education and Skills Act 2008 transfers to Local Authorities the statutory responsibility for the delivery of Connexions services.

### **Number of participants**

In 2009 Connexions shared data on NEET numbers in England. Those not in education employment or training were 147,583 in [region], of which 24,715 in [county]shire. There is no data on how many of these young people use Connexions.

### **Location**

Connexions Personal Advisers based in schools, colleges, youth centres and high street drop-in 'one stop shops' give professional and confidential advice on a range of subjects from careers and education to drug abuse, homelessness and teenage pregnancy.

### **Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

Connexions is considered as an important partner in *Every Child Matters* strategy. Using its strengths it is designed to provide a holistic support for every student in need. Sharing this responsibility with school it is appointed to fulfill duties as follows (Dcsf,2008:7):

- ✓ making sure Personal Advisers, partners and others know how important it is to track young people's progress;
- ✓ having rigorous housekeeping arrangements in place so that CCIS is updated promptly, and no young person is allowed to fall between gaps or be lost from the database;
- ✓ following up young people before their records expire, and keeping the proportion of young people whose current activity is not known as low as possible;
- ✓ setting up data sharing arrangements with partners in contact with young people, including health services, and making sure these are working successfully;
- ✓ collecting and sharing intended destinations data with 14–19 partnerships and the LSC to inform the planning and commissioning of learning provision and implementation of the September Guarantee;
- ✓ collecting information about the type of work or learning opportunity being sought by young people NEET and sharing this with partners;
- ✓ sharing information about the characteristics of young people NEET, and any gaps identified in

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/connexions/connexions/> (accessed 4 April 2010)

- the services available;
- ✓ ensuring that all learning providers have a named contact with whom to share information on young people leaving learning;
- ✓ feeding back information to learning providers about why young people left, and what they are now doing<sup>35</sup>.

Schools have an important role to play by(Dcsf,2008:8):

- ✓ monitoring attainment, behaviour and attendance data to identify students experiencing difficulties and taking action to support those who might be at risk of dropping out;
- ✓ ensuring that Connexions providers have up-to-date details of pupils on the school roll;
- ✓ collecting and sharing information with Connexions providers on young people's intended destinations;
- ✓ monitoring applications for post-16 learning made by Y11 students as part of the September Guarantee, and offers they are made;
- ✓ supporting the Connexions annual survey to confirm the destinations of Y11 leavers;
- ✓ using the findings from the annual activity survey conducted by Connexions providers to: a) identify the characteristics of young people who do not make a successful transition; b)evaluate the effectiveness of the support given to young people to make an effective transition to post-16 learning.

Connexions finds itself in a transition stage caused by the funding mechanism changes. In 2009 it was criticized by Labour MP Alan Milburn for the service's careers advice provision. It was said that Connexion focuses on vulnerable groups while it should provide counseling services to every student. The data cited by Milburn showed that 70% of under-14- years-old have never received careers advice.

### **Priority need for the expansion of the model**

It is perceived that Connexion together with its partners at the local and national level should enforce its efforts in facing the recession (LSC,2009:6). As [county]shire Connexion states:

(...) greater provision of pre-redundancy re-training through Train to Gain, and (...) the government will target the successful Local Employment Partnerships not just on the harder to reach groups, but also on the short-term unemployed. [A] National Employment Partnership [needs] to tackle rising unemployment. This will be chaired by the Prime Minister and involve 20 large employers including Tesco, Centrica and Royal Mail<sup>36</sup>.

### **Methods of feedback and evaluation**

The Website Feedback is available on-line and collects data continuously from the Connexions services beneficiary and also from the webpage casual user. Personal Advisors say they receive many emails from the Connexions users with information about their successful counselling and an efficient advices.

<sup>35</sup> [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

<sup>36</sup> [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/EastMidlands/LSC\\_Issue\\_4.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/EastMidlands/LSC_Issue_4.pdf) (30 March 2010)

### Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model

Due to the current economic climate, we realise that recruitment may not currently be a priority for many businesses. Despite economic conditions, some of [the companies] will still be needing to fill vacant positions so perhaps it's time to think about recruiting a young person to train up. Connexions [county]shire offers a FREE recruitment service. We advertise vacancies on the Summer Starts section of our 'Vacancies Online' website at [cnxnotts.co.uk](http://cnxnotts.co.uk) and in Connexions centres, schools and colleges across [county]shire. The service is totally free and the only requirement is that all the vacancies on the Summer Starts section will either have apprenticeship training or a recognised company training programme.

## 2.7. Good Practice 3: Meteor Project

### Meteor Programme

#### Objectives of the practice

The Meteor programme aims at accessibility promotion and rising aspirations of the young people from the most deprived areas<sup>37</sup>. Meteor engages pupils, parents and teachers from year six onwards. Meteor supports the vital transition period between primary and secondary school, when traditionally young people can dip in performance and behaviour and can be a traumatic experience for some<sup>38</sup>.

The University's students support activities both on campus and in their schools and act as positive role models through their work in the classroom and their support of extra curricula activities. The Programme links and tracks pupils from year six to year nine to promote the view that 'learning is fun' and engages with pupils and their families<sup>39</sup>.

Social class is a big area of concern for the North East region of England and the university prioritises "white, under achieving boys" through a range of initiatives aimed at raising aspirations among young people from deprived communities in the region (Senior). The university targets young people age 5-11 through its Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Inspirational Activities. The university targets young people age 11-16 in local and regional schools through a range of different programmes. These include mentoring activities, such as through the Meteor Student Associate Scheme Aim higher programme. HEFCE (2007-08) recognised the Meteor model as an example of good practice in the way that the university

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.hope.ac.uk/cwp-projects/primary.html> (accessed 5 April 2010)

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases\\_story.cfm?story\\_id=3101&this\\_issue\\_title=July%202009&this\\_issue=194](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases_story.cfm?story_id=3101&this_issue_title=July%202009&this_issue=194) (accessed 5 April 2010)

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases\\_story.cfm?story\\_id=3101&this\\_issue\\_title=July%202009&this\\_issue=194](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases_story.cfm?story_id=3101&this_issue_title=July%202009&this_issue=194) (accessed 5 April 2010)

works with both primary and secondary schools. (Lecturer).

### **Target groups**

The programme interacts with pupils over the school years six, seven, eight and nine (aged 10 to 14).

### **Funding sources**

The Meteor Programme is financed through the HEFCE grant. The University supports this initiative granting £250.000 yearly.

### **History of the model**

When first launched in February 1999, Meteor was offered solely to Year Six pupils in six Primary schools. Ten years later the programme has expanded to 14 Primary and 19 secondary schools from across the North England<sup>40</sup>.

Prominent national recognition for Meteor came in 2000 when several of the first Meteor cohort was invited to Downing Street. The pupils met the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education and several cabinet members<sup>41</sup>.

Based on the success of this programme, Meteor has now expanded beyond the University where it was created with HEFCE asking the University to roll out activities on the Meteor model to other universities and to make the project materials available to all primary schools in the UK. And with this in mind, Liverpool Hope University will now act as a partner and deliverer of the Meteor Programme in Liverpool. Hope Undergraduates will be utilized as Primary Project Mentors to Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in various activities that are arranged both on campus and in the schools<sup>42</sup>.

The Microscope activity is offered under the auspices of the Meteor programme and is offered to Year 8 pupils. The activity was developed in partnership with University staff from the Meteor Project and SETPOINT North East. It takes a section of the curriculum relating to the use of microscopes and through use of the web and other physical resources, enables pupils to compile a report on the purpose, format and content of their work. They then e-mail this work to a virtual audience, who are members of University staff, who add a commentary to the report before being returned to individuals. Pupils can work individually or in pairs to develop their content. Student mentors are trained to support the delivery of this activity and are able to offer practical help to pupils (Action on Access:10<sup>43</sup>).

The Microscope activity provides the opportunity for pupils to exercise:

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<sup>40</sup> [http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases\\_story.cfm?story\\_id=3101&this\\_issue\\_title=July%202009&this\\_issue=194](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases_story.cfm?story_id=3101&this_issue_title=July%202009&this_issue=194) (accessed 7 April 2010)

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases\\_story.cfm?story\\_id=3101&this\\_issue\\_title=July%202009&this\\_issue=194](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases_story.cfm?story_id=3101&this_issue_title=July%202009&this_issue=194) (accessed 7 April 2010)

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.hope.ac.uk/cwp-projects/primary.html> (accessed 7 April 2010)

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.actiononaccess.org> (accessed 7 April 2010)

- ✓ analytical skills;
- ✓ research skills;
- ✓ report writing;
- ✓ communications;
- ✓ problem-solving skills relating to science; and
- ✓ expand their interest in science through the medium of ICT.

### **Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

Meteor was selected by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in 2007 as a model of best practice in Key Stage 2/3 transition. The HEFCE funding enabled the Meteor team to publicise the Meteor framework to other Universities in a series of events across the UK. Delegates from universities were invited to see the scheme in action and discuss the best way to encourage young people from families with no experience of higher education to consider university study<sup>44</sup>.

In addition, the team has developed a toolkit and consultancy services for those higher education institutions who wish to examine the Meteor model in detail, and possibly adapt it for their own institutions. HEFCE also funded a follow-up conference, held at the University in spring 2008, which attracted representatives from 11 diverse higher education institutions. These included the Universities of Aston, Birmingham, Bradford, Bolton, Canterbury Christ Church, Leeds, Liverpool, Middlesex, Wolverhampton and a representative of the Central School of Speech and Drama in London<sup>45</sup>.

Director of Widening Participation at the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) said:

'Meteor is distinctive because it focuses on one of the key transition points in a young person's life - the transition from primary to secondary education. It is vital that we keep youngsters engaged with learning at this point, in order to help them succeed later. The key to the programme's success, as the Meteor research shows, is that sustained interventions by a university can make a positive impact on the lives of young people in relation to higher education choices and attitudes to learning<sup>46</sup>.'

The Higher Education Information Services Trust (Heist) reported:

The Meteor scheme's success in raising aspirations and improving performance of young people involved is that the involvement is long-term and that it encourages young people to start contemplating their future at an early age<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases\\_story.cfm?story\\_id=3101&this\\_issue\\_title=July%202009&this\\_issue=194](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases_story.cfm?story_id=3101&this_issue_title=July%202009&this_issue=194) (accessed 9 April 2010)

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases\\_story.cfm?story\\_id=3101&this\\_issue\\_title=July%202009&this\\_issue=194](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases_story.cfm?story_id=3101&this_issue_title=July%202009&this_issue=194) (accessed 9 April 2010)

<sup>46</sup> <http://ts1.gazettelive.co.uk/local-news/university-of-teessides-meteor.html> (accessed 9 April 2010)

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.heist.co.uk> (accessed 9 April 2010)



Parents are particularly positive, with most having no experience of anyone in their family entering higher education. 98% of parents surveyed said: 'I value the University working with my child'<sup>48</sup>.

Schools and Colleges Liaison Manager for Pre-16 Pupils said<sup>49</sup>:

'The key to Meteor's success, which we hope to share with other universities, is that it has not been a one-off event in the children's lives but a series of sustained interventions by the children's local university from the age of ten until they leave school. The children involved really do grow up with the University and we are now enrolling our first students from Meteor's pilot year.'

The independent newspaper article presents strengths of this project as follows:

One of the reasons that the project has caught HEFCE's eye is that the University keeps in touch with the pupils involved until they leave school. The young people attending the summer schools don't just take part in a mini-graduation ceremony at Town Hall, they are also visited regularly by student ambassadors in their classrooms.

The key seems to be to start influencing children at a young age to get them thinking about their futures early on and to keep in contact with them. Another important factor is to ensure continuity of funding for the programme. Teesside has shown its commitment by providing one-half of the finance. The university decided it was no good relying simply on different pots of external money that come and go. If it wanted this to be a success, it had to make sure it had a stable source of funds (Independent<sup>50</sup>, Leading Article, 13 Dec 2007).

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.heist.co.uk> (accessed 9 April 2010)

<sup>49</sup> <http://ts1.gazettelive.co.uk/local-news/university-of-teessides-meteor.html> (accessed 9 April 2010)

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/higher/leading-article-universities-can-inspire-the-young-764881.html> (accessed 9 April 2010)

## Chapter 3 Non-formal adult education

### 3.1. Background information on non-formal adult education in England

With the emphasis on accreditation and credit frameworks growing apace in recent years, much provision which was formerly non-formal has either disappeared or become part of the formal system. Thus, for example, for most of the twentieth century most 'pre-1992' universities offered a range of 'extra-mural' classes for adults, chiefly in the humanities. Although Oxford and Cambridge still make some offering of this kind, almost all other universities confine their programmes to credit-bearing courses, typically forming part of studies leading to a degree (Jones et al., 2010).

Much twentieth-century university extra-mural education was conducted in collaboration with the voluntary bodies (chiefly the Workers' Educational Association (WEA)) or with local authorities. From the 1920s to the 1990s public funds were allocated to 'Responsible Bodies' (largely university extra-mural departments and WEA districts); this has now ceased. The WEA continues to receive public funding from the LSC for a range of formal provision. It also receives support for specific projects and programmes from a range of government sources.

The local authorities were once the leading providers of learning opportunities for adults in England but their role has been diminished over recent decades. Many, however, continue to provide part-time learning opportunities in vocational subjects and in courses aimed at personal development and community regeneration. They have a significant place in the provision of parent and family learning and in the delivery of Skills for Life. Recently, as we have seen, their role in education generally has been strengthened by the proposal to return 16-19 education to their sphere and they have been asked to take a lead in the provision of some aspects of English as a second language (ESOL.) It remains to be seen to what extent this revival will continue.

Much learning takes place at work or is negotiated at work and delivered through one of the mainstream providers (such as an FE college). By and large, public financial support is restricted to formal, accredited learning. There is a range of organisations outside the public sector engaged in the provision of work-based learning (WBL) including private, not-for-profit and voluntary bodies. The Association of Learning Providers brings many of these together and, while it does have some colleges in membership, it is mainly the voice of these non public sector WBL providers.

The Trades Union Congress has a learning arm, Unionlearn, which champions the cause of learning for union members. Unionlearn is concerned with both the traditional role of unions in helping educate their own members and with brokering other learning opportunities for union members at work. A number of trades unions also offer or secure educational opportunities for their members.

Finally, the past two decades have seen a marked growth in voluntary, self-education, movements, such as the 'University of the Third Age' (U3A), in which older adults, chiefly retired, volunteer to teach as well as to be taught, and the growing array of reading groups. The government has recently endorsed these developments in its white paper, *The Learning Revolution* (DIUS, 2009).

### 3.2. People's Educational Association<sup>51</sup>

The People's Educational Association, a registered charity, was founded in the early 20th century, to encourage the expansion of educational opportunities for the working class, to encourage universities in particular to provide educational opportunities for workers and their families, and to provide a vehicle by which higher education could be offered to working people. Through most of the twentieth century it collaborated closely with universities in the provision of 'extra-mural' adult education for adults. It had strong links with the labour and trade union movements. And from early in the century, it established arrangements, which have continued in various forms to date, by which it received funds from the state to provide classes for adults.

#### 3.2.1. Background organizational context

Peoples' Educational Association has a national compass, with a structure of local branches grouped for most of the twentieth century into districts which covered all areas of the UK. By and large, its courses have been provided in the premises of other educational (or non-educational) bodies: schools, colleges, local authority adult education institutes, community centres, village halls, and the like.

During the 1980s and 1990s, however, the long-standing arrangements both for government funding and for collaboration with universities began to break down, under pressure from factors such as new approaches to public management and accountability, the view that accreditation and qualification structures are essential in learning programmes, and the like. This generated a number of major challenges for the Association, which had been strongly committed on principle to non-accreditation, and which had a highly-devolved governance structure leaving a large measure of authority in the hands of its individual members, its local branches, and its districts – rather than the national association.

In response to this, a series of managerial and governance changes began in the early 1990s, and 14 districts were combined into a single association under central Association management. Around a decade later, the English districts were reorganized into nine regions, coterminous with government (and EU) regions. This reorganization formed part of a major process of restructuring which followed a financial crisis and a report by the Adult Learning Inspectorate which was highly critical of the Association's quality, leadership and management.

The Association is now the largest 'Specialist Designated Institution' (SDI) in England with provision in every Learning and Skills Council (LSC) region. It comprises over 650 local branches. It aims to be a 'democratic, voluntary adult education movement, which is committed to widening participation and to enabling people to realize their full potential through learning' (Ofsted 2008, p. 4). According to Ofsted,

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<sup>51</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

The LSC co-funds 92% of the provision in England through a single national contract with the LSC London East partnership team, which the [Association] uses for further education and personal and community development learning. The [Association] raises additional funds from a range of other sources and has a considerable number of contracts throughout the country to deliver courses on behalf of councils and other funders of adult and community learning. It does not subcontract any of its own work. (2008, p. 4)

The Association's total income for 2007/08 was £31.61m; this was an increase of £2.39m (8.2%) over the previous year, though the first time in four years that the Association's income had risen. Expenditure on charitable activities was £29.98m, an increase of £1.02m (3.5%) over the previous year. Of the income, 65% came from grants from the LSC, 15% from student fees and contracts, and 13% from other grants. Of expenditure, 66% was for staff costs, 7% for ICT, facilities and communications (Trustees' Report and Financial Statements 2008).

The general secretary thought its 'contract with the LSC ... probably about two third[s] of our overall turnover' as implying the Association was 'still too dependent on the LSC'. It was clear a great deal of his and the Association's energies had been directed over the preceding five years into institutional survival:

I've been general secretary for the last five years. I came in at the sort of peak of that crisis when with hindsight, I guess the [Association] was close to going out of business, it had got an interim chief executive (I think the title was at the time) in pretty much appointed by the LSC and it had sort of virtually bankrupted itself owing £3 million to the LSC. The first thing that happened to me was an inspection by the adult learning inspectorate that, well it put the organisation in school terms into special measures, and you could argue at that point who would want to fund it to do anything given it was weak financially, it was weak educationally, its governance and leadership had failed it dramatically in you know the last couple of years [...] If we'd been a college I've no doubt we'd have been closed and another college would have picked it up. I guess because we were the [Association] it was something that neither the LSC nor the adult learning inspectorate necessarily felt that they could maybe, well could, they could but didn't want to do. But it was clear that on both sides if there was going to be improvement, and no sharp improvement then that was an option that they would probably have implemented. So over the last four years history we've significantly restructured and strengthened the association, including governance [...].

### **3.2.2. Number of participants**

The scale of the Association's provision of courses over recent years has reflected this set of problems. The focus on financial viability and educational quality is that the number of courses has declined somewhat over the past five years, although given the degree of variation, it is not clear that this is a trend. The number of students has varied roughly in line with the number of courses, and although there has been some variation in average class size, this has been within a relatively narrow range (See Table 2, p.68).

Table 2 Student & Course Statistics: England 2003-2008

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
<b>Number of Courses</b>	13,701	11,953	13,152	11,560	10,371
<b>Course Hours</b>	307,644	273,946	272,982	261,973	230,052
<b>Learner Enrolment Hours</b>	3,564,030	3,336,434	3,256,545	3,142,188	2,785,044
<b>Average class size</b>	11.4	12.0	11.9	11.7	11.7
<b>Total Student Enrolments</b>	155,913	143,208	156,893	134,705	121,293

Source: Reports of the Trustees and Financial Statements 2004-2008

The Trustees' report for 2008 offers three relatively technical explanations for the decline in numbers of learners and enrolments over the three preceding years, though these are consistent with the general secretary's gloss – that the emphasis has been on improving quality, management systems and finances:

Firstly, increasing Skills for Life provision attracts greater funding per student, resulting in the LSC contract target being achieved more quickly. Secondly, LSC increases in the 'co-funded' element mean that fee remission for an increasing number of students on income related benefits delivers the contract target with fewer learners. Finally, this year, the Association met its LSC contract closely without the unfunded overproduction of the previous two years. This again reduced the total of learners. (Trustees Report and Financial Statement 2008, p. 15)

The general secretary took the view that, with regard to access for groups traditionally under-represented in education, the Association is:

not typical, you've only got to look at the proportion of students that we engage with from disadvantaged backgrounds, you know with elements of quality and diversity and so on, and the fact that that's increasing, not necessarily a huge amount each year, but it's increasing annually, the proportion of our students from those sorts of backgrounds, and compare that with the proportion of similar students in FE colleges or local authority adult education and you see a very different sort of profile in the [Association].

### 3.2.3. Course content

The Association currently describes its provision as organized in 'three educational strands (Second Chance to Learn, Community Involvement and Cultural Studies)'. These are 'increasingly useful in planning the development of the curriculum and responding to new external initiatives and policy developments within a coherent framework' (Trustees Report & Financial Statements 2008, p. 12). The [region] region director described these:

we work around this concept of the educational strands and the strands relate to the sort of prime motivation that's raw [?] impulses that are leading the students into adult education. So the second chance strand is basically about people who want to develop their more formal

educational skills if you like. The community involvement strand is about people with an interest in wider sort of agendas and skills like health and ICT and those sort of things. And that's work that is targeted to disadvantaged communities. And then the cultural [...]. And in this region which is not [...] particularly typical but in this region our work breaks down 20 to 25% second chance, 10 to 15% cultural studies and [...] then the bulk of it is community involvement. And the community involvement will mainly be health improvement and personal development which is a big area for, a big thing for this region. ICT and performing arts and media ... (Interview, Regional Director).

As this regional director indicated, the proportions within each strand vary across the country. Course provision data do not yet seem to be available by 'strand'. The Ofsted inspection report (2008) analysed programmes across the following curriculum areas:

Arts, media and publishing. [...] In 2006/07, there were 22,693 learners on just over 3,000 programmes, accounting for almost 25% of the total provision. The distribution [...] varies across the nine regions [...]. Forty per cent of learners are aged 65 years or more and 77% are women. Approximately 40% of the learners last year were new to learning. Most of the provision is non-accredited and includes creative writing, art in the ancient world, calligraphy, life drawing, stained glass and painting for beginners.

Humanities [...] In 2006/07, 14,061 learners attended 1,131 courses in this sector subject area. Half of the provision takes place in the [three] regions. [...] Courses include local and family history, geography, philosophy, theology and archaeology. Almost 75% of the provision takes place in the week during the daytime, with a small number of programmes at the weekend. Seventy % of the learners are women and 90% are aged over 55. In 2006/07, 23% of the learners were new to learning.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses account for a significant and growing proportion of the [Association]'s total provision. [...] In 2006/07, 11,191 learners studied on 1,973 programmes. ESOL courses account for 76% of the skills for life provision. Classes take place in a range of venues, such as schools, community centres and employers' premises. The [Association] offers courses in preparation for life and work generally from pre-entry level to level 2, including literacy, numeracy, ESOL, study skills, return to learn and life skills. Seventy-four per cent of the learners are new and many come from particular target groups, including ex-offenders, homeless people and learners recovering from mental health conditions. Women and learners from minority ethnic groups account for 76% and 53% of the enrolments, respectively.

Community learning. [...] the title 'Second Chance to Learn' [was introduced] in 2007/08 [...] to identify courses that meet the needs and interests of learners who are new to learning or who have not taken part in any formal education for a considerable period of time. [...] Courses include short and introductory programmes in health and personal development, ICT, crafts, confidence-building, interpreting skills, family history and courses for learners with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities. They take place in community venues, such as church halls, community centres, schools and the [Association]’s own learning centres. At the time of the inspection, 8,126 learners were enrolled on 731 courses identified as community learning programmes. In 2006/07, there were 3,500 courses. Most programmes run for between eight and 12 weeks, and approximately 10% of the provision is accredited.

It is therefore clear that provision includes the specified categories arts (drama, creative writing, music, visual arts), conflict resolution skills, self-awareness, parenting skills, life skills, coping with addiction, leadership skills, psychology, sociology, and philosophy, among many others.

### 3.2.4. Staff conditions

At the time of the Ofsted inspection, the Association employed 224 full-time staff, 185 part-time staff and 1,753 sessional tutors (Ofsted 2008). In addition, the Association is unusual in being a voluntary organization: ‘Volunteers are drawn from more than 15,000 members, and play a crucial part in achieving the objectives of the Association. The [Association] has more than a thousand voluntary members and volunteers supporting the work of the Association by serving as Trustees, regional or local committee members or running branch activities.’ (Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements 2008). An estimate of the time given, and of its monetary value, is given in Table 3 below:

**Table 3 Estimated time given by volunteers to Association**

<b>[Association] Estimated Volunteer Hours</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Governance	8,600
Regional Activities	7,700
Branch Activities	46,500
Conferences	9,000
Portfolio Services	2,400
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>74,200</b>
<b>If costed @ £20 per hour</b>	<b>£1,484,000</b>

Source: Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements 2008

The Association operates a final salary pension scheme for its staff, and also participates in the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (part of the Government’s superannuation scheme).

During 2007/08, a ‘thorough review’ was conducted of sessional tutors’ terms and conditions. As a result, staff can now take pay in the form of childcare vouchers; performance management procedures were also updated, and some £550,000 was invested in staff development and training during the year. ‘Annual pay increases are normally paid in line with an agreed basket of comparators’. ‘Where redundancies are necessary, either because of completion of contracts or as a result of a wider restructuring, these are managed in accordance with agreed job security and redundancy agreements.

There were 3 redundancies as a result of restructuring during 2007/08.' (Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements 2008).

The regional director explained the staffing structure of a region:

here we've got a fairly flat structure, so we've got a management team which includes [name: a woman] who probably met you, who is the operations manager and she deals with all the data, she deals with facilities, she deals with website and marketing and that sort of thing, manages them, she doesn't do them obviously. And [...] then we've got a finance manager, the finance managers are now managed centrally but basically work in regions. And then we've got [name: a man] who is the projects coordinator which is like a management role. So within the sort of infrastructure if you like of the region there are those three. And then we've got what we call programme area managers in the different localities, so [name: a large city], [name: a large city] and so on. And then we operate, so we've got quite a large management team of say a dozen, because a number of the managers are part time, and each, then we have this sort of portfolio system where each of the managers has their local portfolio but they would also have a portfolio or portfolios around managing aspects of the region's activities. So taking [...] an example, complex example, we've got a job share who manage [name: a county] and [name: a county] for the [Association] and one of them also manages staff development and CPD for the whole region, and the other coordinates observation, teaching and learning for the whole region. So if you look at it like that you've got whatever it is, 7 or 8 geographical programme area managers as we call them, each with 1 or more regional portfolios around, mainly around educational ...

The programme area managers organize cadres of teaching staff typically engaged on part-time contracts. These are either 'sessionally' or 'monthly paid'. Most teaching ('probably at least two thirds' in the region) is done by 'sessionally paid tutors', but 'for the more complex and specialize[d] areas you need a predominance of monthly paid tutors' who have 'continuity and the commitment to the organisation', so for example of 'our skills for life tutors, probably about 70% [are monthly [paid]]'. 'Trade union education for various reasons is predominantly monthly paid.' (Regional director).

Re pay levels:

Well the monthly paid are broadly in line with the basket of FE [Further Education] and local authority, [...] I wouldn't say they were quite as well paid as schools but they compare reasonably well with FE and local authority at a more practice level. I think our sessional fees are OK you know because we've continued to increase them year by year, [...] there is basically an hourly rate and that's tended to go up. So [the rate ] [...] is probably slightly higher than FE and local authorities now. (Regional director).

### 3.2.5. Funding

The Association (in England) is funded on a number of contracts, largely from the LSC [Learning and Skills Council]. These are annual contracts, but there is a relatively long-term and stable relationship with the



LSC (see general secretary's comments above). Asked to comment on funding sources at a regional level, the regional director said

[...] without the LSC funding [...] the organisation wouldn't exist in its current form at all because obviously if something is 70% of your income that completely shapes the thing doesn't it? But we're reasonably confident that the successors of the LSC will fund in a broadly similar way. [...] The projects, I mean what we try to do with the project strategy is to concentrate on areas of strength and try to use projects to unlock local mainstream funding [...]. And we try to maintain continuity, so sometimes we'll like take a risk, if we've got 3 year project funding, we'll appoint someone permanent and then you know maybe work on the exit strategy [....] [P]roject staff give you the opportunity to bring in new people and a [...] different sort of person, a wider sort of range of people. So what you don't want is the sort of core staff here who stay forever and then a revolving door for project staff. So sort of we try where possible to give project staff permanent contracts and then accommodate them either through an exit strategy for that body of work or through you know natural wastage and so on and so forth, so juggling around like that. (Regional Director)

### 3.2.6. Target groups

Students in Association classes were 74.6% female in 2007/08. This figure has remained stable over recent years (74.4% in 2001/02, 75.1% in 2003/04) (Trustees' Reports 2004, 2008). In the region,

75% of the students are women more or less across the board and the only exceptions to that would be quite specialized areas like trade union education, learning disabilities which is more 50/50, one or two sort of subjects you'd expect to be slightly more male-ish like environmental studies [...], but if you look at it across the strands and the type of students then the gender split is pretty consistent.

Ofsted have suggested that the Association should try to attract more men, and so it is generating activities to attract more, but

we also take the view that if you take the educational system as a whole, to an extent adult education is a minor compensatory facet to benefit women who are overall discriminated against. So we wouldn't see it as an important priority. I mean there are groups of working class or disadvantaged men we should do more with [...] and we do, we have projects that we try to address, but we don't, we don't feel sort of particularly uneasy about the fact that adult education is predominantly used by women because [...] if, well particularly women, older women had less opportunities through schooling and less opportunities to go into HE, therefore they tend to make more use of adult education, it would be somewhat sort of remiss to then say well we don't, we'll take that away and try and get more men.

Association's success in reaching target groups which the formal sector finds more difficult to reach, there was perhaps a difference between the interviewees. The general secretary:

Well isn't that what we're about? [...] I would say that the groups that we do reach are those that wouldn't turn up to a class in a college or, certainly the hard to reach groups that we attract aren't those who would have either the confidence or the skills or belief, whatever, to be able to walk up to a college and enrol for a course. And what we tend to do with people like that is to start from a position that's much more at the level that they're at and help to develop the personal confidence and belief that they can learn, and to give them experiences of success through learning that enable them to go on from that. And I mean you know the learner journeys, they won't have changed from your day particularly but really quite humbling sorts of accounts of how people have come across the [Association] and it's just transformed what they think of themselves and what they do.

The regional secretary: 'Well I don't think the [Association] or this region [...] is spectacularly good at reaching groups that other sort of providers in the community adult education don't reach [...]'. However, the examples he gave were of achievement in these areas:

I mean [...] we've got a good record of older adults in disadvantaged communities, we've got a good input from various BME [black and minority ethnic] communities, you know we get I suppose a fair amount of work from, interest from parents. So [...] we've succeeded in building adult education in some geographical areas that were considered sort of pretty hard to succeed in. [...] I could point to areas where we've succeeded in engaging people in adult education which people felt were a lost cause, you know particular sort of estates or something like that [... through] very intensive outreach activity and putting on provision around people's interests and finding good venues and making it free and providing childcare and all that sort of thing.

### **3.2.7. Connections to the Formal Education and Recognition of Prior Learning**

The General Secretary distinguished between the cultural studies areas, where progression was relatively unusual (and not demanded by students), and other areas, where learners might be encouraged to 'go on and do something with another organisation'. He emphasized that progression could happen 'in a variety of ways', not only from programme to programme but into other organizations and from student to teaching within the Association or elsewhere. He gave an example:

a couple of weeks ago, I met [X: a woman], and the first time I met her was about five years ago in a mobile classroom in a project in the centre of [a city] where she was a member of a techno elders class, so she was, I think she was an Afro Caribbean older person in a class learning, it was a computing class, and you talked to the class and why were they doing this, they were terrified of computers, I mean they'd never used them before, and you asked them why they were doing that course and the answer in most cases, certainly in [hers] was well I've got family and grandchildren all over the world, and they send me photographs and messages and then I want to be able to write back to them, so I want to do an e-mail. And they were nowhere near an e-mail and she was at the stage where if she pressed the wrong digit she felt the computer would explode or something. So I said well here's my card, here's my e-mail address, when you get to e-mails send me one and I'll respond. Well three weeks later I actually got e-mails from the whole of the class which was quite nice. Now I met [her] two weeks ago at the Central Library in

[that city], she's now, she was now showing me work that she'd been doing in the next sort of development of that class which involved a major project with DIFID where they were researching the diaspora and using the internet and [the city] Library to support. So they've got personal stories about their journey to England in the 50s and 60s, they were backing it up with research that they'd done in the library and on the internet that was doing research around that diaspora. Produced a display, an exhibition using digital technology to produce the exhibition as well, so you could then see a progression in terms of her learning and achievements from five years ago, quite a significant one, but what's more, she was also now a member of the [...] regional committee of the [Association], so she's moved in a position of governance. Now for me that's at least a double sort of progression, she's developed as a learner but she's developed as a person and moved with that sort of confidence, and you wouldn't necessarily have predicted that from that first meeting.

Having said that, there are some doubts about how effectively progression happens into the formal system. The regional director stated:

there's a fairly good progression within the [Association] and there's some progression from the [Association] into FE and local authority provision, but [...] it's more individually guided rather than clear pathways [...] I don't think [...] progression routes are as strongly developed as they ought to be. But it's [...] quite problematic because there isn't always somewhere suitable for people to go is there? [...] (Regional Director)

Asked what formal educational organizations could do to recognize prior learning, the general secretary advocated 'allow[ing] students to unpack and then reaccredit what they've done in their lives':

So if you're thinking of people who have come from minority backgrounds and who have maybe lived somewhere else for a good part of their lives, I'm not sure that we give sufficient credit to them for what they might have undergone or achieved simply by having made such a significant transition. [...] This could also be applied to] people who have missed out, you know if you think of those homeless characters who have maybe gone through hell and back to get to the position where they're starting to engage in something more constructive. I mean isn't there some sort of learning experience there that maybe even you know if it's not recognised now, ought to be counting towards something? You know the fact that the distance travelled for them is probably two or three times as far as the equivalent distance travelled for a person like you or me where you've had no barriers and it's been relatively straightforward to make your steps to achievement.

There is some suggestion that the introduction of Foundation Degrees by the government has 'begun to replace Access' into Higher Education programmes, and the [regional] director certainly reported that they were 'doing less Access now'. But the impression given by both interviewees is that the volume of students within the [Association] in any one area is not sufficient to justify extensive agreements or arrangements with a very diverse HE sector. Discussions were in train with the Open University, but the Association works with 'disparate individuals' to 'move them forward' while the OU are 'looking to

replace all the money they've lost from the ELQ aren't they? So they're going to be looking for thousands and thousands of disadvantaged students, but I mean if we had a dozen students a year who wanted to go onto the OU, that would be about it for the sake of argument.' (Regional Director).

### 3.2.8. Outreach to marginalized groups

The general secretary estimated that 'probably 50 or 60%' of the courses would be free to the user. Courses are typically located 'in the heart of local communities. We've got very little dedicated class space that we use.' Outreach is at the heart of the Association's *raison d'être*. Asked about steps to reach the socio-economically disadvantaged, the regional director said 'it's again partnerships and outreach isn't it?'

### 3.2.9. Training for tutors and teaching methods

The Association looks for qualified tutors when making appointments, but provides training for those who have no teaching qualification:

as I'm sure you know we've got this whole Government policy of moving towards a qualified workforce by 2010 but one of the things, one of the impact of that is you tend to look for qualified, when you're appointing tutors, if they're not qualified when they start and they're new to adult education then there is a particular preparatory course that they're expected to do and then basically [...] [W]e provide that for them and then they're expected then to do a certificate or a diploma in LLL. And you would expect with new tutors there's a sort of qualification route that you'd expect them to follow. And that would be in their interest anyway, if they wanted to do well at their careers. (Regional Director).

CPD is also provided, both through financing attendance at external training events and through Association- provided courses. The General Secretary remarked that the internet was being used increasingly for this.

The Association has strong principles about teaching method, and in particular about the involvement of students in discussion and determination of learning aims. The regional director mentioned 'certain regulatory requirements around recording students' starting points and progress and all that sort of thing which we've embedded into a sort of fairly light touch methodology which tutors are expected to follow, and sometimes do.' He was firmer about 'a sort of adult education, [Association] type of you know philosophy, well around the things you were saying group learning and discovery learning, active learning'. This is 'embedded in some programmes more than others' and 'in different ways'. For example:

the trade union programme [...] and that sort of thing which had been formed in that sort of ethos and the partners support that ethos. I suppose the liberal [cultural studies] education programme has got those elements of discussion, they're largely based around discussion based learning [...] [S]ome of your more recent programmes like your languages and literacy to an extent are driven by the methodology that Ofsted and so on expect, [...] where you've got the very strong expected methodology around personal learning and individual learning plans and that kind of thing, although in theory you can run that alongside group approaches and so on.

It's sort of quite complex and you tend to get, because you're relying on qualified tutors and the tutors you know, you tend to rely on the tutors more to sort of you know develop the structure of the course. (Regional Director).

Interestingly, the General Secretary reports that 'I guess I started [five years ago] with maybe you know the potential to be a little bit skeptical about whether it was exactly as it was described, but I mean I think if anything I'm probably surer, I mean it is a potent driving force for the [Association].' He described it as: 'that the curriculum starts with the learner and it's developed around learners' needs rather than pulled from a shelf. [...] I'd say in that respect the [Association] does probably practice what it preaches, I mean no one else claims to do that I don't think. You know colleges do make claims about being in the heart of their communities and things like that that you know may or may not be true and some are better at it than others, but I've never heard them entirely saying that you know we start with the needs of this group and develop things around them.' (General Secretary)

Feedback to learners is provided through both formal and informal methods.

we encourage tutors [...], at the end of each session to do some sort of quick feedback from learners and certainly at the end of the course they do a proper course review. We have you know student evaluation forms and this sort of light touch sort of progress and achievement thing which document [...] in a small way student feedback. And the tutor report that the tutor does for us is expected to take into account feedback (Regional Director)

### **3.2.10. Future developments and strategy for the non-formal sector**

The discussions addressed three main (though interlinked) issues: the implications for the sector and the Association of the recent English government white paper<sup>52</sup> on informal learning ; specific concerns at an organizational and programme level; and the implications of the recession.

The Sector and Government Policy. The general secretary stressed the importance of (and saw some potential for) shifting public attitudes to public investment in lifelong learning:

Well traditionally in this country the problem has been that if you [...] ask [...] the person in the street you know what they think of LLL and whether the tax payer should pay for it, [...] the vast majority will say no, that LLL is about leisure and pleasure and the tax payer shouldn't be paying money for that. If you phrase that question, and NIACE has done this, if you phrase the question [...] 'what should the Government do?' you get a slightly different percentage, but [...] still [...] probably over half will say that LLL is something which individuals should fund. In other words they're basically saying that it's not important. Now I think there's a potential for that to just tip slightly and I mean my evidence for that is that a year ago when the secretary of state consulted about his proposals for what he called informal adult learning, which I like to think is LLL, he got in response to his consultation document the largest number of responses that any Government

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<sup>52</sup> [http://www.dius.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migrateddd/publications/l/learning\\_revolution.pdf](http://www.dius.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migrateddd/publications/l/learning_revolution.pdf) (accessed 15 April 2010)

consultation on anything has ever had, it wasn't a huge number, it was about 5,000 I think, so not a lot, but no Government consultation had generated that much response. Latterly, since then, there's been a campaign, Campaigning Alliance for LLL which you might have come across, CALL [...] that has generated a huge amount of interest, I mean a phenomenal [...] I just sense that there is [...] the potential in this country for there to be just a bigger awareness now of what the benefits of LLL might be, not in terms of just the economy and skills and jobs and things like that, but some of the other stuff, and I mean this might be demographic, it's about the older population, the age profile and things like that of the country. So for me future developments and challenges are going to be about how do we ensure that we can get across and enable more than just that small minority of people in the street to understand that LLL isn't just about holiday Spanish and leisure and pleasure, this is actually about staying engaged, staying alive, maybe keeping your brain and body more active for longer than it might otherwise be, all of those sorts of, those benefits as well, that are increasingly coming out from research that people like Tom Schuller and others are doing. And then to get into a [...] more constructive discussion about what is the balance of you know responsibility for funding that?

Asked about the government's white paper, he saw it as limited, but offering real potential to help this debate.

I'm not hugely impressed by the language of the document or its presentation; it seems to me to be fluffy, overlaid with veneer and when you start to dig, short of anything of substance really apart from maybe an extra £20 or £30 million. And when you start to then poke at some of the other things that it claims it's going to act on, I mean you know it would be interesting to see whether they're in place a year from now because it seems to me that there isn't a lot that's of substance there. On the other hand [...] it actually does offer organisations like ours an opportunity and a right almost to engage in and demand engagement with, partners that we've always wanted to work with. So if you look at the 40, the 30 actions at the back of the white paper you know see that NAVCA [National Association for Voluntary and Community Action] is going to sort of convene the voluntary sector, well you know we've long wanted some sort of circle around which the voluntary sector can engage and we can engage with them. Local Government's got a duty to lead in some areas, we've long wanted you know a framework around that. Museums, libraries and archives are also similarly required to engage and very keen to. So when you start to put those bits together and say well we've got a choice, we can sit back and just criticize the quality of the text and the substance of the document, or we can take an opportunity and engage in some of these, you know the opportunities that are presented. I'm saying that we should do the latter, [...] and [...] if a year from now we've got local agencies engaging more effectively, breaking down some of those silos, bringing money together, bringing intent together, well that would be a significant achievement. And has there ever been a white paper on adult learning before? Not that I can recall.

At a regional level, the Regional Director commented that it was a matter of 'more strategies than strategy'. In relation to the 'localization agenda',

I think a lot of the more community adult education needs to get into, or be stronger within the sort of cross departmental localized agendas around health, older people, community safety, economic regeneration and green, [...] enhance and develop and enrich you know, radicalize to an extent those agendas, [...]

Organisational strategy:

The interviewed Regional Director discussed the three strands of Association provision:

- With our second chance strand we've got to have a broader offer and more progression because at the moment it's too skewed, so we need opportunities for people to do, you know, we need to build a sort of flexible credit based structure that combines functional skills or basic skills, whatever you want to call it, with more vocational elements with personal development elements with more sort of standard educational elements, so that students can gradually build up a stronger qualification base, but that will have to be done within the sort of emerging qualification framework because otherwise it will have no currency. So [...] we've got to try continually to embed these programmes in the community or the workplace rather, so that they [...] offer something more [...] than people will get through the more formal institutions. [...]
- I think within the community education we need to you know try to make stick the relationship between the sort of specific subject area and the broader sort of citizenship and cohesion and cohesion agenda, that's the sort of biggest challenge there. Again more sort of progression and probably more pathways and more accreditation.
- Within the cultural studies there's sort of 2 challenges, one is to sort of refresh what we've got, you know by bringing in more tutors and widening horizons, but I think we've also got to try and develop you know a new sort of blended approach to attract younger employed people to that sort of work rather than [just] older, retired people. [...]
- At a regional level, he thought it was important 'instead of just being the provider of courses [...] to influence agendas around civic involvement, family learning [... And] with community education [...] mainstreaming without losing the distinctiveness [...]. It obviously is a challenge to do that'.

The general secretary saw opportunities for the Association to take more of a lead in

a big opportunity for the [Association] [...], I think we should be aiming to be the partner of choice in all of those local authorities, with NAVCA, [...]

But also:

I would like to see evidence in five years time that our voluntary membership is more broadly representative of the demographics of the country than it is at the moment, both in age and also socio economic and other backgrounds, and I would like to think that we were leading more

rather than following, maybe in the way that the OU is leading now in some of the sort of exploration of digital inclusion around learning because at the moment [...]. And I think there's going to be much more interdependency between the face to face teaching and learning, but also much more access to on line and other forms of learning as well, that become part of someone's experience. (General Secretary).

More prosaically, he was concerned about progress against various targets:

The questions [facing the Association now] are probably [...] about how dependent are we on particular sources of contract funding, how effective are we at engaging with the next generation of adults and you know moving into some of those sort of digital issues as well, I mean some of that's about technology but some of it's also about the mechanisms with which we engage with people and the attractiveness that, how attractive we are to people from more diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds. But I'd say compared to four years ago they're relatively sort of second order issues and they're much more about building strengths and sustainability rather than looking at survival. (General Secretary).

### 3.2.11. Impact of Recession

Both interviewees thought the situation would get tougher as the recession proceeded: The general secretary saw no impact to date,

I mean our budget, despite the fact it comes from the LSC hasn't been cut for next year, [...] but I do predict that in two or three year time public sector funding which is essentially what our contract with the LSC comes from will be significantly cut and I don't know that adult education will be protected particularly if that happens.

At the regional level, the Director saw that:

clearly in the light of whatever we're calling it, recession, depression, credit crunch, there are sort of survivability challenges for everyone that's outside of the absolute core priorities of Government [...] [W]e broadly know where we stand in this [government] comprehensive spending review (which is next year and the year after), I mean assuming that that sticks. But [after that] [...] there are obviously going to be significant cuts in public expenditure and we are publicly funded. I think the [Association] and others have made some progress in you know establishing with people like John Denham [the then Secretary of State] and so on that there is a life outside of the skills agenda, albeit it only you know a minor life, but that's a continual sort of, and also there are connections between whatever we call ourselves and the skills agenda, you know they're sort of continually sort of asserting and working on. [...]



### 3.3. Good Practice 4: Tandrusti Project

#### Tandrusti Project

##### Objectives of the practice

Tandrusti<sup>53</sup>, meaning health and well-being in the main Asian languages, is a leading edge initiative that has used a community education approach to explore and promote the benefits of physical activity and health amongst members of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. This is achieved through the provision of free, local and structured bespoke exercise programmes in an adult education context making use of community venues and a limited amount of gym equipment that is stored and transported to various localities (Tandrusti Research Report, 2009:2). In addition, culturally competent and relevant health information and advice is offered to all project beneficiaries. Consequently, the project has attracted local, regional, national and international interest. Tandrusti courses include community gym, postural stability instruction (falls prevention), physical activity and medical conditions, anatomy & physiology, diet, nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

The Tandrusti research project has demonstrated that taking a culturally competent community education approach to physical activity can be a successful way of promoting healthy lifestyles among health deprived BME communities. And yet the research findings suggest there is still much work to do.

For example:

- ✓ Whilst health messages are crucial, effective communication of them requires ongoing consultation with minority ethnic community groups,
- ✓ Barriers to the adoption of healthy lifestyles are significant; tackling them requires a multi-agency approach in the delivery of health education programmes,
- ✓ Community involvement such as volunteering demonstrates the capacity of BME communities to take ownership of health improvement initiatives,
- ✓ The enthusiasm of people to take part in voluntary activity is an important lesson to build on and embed within local communities. To achieve this longer term funding is required to support sustainable outcomes (Tandrusti Executive Summary, 2009:9).

The regional director referred to the 'Tandrusti' project:

"...set up to address the health needs and experiences of minority ethnic communities in [a town several wards or which are among the most deprived 10% in England]. Scientific research had shown these groups were at a much greater risk from diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and stroke. Lifestyle factors contribute greatly to these diseases and addressing those in this particular group of learners is not always easy due to language or cultural barriers. A fundamental role of the project is therefore making sure that the health information and advice given to minority ethnic communities is culturally sensitive

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.westmidlands.wea.org.uk/tandrusti-health-education> (accessed 8 April 2010)

and relevant to them”.

### **Target groups**

Black and ethnic minority (BEM) and South Asian communities are the focus of this project. South Asians are considered as a group more susceptible to developing CHD (coronary heart disease) than other groups. Structural inequalities that persist in the British society, existing in the form of inaccessible health services, poor health education, and lack of facilities and time to exercise are seen as the main factors of the higher proportion of the CHD within the South Asian population residing in England (Tandrusti Research Report, 2009:5).

### **Funding sources**

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) funded Tandrusti action research project and was set up – via the Connecting Communities Plus Programme (Tandrusti Executive Summary, 2009). The project has run successfully for five years following funding from the National Lottery, Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the People’s Educational Association.

### **History of the model**

The Tandrusti Project grew out of work with older Asian adults undertaken by the People’s Educational Association, Age Concern and Social Services in 1999. Once exercise classes were established in a number of areas it was clear there was a need for a high level of support for the participants and a demand for more classes than there was funding to support. This, coupled with the well documented health inequalities amongst ethnic minority communities, formulated the rationale for the project. After gaining the trust and respect of the communities the project has been working with it has been able to challenge cultural stereotypes by recruiting mixed religious groups and mixed gender sessions (Tandrusti: a Health Education Project Meets Health Agendas<sup>54</sup>).

### **Location**

All programmes are delivered at local culturally competent venues.

### **Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

Tandrusti has adapted policies and procedures to be sensitive, appropriate and effective for its target client group (Tandrusti: a Health Education Project Meets Health Agendas). All programmes are tailored to address the cultural, religious and socio-economic barriers that limit opportunities available to members of minority ethnic communities to participate in physical activity, so:

- ✓ Beneficiaries and partners from all main minority ethnic/cultural backgrounds residing in the area are involved in project activities.
- ✓ Culturally competent information sessions, open days, publicity and materials to promote activities and events are used.

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.wea.org.uk/conference2007/pdfs/WEA%20Tandrusti%204pp.pdf> (2 April 2010)

- ✓ A high priority is given to selecting, appointing, supporting skilled tutor group.
- ✓ A high priority is given to matching local and national core policies.
- ✓ Physical activity and medical conditions courses that address health conditions that have a higher prevalence amongst members of BME communities are delivered.
- ✓ There is a robust working relationship with local PCT -Tandrusti is seen as 'a meaningful vehicle for the delivery and development of health improvement programmes for members of BME communities'.
- ✓ For the first two years weekly meetings with all learners by the project manager were conducted. Student need formed the basis of curriculum development. Once trust had been established, the project has not encountered problems recruiting learners and volunteers.
- ✓ Project innovation - Tandrusti is the only project of its kind marrying 'education and health'.
- ✓ Robust initial assessment, very effective Health and Safety protocols and procedures as well as efficient recording of learning and health progression has made Tandrusti 'a very effective project, [with] good practice of assessing literacy and language skills and recording progress' (Adult Learning Inspectorate 2005).
- ✓ Challenging learning activities with excellent progression routes to cope with improved physical capability amongst groups. This includes running, gym and anatomy and physiology courses for the over 60s.
- ✓ Active participation of learners who have been involved in an ongoing consultative process to develop and evaluate programmes.

Whilst many people reported that they were attracted to Tandrusti as a physical activity programme they greatly valued the emotional and social support gained from sharing experiences with others. In short attending programmes helped improve their mental health and well being. The level of participants' health awareness was affected by their literacy skills; those who were literate in a language were able to access health information a lot better than those who were not. Older participants (over the age of 65) were less active in building their health knowledge and health promotion material was less effective in reaching them (Tandrusti Executive Summary, 2009:5).

The project has been recognised by health professionals nationally as a 'best practice model in tackling inequalities around physical activity and health' (Barbican Centre London, Cardiff City Hall).

Some strengths identified in the Annual Report (Ofsted, 2008:8)<sup>55</sup>:

- ✓ learners enjoy their courses and attendance is good,
- ✓ programmes meet learners' aspirations and potential and national and local priorities,

<sup>55</sup> [www.ofsted.gov.uk/content/download/8709/95015/file/talisman%2071.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/content/download/8709/95015/file/talisman%2071.pdf)

- ✓ learners are prepared well for further learning and/or employment,
- ✓ relevant provision is located well for priority groups,
- ✓ learner guidance and support is generally good or better,
- ✓ the curriculum is increasingly relevant to priority learner groups,
- ✓ leadership and management are generally good,
- ✓ self-assessment processes and development planning are improving,
- ✓ learners make good progress in developing skills relevant to their everyday lives.

Some weaknesses identified in the Annual Report (Ofsted, 2008:8):

- ✓ evidence of progression is usually not based on reliable data,
- ✓ insufficient progression options for learners,
- ✓ unclear definitions of success and achievement on non-accredited courses,
- ✓ insufficient use of assessment to plan learning,
- ✓ poor monitoring of learners' progress on non-accredited courses,
- ✓ insufficient formal consultation with employers to identify requirements,
- ✓ too much reliance on motivation and knowledge of individual tutors and development workers for some provision,
- ✓ targets for staff are insufficiently challenging,
- ✓ some skills for life strategies not well established,
- ✓ insufficiently robust quality assurance arrangements,
- ✓ insufficient focus of observation on the teaching and learning to implement improvements.

As the General Secretary concludes:

"...we're now talking about working with groups of people who wouldn't otherwise be there. In most cases that is usually in working in partnership with a third party, third agency that acts as the sort of proxy spokesperson for that group, now it could be a PCT [primary care trust], a health authority, it could be a local group of MIND or MENCAP if you're working with people with learning disabilities, it could be CRISIS or an organisation representing or working with homeless groups, whatever, like that. And it's ensuring that through that group, or through that agency you're developing something that's of mutual benefit to both sides, and usually has got sort of twin objectives. I mean there'll be an objective that the, if it's CRISIS there'll be an

objective that we might be putting into that which could be leading to some sort of achievement or accreditation or something like that. [...] [T]he other organisation of course would be a trade union (General Secretary).

### **Methods of feedback and evaluation**

To secure the proper feedback and evaluation of the programme the Tandruti research project was developed. Through 180 questionnaires and 50 in-depth interviews the data on health journeys of the participants and non-participants in the area was collected.

The success of the project is evidenced by health improvements recorded in over 90% of learners completing a programme (as measured by reduction in blood pressure, weight, waist circumference or Body Mass Index) (Tandruti Executive Summary, 2009:7).

## Chapter 4 Prison education

### 4.1. Background information on prison education in England

Offenders are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of social exclusion. Living with the prison stigma has always been a serious challenge for both: the ex-offender and his/her family, and for the local community. Therefore, preparation to the process of social inclusion and the transformation of the offenders into the citizens has recently become a center of attention of the Prison Service in general and the penal institutions in particular. The most important aim for the Prison Service is to reduce the re-offend rate and by the year 2010 the Home Office Strategic Plan stated that the level of re-offending will decrease by 10%<sup>56</sup> (NOMS, 2005:8).

In England keeping in custody those committed by the courts is a HM Prison Service responsibility. In order to ensure the implementation of the government re-offending reduction strategy the alliance of four agencies was established. Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS), National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and Jobcentre Plus were appointed by the Government as the mainstream agencies due to re-offending reduction. To assist the crime prevention the National Offender Management Service also uses a variety of social sectors support. It is based on the corporate sector with national, regional and local businesses, a civic alliance, working with local authorities, and faith groups and the voluntary sector (NOMS, 2005:9). The extensive cooperation within the local community helps to reduce re-offending and strengthens positive outcomes of the prison education.

The Government defined three priorities to reduce the second offence:

- Engaging employers through the Reducing Re-offending Corporate Alliance,
- Building on OLASS and developing a Campus Model<sup>57</sup> to include a package of rights and responsibilities to motivate and engage offenders ,
- Reinforcing the emphasis on skills and jobs in prison and probation.

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<sup>56</sup> The latest re-offending results for adults published on 29 March 2007 show that between 1997 and 2004, proven adult re-offending has been reduced by 6.9% against what would be expected from the characteristics of the group (Cunliffe, Shepherd, 2007:16).

<sup>57</sup> Development of a Campus Model has among its key features: a focus on employers' needs; an employability contract as part of the sentence plan, to motivate offenders and focus resources where they will have most impact; more flexible access to skills and employment support, with effective use of ICT (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/offenderlearning//index.cfm?fuseaction=content.view&CategoryID=3&ContentID=16>) (accessed 9 April 2010).

The ex-offenders employability is the central focus of the NOMS. In tackling repeat offending education plays an important role and is one of the 7 priorities established by NOMS (National Offender Management Service).

There is a strong correlation between offending, poor literacy, language and numeracy skills, and low achievement and truancy at school. Many offenders have very poor experience of education and no experience of stable employment<sup>58</sup>.

Thus, education is seen not only intrinsically but most of all as a main tool to improve the employability of the offenders. Employment of the prisoners after release is considered as a crucial factor in re-offend prevention and those with good grades in NQF are more likely to be in employment than those without (HM Government, 2005: 12). Together with six other Pathways (Accommodation, Health, Drugs and Alcohol, Finance, Benefit and Debt, Children and Families, and Attitudes, thinking and behavior) education provided in prison influences positively chances for social inclusion after release. The crucial aim of the educational services available for the prisoners is to help them gain skills and knowledge useful after serving a sentence. Goals of prison education are defined as<sup>59</sup>:

- [to] develop a learning and skills service as an **integral part of the offender management process**, to provide offenders with skills for life and improves their employability,
- [to] use **sentences to improve employment opportunities** – i.e., arrange Freshstart interviews and job searches, and set Education, Training and Employment Activity Requirements as part of the new sentencing framework,
- [to] develop strategies nationally, regionally and locally for **engaging employers** in providing jobs for ex-offenders,
- [to] put employability and **employment at the heart of supervision** in the community for every unemployed offender.

OLASS is a key contributor to the Government's Skills for Life and Skills Strategies and is a central part of the Ministry of Justice's action plan to reduce re-offending.

OLASS is a means by which existing delivery services are brigaded together and focused on to the particular needs of a specific group of learners. The budget that meets most of the costs of OLASS is held by the LSC (with a significant sum controlled also by the YJB) but the explicit intention, recognized by all the partners, is to act in a collaborative manner, making the effect of the OLASS arrangements greater than the sum of its parts.

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<sup>58</sup> [http://noms.justice.gov.uk/managing-offenders/reducing\\_re-offending/reducing\\_re-offending\\_pathways/education/](http://noms.justice.gov.uk/managing-offenders/reducing_re-offending/reducing_re-offending_pathways/education/) (accessed 10 April 2010).

<sup>59</sup> [http://noms.justice.gov.uk/managing-offenders/reducing\\_re-offending/reducing\\_re-offending\\_pathways/education/](http://noms.justice.gov.uk/managing-offenders/reducing_re-offending/reducing_re-offending_pathways/education/). (accessed 10 April 2010).

OLASS is underpinned by better assessment and planning; a broader, richer curriculum offer; availability of accurate and up-to-date data; mainstreamed delivery of offender learning; alliances forming at regional level; progressive development of the offender learning and correctional services workforces; and strengthened and refocused external inspection arrangements<sup>60</sup>.

In 2005 the Government published a Green Paper titled: Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment where the national strategy was outlined. “Key proposals [of this strategy, A.M.] include a stronger focus on jobs, with more relevant skills training, led by employer needs; a new ‘employability contract’ for offenders, with incentives for participation; and a ‘campus’ model for learning to ensure continuity of education from prisons into the community” (HM Government, 2005:5).

The large-scale activities described above have been carried out with an adequate budget support for offender learning, which was increased from £57 million in 2001-02 to £151 million in 2005-06 (HM Government, 2005:6). The prison education should not be regarded however as an isolated intervention. It needs to be viewed in a context of the prisoners’ life normalization and as a crucial element of a broad and long-term strategy. Life normalization extends the sentence serving and so the support of the ex-offenders does. Education provided by the LSC and National Probation Directorate (NPD) includes ex-offenders and is additionally supported by the Jobcentre Plus. “The Custody to Work initiative helped achieve 41,000 cases where offenders moved directly into employment, training or education on release, and over 66,000 into accommodation (HM Government, 2005: 15).

Despite an impressive set of achievements some serious challenges still need to be properly addressed. The quality of education regardless the progress that has been made remains a main concern of the learning providers. The external inspections showed that the failure rates are still very high. It is caused by tremendous increase of the prison population and, as a consequence, frequent movement of the offenders between the institutions. To prevent the lack of continuity in prisoners’ education the Regional Offenders Managers (ROM) were established.

This will increasingly enable the prison and probation elements of an offender’s sentence to be managed as a whole. More coherent sentence planning and offender management provide an opportunity to plan interventions to improve skills and employability in the context of other support (for example, offending behaviour or drugs programmes) (HM Government, 2005:18).

## 4.2. Lakewood Private Prison<sup>61</sup>

Eleven per cent (9,100 prisoners) of the prison population in England and Wales is in private prisons, whereas 17 per cent of prisoners in Australia and 7.2 per cent of prisoners in the United States are held in private prisons (Verkaik, 2009). In England and Wales, private prisons are inspected by HM Chief

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/offenderlearning/index.cfm?fuseaction=content.view&CategoryID=3&ContentID=3> (accessed 10 April 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.



Inspectorate of Prisons in the same way as public sector prisons. Privatisation of the prison sector began in the 1990s with the first contract to operate a prison in 1992 and the first designed, constructed, managed and financed private prison in the UK opening in 1997. Four of the private prisons are managed by G4S, the world's leading international security solutions group, operating in over 110 countries around the world. G4S is the largest security services company in the UK and the world, with approximately 585,000 employees (the largest employer on the London Stock Exchange) and a reported £1 billion turnover (G4S). G4S has a reported organic turnover growth of 9.5% in 2008, up from 7.0% in 2005 (G4S). They design, construct, manage and finance prisons in the UK, Australia and South Africa (G4S).

#### **4.2.1. Background features of the prison**

Lakewood Prison is one of eleven private prisons in England and Wales, opening its doors in the late 1990s. It is a Category B men's prison, meaning it is for "prisoners for whom the very highest conditions of security are not necessary but for whom escape must be made very difficult" (Prison Category A-D, see Table 5, p. 96). It is also a Young Offenders Institution. The prison holds around 1300 prisoners, accepting young and adult offenders from within and around the north of England and the north of Wales. The prison population breakdown by ethnicity shows that the population is largely white, with 89.6% classified as White British, White Irish, White Welsh and White Other. The total non-white population in the prison is 10.67%. The population of foreign national prisoners has been steady at around 8% for the past several years, which the prison reported includes up to 40 different nationalities. The senior manager reported a recent influx of Chinese males. The prison experiences a significant proportion of male prisoners from low socio-economic status backgrounds. Social class, according to the prison, is linked with particular negative attitudes toward education, which the prison aims to deconstruct. The largest proportion of male prisoners is within the age range of 22 to 65, with 9 prisoners (or 0.6% of the total prison population) 65 and over and 173 prisoners (or 12.9% of the total prison population) between the age of 18 and 21.

According to interview participants, the private prison regards its public sector provision as more developed than other prisons and within the private sector, is within the top three. Its strategic plan is geared more toward "lifelong learning with rehabilitation", according to the Senior manager of the prison. There is an eight-point business plan for the prison, in which objectives stated include training and development of high quality staff, secure and safe environment up to high quality standards, the development of a healthy environment with importance placed on establishing positive relationships, delivering positive and purposeful educational opportunities. According to an Ofsted inspection, the prison's education and training strategy is well integrated into the prison's strategic plan and the prison shows a lot of enthusiasm for expanding its education provision. Compared to the public sector, the private prison's provision of education "has to be of the same quality as would go on in an external college, it's Ofsted inspected so and if you're offering courses that are nationally recognised, we offer literacy, numeracy, we offer IT, they all have to be verified and externally moderated, so it has to be of an equal quality, if not a better quality than it would be if it was in a normal college". (Manager of the education department).

Ofsted inspections regularly rate the education at Lakewood Prison as “grade 2, which is good...we’re now beamed at Ofsted...certainly our external moderators who have come from the qualifications bodies, the accreditations bodies are saying “this is excellent, this is great” (Senior manager).

The prison’s education department includes a staff of 34, which is predominantly female. The team of full and part-time teachers report to the Manager of the education department, who is also female and a qualified teacher. All of the staff members are qualified teachers (Manager of the education department). Ofsted reported that the teaching at Lakewood Prison is good, with 56% of teaching graded as satisfactory, 39% as good or better and 6% graded unsatisfactory. The Manager of the education department reports the staff as being very “enthusiastic” and trained to teach a variety of courses. There are also “specialist literacy tutor[s]” and “tutors in IT are trained to teach from entry level up to level 3” (Manager of the education department). As reported by the Senior manager, “the atmosphere for education, for us certainly is, it’s a friendly atmosphere and it’s a non-threatening place, there’s very few incidents in education”. The general philosophy of the teaching staff and tutors is “what happened yesterday happened yesterday and today’s a new day”, which the staff and management credit as a leading example for the Lakewood Prison community and the positive relationship between the prisoners and education staff (Manager of education department). Ofsted inspections concur that the relationship between education staff and prisoners is “exceptionally good” and in part due to frequent interactions on the wings between staff and prisoners. Ofsted noted that these interactions helped staff to have a good knowledge of the individuals, particularly given the high turnover of prisoners.

There is different technology used within the education department, including new Smartboards and interactive Whiteboards. There are computers for prisoners’ use (although Internet access is restricted from prisoners’ use), a recording suite for the Dad’s Away course, a radio station (which promotes education) and a counselling service for prisoners. There is a library at the prison, which exceeds the library specification of “ten books per prisoner...a minimum of 13,000 books” (Senior manager). The library is staffed by one full-time librarian and two part-time assistants. Lakewood Prison offers a range of books, including leisure materials, a reference section with the mandatory legal texts, audio books, textbooks in other languages, including Welsh and dictionaries, as well as legal texts in most languages of the nationalities served in the prison (Senior manager). A recent Ofsted inspection found that the prison had made recent improvements in developing the link between the education department and the library, in part through the use of computers to assist prisoners with their education. The library has “three computers, which lads can book to work on” (Senior manager). Every wing at the prison has “two or three sessions a week and then they can book sessions particularly for things like the computers on Saturday morning” (Manager of the education department). As stated by the Senior manager, “the prison service order for library says that every prisoner has to have at least twenty minutes access to a library per week, but we exceed that quite considerably”. In an Ofsted inspection, it was reported that the access of prisoners to the library is “good”.

#### **4.2.2. Aims and objectives**

G4S’s mission statement and objective is stated on their website: “Training of prisoners plays a vital role and the prime objective is to stop re-offending by teaching them skills that will help their reintegration

into society. We provide an environment that emulates in all aspects the conditions, practices and standards offered as well as those expected by industrial employers. We give prisoners real work experience and instill the ethics required in business. We provide opportunities for prisoners to gain national vocational qualifications and these demonstrate to potential employers the commitment needed by offenders to find work<sup>62</sup>. The manager of the education department explained that every new prisoner is given an English and maths assessment when they come on the induction, “then we’ll give them a list of the courses that we offer, along with...the amount of wages they’ll get paid if they do education”. After an initial assessment of prisoner’s education, individuals develop an individualised learning plan together with a tutor in the education department. Each individual prisoner has a sentence plan “to highlight things that some prisoners ought to do to address offending behaviour or to improve their skills” (Manager of the education department). In addition to the recommended courses in the sentence plan, “it’s entirely up to the individual how much they engage” (Manager of the education department).

Courses on offer are both short and long-term. The manager of the education department explained, “If a man comes in at entry one literacy he can go up to...level three literacy, so he goes through all the entry levels and then up to level three...Again a man can come in knowing no, having no IT skills and he can go up and we do have quite a few men go out as BCS experts, so they’re again level threes...The Dads Away course is only a two week course but it is a course that keeps them in contact with their family, and they produce a CD which is edited, background noises put on it, voices are changed, so that they can send a CD home to their kids and read a story to them every night, that kind of thing. So that’s quite a nice little course but it’s only a two week course. GOALS is only a two day motivational programme but that again works really well for lads who are looking at getting parole or probation. The rest are rolling courses so they achieve at one level and then move on to another level if they choose to, if they don’t want to they can move on to a different course”. There are progression pathways that prisoners can follow. Furthermore, full-time unit-based education has recently been offered, including a range of different content areas. Prisoners are regularly assessed individually at regular intervals.

Lakewood Prison holds prisoners with sentences of varying lengths, from days to four years. This, according to the prison staff, has an impact on the extent to which prisoners with short-term sentences can engage in education. However, the prison education system aims to offer education to everyone, regardless of their length of sentence through the wing-based delivery: “even if they’re in for a couple of days they will engage in education...I had a guy I came across yesterday. He wanted to do art but he [was] out tomorrow...he actually ended up doing a level 1 health and safety course”, which he earned a health and safety certificate for (Manager of education department). The prison does not regard short-term sentences as a problem for the prison education system, as the manager of the education department stated, “if a man’s here for any length of time, we’ll direct him towards a course that suits him, so if a man is only here for a week and he hasn’t done IT before, we’ll direct him towards a low-level EDCC course or something like that if that’s what he wants to do. If he needs to brush up on his English and maths then we’ll direct him towards someone who will give him a hand with that”. The

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<sup>62</sup> [http://www.g4s.com/uk/uk-what\\_we\\_do/uk-justiceservices/uk-prisons.htm](http://www.g4s.com/uk/uk-what_we_do/uk-justiceservices/uk-prisons.htm) (accessed 8 April 2010)

overarching aim is to provide tangible benefits to prisoners, helping them to earn qualifications while at Lakewood Prison. The manager of the education department stated, the aim is to have them “going out...with a qualification that will benefit them”. However, one of the barriers to long-term education and the provision of higher education to adult prisoners, as noted by the prison staff, is the high turnover of prisoners due to short-term sentences. A recent Ofsted inspection noted that the provision of higher education should be expanded and this is an area the prison aims to improve.

One of the unique features of the provision of prison education at Lakewood Prison is the wing-based delivery of education, which has been successful in expanding access to educational opportunities. Wing-based education intends to allow for greater flexibility in providing adult education in prison. Wing-based education allows for the provision of education to extend beyond the physical structure of the education department into the residential units at the prison in order to better integrate education into the organization of the prison. It is a model developed at Lakewood, which “has been taken from here to other places” (Senior manager). The senior management representative explained, “education was always something that went on in that building over there or in those rooms, by delivering on the wings, people see it now as part and parcel of every day activity”. According to the prison management, wing-based delivery of education “engages more prisoners because they feel...more comfortable in their own surroundings that they’re moving across [and] it also raises the profile of learning and skills with the officers on the wings because they’re involved in making sure men attend...certainly in Ofsted reports, that’s been looked on very favorably”.

#### 4.2.3. Target groups

The prison reports that it aims to offer access to educational opportunities to every male prisoner at Lakewood Prison through its wing-based education. However, there are particular courses, including vocational courses, which are on offer to specifically engage certain groups or individuals:

- Young offenders, through the vocational course, Motor Vehicle, which is used as “a hook to get them to engage with learning and skills” (Senior Management).
- Individuals with learning or behavioural difficulties – Short-term literacy and numeracy courses: “we will accommodate them by engaging them for a shorter length of time, maybe twenty minutes in the morning, twenty minutes in the afternoon” (Manager of education department).
- English as an Additional Language individuals, who are targeted through two different ESOL classes, one which is lower-level and one geared more toward high ability.
- Individuals with drug or alcohol abuse, who are targeted for the Social and Life Skills.
- Fathers are generally targeted for the Dad’s Away course.

#### 4.2.4. Course content

All of the courses at Lakewood Prison have national accreditation and many of the courses are available at different levels. The Table 4 (p.92) presents the different content areas, courses and activities. All of the qualifications offered in the education department at Lakewood Prison are nationally recognised. In addition, a proportion of prisoners is working on a key skills certificate and attends an education course one day a week as day-release.

**Table 4 Content area, courses and activities in prison education**

<b>Content area</b>	<b>Courses and activities</b>
Skills for Life	Suit individual needs in reading, writing and maths
Social and Life Skills	Drug and Alcohol Awareness and other courses intended to help address offending behavior
Art	Drawing, painting and collage (eligible for National Open College Qualification)
NVQ Performing Manufacturing Operations	City and Guilds qualification
Dad's Away	Hands-on parenting skills and values
Information Technology	A range of modules for different skills and levels
Goals	Short-term self-development course
Health and Safety	Health and Safety and Food Safety qualifications

There are various incentives used to target and engage individual prisoners in education. The senior manager stated that a lot of the prisoners “are very keen [to participate in prison education as] a way of gaining money and progression through the levels of the prison”. Prisoners engaged in education are paid according to an education pay structure, which offers wages for roles as education orderlies, mentors and participating on the Dad’s Away courses, as well as ICT and Art. Incentives also include certificates of achievement. Further, “if a man achieves a certificate, he’ll get a 2 pound bonus on our education”. With the wing-based education, the prison reports that “people accept education and are willing...to embrace it because they see that they can get good qualifications” (Senior manager).

#### 4.2.5. Funding sources

The prison is funded by the Ministry of Justice by bed space and type of prisoner. Funding is determined per bed, security category and by categories of “young offenders, adults, vulnerable, etc” (Senior manager). Funding is also provided through workshops at the prison, which “are expected to be commercially viable” (Senior manager). According to the Senior manager at the prison, “in the private

sector, the education funding is part of the main contract we have with the authority and here that pays for 30,000 hours of teacher contact from the prison". This is "probably around £1 million a year" (Senior manager). In addition, "we can put in bids to various local charities who will give us money for equipment for specific courses. I'm thinking the Co-op gave us money for an art project, we've got some money for our Dad's Away courses, the family learning course, from the local children's centre...they're not to fund the actual course, they're to fund specific resources" (Manager of the education department). Differing from the public sector prisons "in terms of education are all provided by external providers, colleges, training companies, and they are all funded by the LSC under what is called OLAS, Offenders' Learning and Skills Service...local FE colleges or colleges will have put in bids to do work in certain regions" (Senior manager). This is different from the private prison, as it employs teachers directly (Senior manager).

No specific information could be gathered on the profit margins of Lakewood Prison, as participants refused to provide information. Interview participants felt that financial information related to the profit of the prison was above their role in the prison and confidential information. The senior manager stated that regardless, "making a profit actually doesn't impinge on the learning and skills side of things". The manager of the education department stated, "I find the prison more than obliging in everything we've wanted to do. So financially, there's no constraints but I think they're certainly amenable to propositions and resources, we've got some great resources and they do promote education, so I don't think whether they make a profit actually impinges on education".

#### **4.2.6. History and background of the model**

The education department at Lakewood Prison opened shortly after the prison opened its doors in the late 1990s. The manager of the education department stated, "when we first opened, we offered mainly basic skills, English, maths, IT, and art, then cookery arrived probably about nine months later...and it's changed immensely. We used to do things like healthy living and we've now moved on, we do drug awareness, we do alcohol awareness". In addition, the prison has regularly adapted to government initiatives. For example, the senior manager stated, "we also now offer a different range of courses with the changing nature of what the government expects from us, we've gone with trying to get prisoners into a situation where they're still on contact with what's going on on the outside, so that they're still in contact with families". The Dad's Away course is a fairly recent development, and has been successful in helping fathers learn parenting skills and engage directly with their children by "reading a book to them every night" on CD (senior manager).

#### **4.2.7. Number of participants**

A recent Ofsted inspection reported that the prison had up to 85% of its population engaged in education and related learning and work activities. A senior manager at Lakewood Prison stated that "everyone has access to education...there's over 600 men broadly engaging with education on a daily basis". Each prisoner is given an initial assessment prior to engaging in prison education. According to prison data, in 2008, the prison completed "4,000 initial assessments, out of those we would expect 3,000 of them at least to have engaged with education, if not more, probably 3,500" (senior manager). The manager of the education department stated, "the way the prison's set up and the system's set up, they all engage". Prisoners, at a minimum engage in fifteen hours of classes per week and at a

maximum, engage in 31.5 hours a week. Prisoners age 65 and older are not required to engage in education or work, as they receive a retirement wage, “although you do tend to find that they’re very keen to engage in things like IT and to get qualifications” (Manager of education department). Foreign nationals also often engage in education at Lakewood Prison, particularly in IT and Art, as reported by both interview participants.

Participants did not perceive any discipline problems among the individuals engaged in prison education. As stated by the tutor, “discipline problems in class no, if a man has a problem then we have an officer who will escort him out of the class but generally our staff will take quite a long time to talk to a man and try and work out what the problem is before they get to that stage. And because of the opportunities on the wing the men elect to do what they’re doing so there shouldn’t be a discipline problem. Attending class sometimes they can’t get out of bed, in which case they lose their wages for that morning and potentially start, it gets noted in their file that they’ve not attended, which is a bit like not turning up for work, you’d expect there to be some sort of problem if you didn’t turn up for work, so eventually if you do it sufficiently the manager on the wing will have a word”. As most of the staff in education are women, the manager of the education department stated that “as for women working with the men, the men tend to be more protective, there’s the odd, I mean you get the odd comment, anybody gets the odd, you know the same as you would anywhere else, you get the odd comment, but the men tend to be, the learners tend to be more protective of the women because they’re less, in a way they’re less threatened because it’s easier to sort of like challenge a man than it is to challenge a woman, and the rest of the men would find it difficult if they saw a man challenging a woman. And that’s been my experience over ten years that it’s far easier for a woman to basically ask a man to do something and for him to do it than it is for a man to ask a man to do something. But there is a culture of hang on that’s a woman there, you don’t say that to a woman as well. And I think outside the jail is somebody swears in front of me I get an apology, because I’m a woman, not because it’s a jail but because I’m a woman. If they swore in front of Tom they probably wouldn’t worry, I’d apologize but it’s true, oh sorry Miss I didn’t see you were there”.

#### **4.2.8. Location**

Lakewood Prison is located in the North West England, in a city with a population of approximately 450,000. The area has experienced high rates of deprivation, as a result of chronic unemployment and poverty. It is the most deprived local authority in England, with 42% of its population classed as income deprived and 57% employment deprived (IMD, 2007). The majority of residents (92%) are White British, which is higher than the national average (88.7%). The unemployment rate is roughly 3% higher in the area than the national average, as data from 2007 show. The level of educational attainment is generally low. There are significantly higher crime rates for the region compared to other regions in England. Anti-social behaviour is prevalent as many young people are pressured to join gangs and take drugs.

#### **4.2.9. Perceived strength and weaknesses**

The wing-based delivery of education in and of itself has a number of perceived strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths is the flexibility it allows individuals in terms of their access to education. It has been successful in allowing vulnerable prisoners access to education. The wing-based education “is flexible and adaptable...most of our tutors on the wing will teach literacy and numeracy

and drug awareness and alcohol awareness up to level 2" (Manager of the education department). It has also promoted education within the prison and officers on each of the wings, and increased engagement of prisoners, due to prisoners' likelihood to feel comfortable. The manager of the education department stated, "the acceptance of the lads that education is part and parcel of life is facilitated by wing education". Another perceived strength of the prison education service offered at Lakewood Prison, which is linked with wing-based delivery, is the prisoner peer mentoring scheme, a one-to-one mentoring service. To be a peer mentor, "you've got to be at least working towards a level two qualification or at a level two qualification, apply for it, you've got to pass a security thing to say that you're eligible to work with other men" (Manager of education department). This has been successful in providing men support networks within their residential wing.

Another perceived strength, from the perspective of the prison staff is the flexibility of courses on offer, teaching, and the organisation of the education department. Education in Lakewood Prison is organised so that each wing of the prison has its own courses, allowing for education to be better integrated into the life of the prison and all prisoners have greater access to educational opportunities. One of the wings is specifically for vulnerable prisoners, who have the same access to education as other prisoners through the education department directly on their wing. Whereas "a lot of prisons do have specific registers for specific courses", prisoners at Lakewood Prison have "open access, they can do a course and finish it fairly easily because our staff will work with them until it is finished" (Manager of the education department).

Every "learner has an individual learning plan" and helped with a member of staff or tutor to enroll in courses and activities to help improve their skills (Manager of education department). The education staff is seen as one of the strengths of the prison education system. They are referred to as "encouragers" and "their attitude really is flexible and very much positive and I think you have to be positive because a lot of the lads are at the stage like "I said I can't do it, I don't want to do it" and that has to start right at the beginning, it has to start with me on induction...[with] emphasis that [they] can develop all sorts of skills" (Manager of the education department). The interview participants regard the relationship between prisoners and the staff to be positive, which is confirmed by Ofsted inspections. The primary "philosophy is about mutual respect" and prisoners often know staff by their first names and use them regularly, which is also confirmed in recent Ofsted inspections. A Senior manager stated, "all staff wear name badges so a prisoner know who he's talking to and what their function is, so it's very open and it's about respect". In addition, the guards refer to prisoners by the title 'Mr' and guards do not carry batons. The staff uniform is also regarded as a strength. Lakewood Prison is "one of the few prisons where the education staff wears uniform" (Manager of the education department). They perceive this to have an important positive impact on prisoner-staff relations. Participants perceived that one of the benefits and strengths of the prison was being in the private sector. As stated by one of the participants, "we benefit because the buildings are new and the area, there's more space, but it's about the culture of the company and the establishments, I think that's where I would say they have the edge, having been in lots of public sector prisons, I think that's where we have the edge" (Senior manager).



There are a number of weaknesses. Although “wing-based education facilitates access, it’s not always the best environment because there will be other people there doing other things...there’s limited space on a wing because when the wings were originally built, they were built as accommodation wings, so there’s limited space for resources” (Manager of the education department). However, the staff feel that the strengths of increasing access to education that wing-based delivery allows far outweighs the weaknesses related to lack of space and resources. The length of sentences for prisoners also has an impact on the educational opportunities available. The manager of the education department explained, “If [a prisoner] wanted to do track works it’s a ten week course so he can’t do a ten week course in a week. If he wanted to do Goals course, it’s so popular even though it’s only a two day course, he’d go to the bottom of a waiting list. So there’s the issue of the waiting list for men who are on short term sentences and there’s the issue of length of the course. So if he wanted to do, I mean I think the plumbing and the vocational courses, they have to by their nature last a minimum of twenty weeks. So in that way he’s restricted in the sense that he couldn’t do it because he wouldn’t be here for long enough”. There is a lack of continuity between prisons, which is difficult for prisoners with long-term sentences who leave Lakewood Prison to enter another prison. Although their records go with them, there are possibilities that progression in education will be lost.

#### **4.2.10. Priority needs for expansion of the model**

There are a number of priority needs for expansion of prison education, particularly wing-based education:

- The prison needs to expand and further develop the links between the library and the education department, as highlighted in the recent Ofsted report.
- There is a need for greater expansion of higher education provision at Lakewood Prison. This is an area that the prison would like to make improvements, following the feedback from an Ofsted inspection. They cite the main barrier to enhanced provision as short-term sentences.
- The prison is prioritizing accreditation of activities according to recent government initiatives. The Senior manager stated that the prison, similar to public and private prisons nationally, would like to expand the accreditation of “activities that are going on in workshops and around the prison, a big push to make sure men get their first level 2 which is just in line with government policy for the rest of the population”.

#### **4.2.11. Methods of feedback and evaluation**

There are both formal and informal methods of feedback and evaluation at Lakewood Prison. Lakewood Prison’s education department regularly carries out its own needs assessments to pinpoint particular weaknesses and areas of improvement (Ofsted). Teaching methods are regularly monitored through observations and “SPOC analysis, SPOC is Student Perception of Course, so basically it’s a handout that we give out on a regular basis to see what learners think of a particular course they’re on” (Manager of the education department). The manager of the education department regularly observes staff and does a formal observation “at least twice a year” (Manager of the education department). Classrooms and spaces for learning activities are open (“we’re never ashamed for anybody to walk in on a class” and “we

take people around on a regular basis [for visits and tours]”). The prison’s education and library provision is regularly inspected by Ofsted, including perspectives of prisoners. According to a recent Ofsted inspection, over 50% of prisoners believed their education at Lakewood Avenue would help them on release. This is higher than the benchmark of 31%.

#### **4.2.12. Perceptions regarding the impact of recession on this model**

The Senior manager and the manager of the education department believe that the prison sector will be affected by the recession in a number of ways. First, they believe it will “increase the numbers of adults in prison” (Manager of the education department). As unemployment rises in the recession in an already deprived area that has faced chronic unemployment and a cycle of deprivation and poverty, staff at the prison expects to see the numbers of prisoners rise. During a recession, it is also reported to be more difficult to successfully integrate former prisoners into the job market, which may have an impact on the number of re-offenders (Daddow, 2009). Further, the number of individuals receiving sentences including prison time has rapidly increased throughout the past decade in England and Wales. In 2004, the prison system in England and Wales hit a record of roughly 75,000 individuals in prison (Morris, 2004). Scholars, such as Millie, Jacobson and Hough (2003) argue that the prison population in England and Wales has also risen so rapidly due to the increasingly punitive climate of harsher sentences and the likelihood of custodial sentences. Therefore, with harsher sentences and the likelihood of prison time, the numbers are likely to continue to grow. As far as funding for adult education, it is less likely to have an impact on the delivery of education at the prison: “our budgets are contractually agreed [and] any significant reduction that the authority wanted to make would involve protracted discussions” (Senior manager).

### **4.3. Buxtowne State Prison<sup>63</sup>**

Britain has one of the highest incarceration rates in Western Europe, jailing roughly 50% more of its people per head than France, Germany or Italy. There are 139 prisons in England and Wales, with 19 new prisons constructed since 1995. According to March 2009 statistics, there are over 82,816 prisoners in Her Majesty’s Prison Service, of which 78,500 are male. According to a BBC (2008) report, the prison system in England and Wales subscribed beyond its operational capacity, with increasing pressure.

#### **4.3.1. Background features of the prison**

There are four categories of prisoners in England and Wales, as illustrated in Table 5 (p.98). Buxtowne Prison is a Category A men’s prison, which is the highest security rating. The education system in the prison is provided (organized and managed) by a local city college.

At the prison, there is a “separate wing for education [and] a training unit over in the work area as well” (Senior manager). The prison’s education department has a staff of over 40 individuals, with roughly 10 individuals in the prison “who are involved in education and training as well” (Senior manager). A number of the staff members, including the Head of Learning and Skills are long-standing, with over 20 years of service at Buxtowne. The majority of staff in education are female and roughly around the average age of 50 (Tutor). There are also retired individuals from the college who provide cover for

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<sup>63</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

courses at the prison (Tutor). As stated by a tutor, “our tutors I think are really experienced at motivating. But I suppose the only thing, the one thing that you can, you have to guard against is making sure that you treat them as adults and almost as, well equals really because they won’t tolerate you, you know if, sometimes we have had people who have worked in schools and then suddenly come into an environment like this and they do find that difficult because you know you cannot talk down to them or be you know, not treat them as equals” (Tutor).

**Table 5 Category of prisoners**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Type of prisoner</b>
Category A	A prisoner whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public, police or the security of the state
Category B	Prisoners for whom the very highest conditions of security are not necessary but for whom escape must be made very difficult
Category C	Prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions but who will not have the will or resource to make a determined escape attempt
Category D	Those who can be reasonably trusted to serve their sentence in open conditions

Each staff member in education has a teaching qualification, and follows the rules of appointment of the local college. All education staff is encouraged to utilize student-centered approaches to learning: “at the beginning people will look at learning styles and see what style fits that learner” (senior manager). The prison “encourages group teaching in the classroom” although it is difficult with “people starting a course almost every day of the week and so it is quite difficult to do group teaching but it is encouraged in every instance, because people working individually can lose their motivation unless they are encouraged to take part in other things as well” (senior manger).

There is different technology used within the education department, including access to IT in the classrooms and interactive Whiteboards. Access to the Internet is prohibited. The education department “is situated on one of the wings in the main prison, so it’s easy walking distance for all prisoners,” with a limited number of courses available on the wings (senior manager). There is a library at the prison, which includes roughly 17,300 books (senior manager). There is a wide range of books on offer, including “a wide range of fiction, quite a lot of men’s interest, some reference books...we have a reasonable budget for the library” (senior manager). The library includes “books in 33 other languages” and non-book resources, such as “music CDs, spoken word CDs, CD ROMs, large print books” (senior manager). From the perspective of the senior manager, prisoners’ access to the library “is reasonable under the circumstances because everybody has to be escorted everywhere here, so every wing gets at

least one visit a week. People on education have a set time when they can go to the library, so everybody has the opportunity to go, they possible don't get as much time as they would like to spend there" (senior manager).

#### 4.3.2. Aims and objectives

The prison has a vision statement, although it is in the process of rewriting it with a new governor in place (senior manager). The strategic plans for the prison do not "refer to lifelong learning but it will refer to reducing reoffending" (senior manager). The goals behind the education service in the prison include "striving to improve the individual so that they become more employable, or sometimes that's not realistic but at least make them be a better members of society" (Tutor). The tutor went on to state, "I do think that anybody who attends education has certainly more of a chance of meeting those particular aims of rehabilitation than if they don't [engage]". Therefore, the main aim is to provide education to as many individuals in prison as possible and to provide a range of different educational opportunities to meet the needs of male prisoners. With the provider of education being the local college, the staff look at the prison education "as a satellite of the main college, we mirror what they deliver and the lads here have the same opportunities as they would if they were outside and going to college, because all of our courses are accredited" (Tutor). The tutor further mentioned that for the education staff in the prison, "they're learners, they're not prisoners".

One of the central objectives is to maximize the number of individual prisoners who are in at least part-time education. The prison aims to "put people on not more than half-time education because that maximizes the number of people who can attend, because obviously if we can only take 350 we're only taking a quarter of the population. Some of the courses are full-time, the vocational training courses are all full-time because they're quite long courses, but other courses we try and just take people half-time so more people can attend" (Senior manager). Every individual will start "with an individual learning plan", which includes information about their learning style, any learning difficulties and their aims and goals (senior manager). The Senior manager gave the example of how they aim to match different educational opportunities to the needs and aspirations of the individual through an individual learning plan: "if somebody was going out in three years and wanted to be a bricklayer then we would look at trying to plan what that a person would do over the three year period. Somebody who wanted to do a bricklaying courses would need a certain level of literacy and numeracy, that might be something we would concentrate on first. And then if somebody did a bricklaying course it might be that they would move and do some IT if they were thinking of setting up their own business. So we try to look at progression". Given that the prison is a high security, Category A prison, it balances educational opportunities against the security risks involved. Every individual "goes through an individual risk assessment, so they'll apply for something and then there'll be a risk assessment" (senior manager). For education, "if there are certain crimes which might preclude somebody from actually taking part in an IT course...and there are some security levels where people are not allowed access to IT" (senior manager).

Prison staff highlighted the importance of literacy skills for health and safety concerns: "from a literacy point of view...if people want to go into a workshop, they need to be able to read a health and safety notice or they need to know about fire evacuation or they might need to be able to follow simple instructions" (Senior manager). The other major objective is rehabilitation in order to break the cycle of

reoffending. For the prison, the objective is to rehabilitate individuals to successfully re-enter society and the labour market. In order to help individuals gain employment, the prison aims to help improve literacy and numeracy skills, as well as other skill and personal areas in prisoner's lives (senior manager).

#### 4.3.3. Target groups

There are a range of courses offered at the prison, including Skills for Life, Information Technology (IT), English language classes, literacy and numeracy courses, life skills and parenting. The majority of classes take place in the education department, a separate unit in the prison. There are a few wing-based courses on offer to prisoners, who either work full-time at the prison or are unable to attend. Courses are offered "either full time or part time...in any one day, we will have about 25 and 30 classes running" (senior manager).

Particular courses are targeted specifically to certain groups or individuals, such as:

- Individuals with low levels of literacy and numeracy: Targeted through Skills for Life programme.
- Illiteracy: Non-readers are targeted through Skills for Life course "for non-readers, then we have a progression route up to Skills for Life [level] 2 and then Key Skills" (senior manager).
- Individuals with problems with their families/parenting skills for fathers: Targeted through Social and Life Skills programmes.
- Individuals with a history of domestic violence are targeted to enroll in healthy relationships program.
- Sex offenders enroll in sex offender treatment programmes and thinking skills.
- Prisoners on life sentences: Targeted through progression courses and flexible learning class "where people can actually show progress in their subject areas" (senior manager)
- English as an Additional Language individuals are targeted through two different ESOL classes.
- Individuals with drug or alcohol abuse issues: Targeted through Social and Life Skills programmes and specific classes dealing with alcohol and drug abuse. The psychology department offers a number of different courses, including flexible and short-term rehabilitation for drug abuse. Prisoners are targeted for this following an individual assessment with a professional. There is also a course "that deals with alcohol and anger issues" (senior manager).
- Individuals who are difficult to engage in education: "If people aren't particularly interested in going to a class, then we provide outreach support in the workshop" (senior manager).
- Young white British males, who are most reluctant to engage, are targeted through a Learn Direct workshop: "we are hoping because that will be in the work area that people will feel that that has more kudos and people who perhaps wouldn't attend a normal formal class situation would attend and work on their own on perhaps a distance learning programme" (senior manager).

The prison provides "enrichment activities, we have music projects, we have theatre projects, anything where we, and we find that they are very successful in getting the men engaged and then you know they want to do something else" (Tutor).

There are also courses specifically geared towards employment outside the prison. The senior manager stated, “we run quite a lot of IT courses because IT is related to employment outside...we do several [vocational training] courses in bricklaying, painting and decorating, plastering and industrial cleaning, so those are our employment-related courses”. Individuals earn nationally recognised qualifications and the courses are linked with employment opportunities. Most courses offer qualifications. Apart from national qualifications, the prison offers equal pay for education as work, with “bonuses for achieving accreditation” (Senior manager).

At the prison, counseling is provided through the chaplaincy, but is fairly limited. Individuals seeking counseling are required to ask for this service, or in some cases, “it is people who have probably come to the attention of the chaplains on their visits around the wings, or it might be people who are referred through [the] big listener group” (Senior manager). It is a small service. The counselors are trained by the Samaritans. The prison also runs a specific mentoring scheme to assist people “who do not want to attend education” with their reading” (Senior manager). In this scheme, “one teacher is responsible for prisoner mentors and they go through a structured reading scheme on the wings...it’s a very structures reading scheme, and it has to be done every day for something like 20 minutes to half an hour, so somebody is supposed to sit down with their mentee every day and just go through a section of the book each day” (Senior manger). This form of peer mentoring is “done on a more formal basis, mentors are identified on all of the wings or within classes and they then will be given mentees who they will help with reading...[the] scheme has provided incredibly successful in getting people started to read. And it only works if it’s done on a regular basis which is why the mentors are so important because if they are on the same wing, in an evening, they can do half an hour [of reading]” (Tutor). This has been highly successful in engaging individuals who are reluctant to engage in literacy or other education classes and in getting individuals to work together: “it encourages people who possibly don’t want to [engage]. We get a lot of people who have literacy problems, who don’t want to really expose themselves in a classroom situation, so we have people who really have the serious problems who don’t really want to attend, so we have to think of other ways of actually improving their literacy while they’re here” (Senior manager). In addition, the prison staff report that informal peer mentoring often occurs inside and outside the classroom (Tutor).

#### 4.3.4. Funding

The funding for the prison “comes from the LSC now and the LSC have much more of a role in deciding who does what and when and who gets the funding and how the funding is going to be organized” (Senior manager). This applies to the funding of education at the prison, as “the LSC will provide the funding for education in all public sector prisons and any new private prisons that come on stream...every prison in England, every new prison will have education provided by the LSC” (Senior manager). The Senior manager stated, “when the LSC took over four years ago, they took over historical funding, so you will find that a prison like Buxtowne has a fairly low number of hours compared with another big local prison, just because the funding changed several years ago and nobody ever looked to see whether it suited the needs of the prisoners. So you will find huge discrepancies in the amount of funding and the amount of education different prisons provide for no particular reason”. In this case study, prison staff was unable to provide information regarding the percentage of the overall prison

budget that goes to education or rehabilitation services. Although there are not opportunities to expand education, “there is an opportunity to move funding around from August 2010 so it might be that the historical funding will change from them and they will look at what is needed in which establishment and move the funding around accordingly” (Senior manager).

#### **4.3.5. History and background of the model**

The prison opened its doors in mid-19th century. Historically, the prison held both female and male prisoners. By the mid-20th century, it became an all male prison. In recent years, the prison has faced significant change. In the 1990s, the prison was reconstructed and the management of the prison was determined to be best put out to tender. During the past two tenders, the prison “actually won the bid” and the prison remained public (Senior manager). This means that although Buxtowne Prison is a state prison, it is market-tested. The prison goes “through the market-test procedure...and private companies are able to bid on us...whoever wins the bid actually gets to run the prison...there is an invitation to tender, people express interest, some people go through to the next round and everybody puts in a bid to try and better another company, but to use it at a more economical level” (Senior manager). As a state prison that is market-tested, there is a chance every few years “that they might move from public to private or the other way around” (Senior manager).

The impetus for establishing education in the prison “came from the chaplaincy”, who were the first organisers of classes at the prison, due to the need to even just do something simple like read the Bible” (Senior manager). Education continued to be provided on an informal, unofficial basis with the first tutor organiser starting roughly 40-50 years ago (Senior manager). From the Senior manager’s perspective, education “has progressed, it’s much more structured. We’re looking at prisoners’ needs not just what they want to do, we’re trying to look at what people actually should be doing. Classes used to be sort of more recreational and so there used to be all sorts of classes just based on what tutors felt like doing or what prisoners felt like doing. Whereas now we do a needs analysis every year, we look at what’s available in the outside world in terms of employment, we try and focus on things that prisoners need to do”.

The courses on offer and their focus have changed. For example, there used to be more artistic and musical expression courses on offer. Prison staff stated that “there has been a big reduction in the support for those programs since there was some bad publicity last year...after that, we had a list of inappropriate activities so we have got to be very careful to justify everything in terms of the educational experience now” (Senior manager). There are two art, drama or music projects a year, “but we’ll try to relate them to the wider key skills, so we’ll do some accreditation on wider key skills through those projects” (Senior manager).

#### **4.3.6. Number of participants**

There are around 1200 prisoners in Buxtowne Prison. The age breakdown and the number of prisoners in each range is: 5 are under 21, 237 are 21 and over, 304 are over 25, 388 are over 30, 243 are over 40 and 45 are 60 and over. The majority are between the ages of 21 and 60, with a small proportion under 21 and over 60. At Buxtowne, 168 prisoners (or 13.8% of the total prison population) are foreign nationals. The Table 6 (p.103) provides information related to ethnicity of prisoners.



There are 23 individuals at the prison, who “we would consider totally non-English speaking...it varies according to the level of English that people speak...it’s difficult to get a definite figure on how many people struggle with their English” (Senior manager). For English language needs and learning difficulties, the prison aims to target these issues when individuals first come into the prison. When individuals first enter prison, they come “on the induction wing and they will do a screening test at that stage” (Senior manager). The screening test is for “literacy, numeracy, it’s to look for people whose English is not good and check for people with learning difficulties. And it’s also so that we can actually look at what activity would suit that person while they’re in the prison” (Senior manager).

**Table 6 Ethnicity of prisoners**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Numbers of prisoners</b>
Asian or Asian British Indian	21
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	44
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	2
Asian or Asian British Other	49
British Caribbean	36
Black or Black British African	31
Black or Black British Other	56
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	11
Mixed White and Black African	4
Mixed White and Asian	2
Other Mixed Background	16
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group Chinese	8
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	10
White	826
White Irish	17
White Other Background	35
Not Stated	1

As far as educational background of prisoners, the tutor stated, “we are finding that now more and more of the learners that we see in education are already at E3 level and level 1. So that you know previously and always there is the perception that there is a huge proportion of people who have poor



literacy skills, well there is a proportion obviously but we have found whether it's because they have come through the system through you know Youth Offender Institution or even juvenile provision, that most of them have reached a reasonable level before they get here".

Although difficult to accurately assess, the senior manager believed that "about 350 [prisoners] at any one time" are in education and "between about 1200 and 1500 a year" are engaged in education. It is difficult to assess as "people will stay from anything between a day and the whole year during that time". The minimum hours per week of classes that an individual can participate in are 2.5 and the maximum is 32 hours (senior manager). The prison staff discussed the different target groups who seem more difficult to engage. Without education and vocational training being wing-based, "some prisoners aren't able to access all the different opportunities, so on the vocational training wing, we have a lot of older prisoners and because the classes aren't based on the wing, they can't walk to the workshop, they will tend to go to class" (Senior manager). In addition, it is "people on longer sentences [who] would see the benefit of education more than those on short sentences" (Senior manager). With the individuals serving lifetime sentences, "the flexible learning unit comes into its own because that is where they can sample a lot of different unitized [courses], sociology, psychology, law, you name it. They can do it and it gives them a taster, so a lot of them move on, they really become very engaged and they are the ones who would eventually end up doing OU" (Tutor).

The prison perceives foreign nationals to be "much keener" about engaging in education (Senior manager). Although it is difficult to place the proportion of foreign nationals in employment when they leave the prison, they "do attend classes more often and are regular attendees" (Senior manager). The tutor interviewed believed that the "ESOL students are very engaged" (Tutor). The prison faces a challenge in engaging its young, white British prison population: "one of our big things is to persuade white younger males to take part in the education programme" (Senior manager). They believe that young white British males are more reluctant as they likely had "school experience [that] was more recent and they didn't have a good experience in school, they didn't go" (Senior manager). Comparing younger and older prisoners: "I think as people mature they suddenly realize the importance [of education], when people have children they decide that that's the time they want to actually learn. I think perhaps younger people are less confident and don't want to expose themselves in a groups situation" (Senior manager). One of the tutors at the prison believes the greatest proportion in education are between 25 and 35 years of age, "but we have people as old as 80 in the vocational training wing, so there's a wide variation" (Tutor).

#### 4.3.7. Location

Buxtowne Prison is located in the North West England, in a city with a population of approximately 400,000. The area has experienced high rates of deprivation, as a result of chronic unemployment and poverty. The unemployment rate in both the city and the region is considerably higher than the national average (ONS, 2007). The local authority is in the top ten most deprived in England according to the Economic Deprivation Index (2008) average rank for 1999-2005, and is among the local authorities most consistently placed in the top ten most deprived local authorities. Although the majority (roughly 80%) of the current residents are White (White British, White Irish, White Other), this has steadily decreased over the past decade with a growing proportion of ethnic minority residents. According to the 2001

census, the white population has decreased by approximately 10% over the past ten years, whereas the ethnic minority population has increased by around 45%. The level of educational attainment is generally low. There are significantly higher crime rates for the region compared to other regions in England. Anti-social behavior is prevalent as many young people are pressured to join gangs and take drugs.

#### 4.3.8. Perceived strengths and weaknesses

For a prison, such as Buxtowne, which serves as a high security prison with a proportion of prisoners with long or lifetime sentences, the education provided helps to break down the sentence for the individual and provides a focus, in term providing hope: “education helps to keep people focused, so you might have somebody who has got a very long sentence who might be able to work on their education in small bytes, so instead of saying I’m going to do a minimum of 14 years, they could be looking at completing a literacy courses now and they might aim to do a GCSE [Graduate Certificate of Secondary Education] and then possible an OU [Open University] course, it helps to break down the sentence into more manageable chunks and so it gives somebody some sort of hope really, some sort of focus on what they can actually do while they’re in prison” (Senior manager). One of the strengths of education from the prison’s point of view is that education “provides a lot of purposeful activity hours...somebody who is engaged and perhaps working on their own in the evening and sees some hope for the future is more likely to be better behaved” (senior manager).

The prison aims to link its education with employment and provide individuals with a chance to develop short and long-term aspirations for their future education and employment, which the prison perceives as a major strength. The Senior manager stated that education “does help to get people jobs outside and it does help people to actually continue their education. We have a lot of people who have never worked but people might develop an interest while they’re in here and possibly follow it up when they go out”. The individual learning plans are designed in consultation with the prisoner to meet their learning needs and goals. The individual learning plan is set up “as soon as somebody engages in education and that will be based on their screening results...we’ll be looking at their long term learning goals and their short term learning goals (senior manager). The prison is “proud of the fact that people can come in here at possibly pre-entry and there is a progression right the way up to OU [higher education]” (Tutor). According to an Ofsted inspection report, the prison has been successful in providing education and work for the majority of its prison population.

The prison offers flexible learning courses “whereby prisoners are supported with open learning courses...we’ll have 15 people all working possibly on different courses or working by themselves. [For] people who run out of options, there will then be referred to a distance learning so we can buy in a correspondence courses or even go to the OU” (senior manager). Although prisoners “don’t have access to IT on the wings for learning purposes, somebody who was doing an OU course would have to either do the IT element in the classroom or in the library” (senior manager). One of the weaknesses here is “the lack of the use of the Internet because a lot of courses now rely on the use of the internet, particularly OU courses, so I know that’s something that the OU are addressing but everybody becomes more reliant on the Internet and prisoners do not have access to it here” (senior manager). As the tutor stated, “our progression routes particularly within the flexible learning is very good practice...we’ve got

a very good flexible learning department, they've all got their own laptops, if you walk in there you can hear a pin drop...and the flexible learning coordinator is in close liaison with her OU and distance learning coordinator who used to work for the OU and it gets fantastic results" (Tutor).

Another perceived strength is a recent project, in which the education staff "has introduced into all the workshops the wider key skills. This means that men who will not engage necessarily with education, don't want to know, they have a chance to gain accreditation because it is embedded in the workshop that they're working in, they do working with others, improving on learning and performance and problem-solving...we provide outreach for key skills, ordinary key skills and basic skills, but this wider key skills is done in blocks of three weeks, three sessions a week and the men have to do various activities related to their work, but show that they can work with others or they can problem solve. We have found that it means an awful lot to the men to get, some of them have never ever achieve anything and aren't willing to come to education, maybe their literacy skills are poor but you cannot force them to come if it's not part of their sentence plan. Whereas going into a workshop and doing the wider key skills gives them an opportunity to gain and from that you know sometimes it just takes off" (Tutor).

Aside from flexible learning and progression routes, the prison staff perceives their library system and the access provided to the library to be very positive. This is in part due to having a library officer appointed, "who brings the prisoners from the wings, a dedicated library officer which makes all the difference that I think is good practice. In the past, when I used to work in the library, if there was a shortage of staff, the first thing that would be taken was the detail to take men to the library. And now all the wings get regular visits and also on education, every class gets half an hour a week. Each class is timetabled a particular slot and so I think the access certainly here is really good" (Tutor).

The structure of the building is a perceived weakness of the prison in terms of presenting an obstacle to learning: "it's a very old prison and the rooms aren't purpose built, so we'll have small classrooms or classrooms that are strange shapes...in some ways there are some physical obstacles to learning" (Senior manager). The prison staff also perceived security and the current health and safety regulations as an obstacle. She stated, "health and safety is very big on everybody's agenda, isn't it? So obviously we want to make sure everybody's safe, but I suppose in a lot of cases, it can be very restrictive. In general, I would say that it doesn't really affect the education and training that we offer though" (Senior manager). Providing access to education for all prisoners and ensuring that individuals gain long-term benefits of education is difficult. Prison staff highlighted the disproportionate interest in educational opportunities among individuals, with the young, white British male prisoners the most difficult to engage, although they are currently attempting to provide different work-based opportunities as a "hook" into education.

One of the biggest difficulties in providing long-term education plans for prisoners, as highlighted by the two staff members during their interviews is "the churn", the process of repeat offenders and the revolving door for prisoners moving in and out of the prison service. This means that it is difficult for the staff to assess how many prisoners receive education annually. The Senior manager stated, "we have quite a high churn ratio here and we have people who sometimes don't attend" education. Another challenge is that the prison, being a local prison, receives "people at the beginning of their sentence

normally and you don't know how long someone is going to stay, so you might think someone is going to stay for six months and they stay for six days or you might expect them to stay for a very short period and they stay for a long time. So you aren't working to any sort of particular end date" (Senior manager).

Another challenge for the prison is ensuring on a daily basis that there is sufficient education staff to cover classes, given that this is a high security prison. The tutor stated, "the day to day difficulty for me is making sure that I have staff to cover the contract. We have almost 100% compliance but that's really difficult at times, simply because we are not like any other prison that we can, you know within three weeks get somebody cleared to work here, it can take up to six months to get clearance...so if a member of staff leaves for whatever reason it's not easy for us to replace them, so we are constantly using our pool or cover staff until we get more people".

In addition, some of the weaknesses relate to the lack of structured, formal assessments for prisoners' individual needs. There is no structured assessment for prisoners for whom English is an Additional Language. The process is one in which prisoners self-identify their level of English and the prison finds it difficult to have an accurate account of which prisoners require ESOL training or help with literacy. Moreover, prisoners are "asked on reception if they have any learning difficulties and they get asked again as part of the induction...we're not actually able to screen everybody for learning difficulties, so we're having to go on what people tell us at the moment" (Senior manager). In terms of personal support, there is "some counseling available, I don't think it's too well developed, through the chaplaincy...with the chaplaincy, they have to ask for the support and they are assessed and then there is quite a long waiting list" (Senior manager).

#### **4.3.9. Priority needs for expansion of the model**

There are a number of priority needs for expansion of prison education. The Senior manager stated, "I would try and make education a core element of the whole regime...a lot of activities are numbers based, so it's very important for people to get the right number of people to a particular place and not always get the right person to the right place". Providing firm options for progression in education is another priority need for the prison. With the different lengths of sentences, sometimes unknown to the prison staff, the prison believes it "needs to be smarter about how we can work with other prisons so that if somebody starts a course here we can actually, somebody can actually carry on or do something similar in another prison, that's something that we need to address really in different geographical areas" (Senior manager). Although it is not planned for the future, the prison staff reflected on the need to expand the formal mentor scheme in reading to offer qualifications for mentors (Tutor).

#### **4.3.10. Methods of feedback and evaluation**

There are both formal and informal methods of feedback and evaluation at the prison. The prison is Ofsted inspected, which is a regular formal evaluation. Part of the formal evaluation is to ensure that tutors are using methods of actively involving the learner in lessons, as well as inspect various other aspects of the provision of education. In addition, there are regular "teaching and learning observations" done by managers in each area (Senior manager). There are also spot checks "whereby I might walk around and just see what people are doing" (Senior manager). There are both internal and external evaluations of education at the prison. The tutor stated, "we do lesson observations and annual reviews,

supervisions and they are moderated by the college, we have a schedule for the lesson observations and then we send them to college who moderate what we've done and so it's monitored both internally and externally".

#### **4.3.11. Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model**

Further, the number of individuals receiving sentences including prison time has rapidly increased throughout the past decade in England and Wales. In 2004, the prison system in England and Wales hit a record of roughly 75,000 individuals in prison (Morris, 2004). Scholars, such as Millie, Jacobson and Hough (2003) argue that the prison population in England and Wales has also risen so rapidly due to the increasingly punitive climate of harsher sentences and the likelihood of custodial sentences. Therefore, with harsher sentences and the likelihood of increased prison time, the numbers are likely to continue to grow.

The Senior manager and the manager of the education department believe that the prison sector will be affected by the recession in a number of ways. During a recession, it is also reported to be more difficult to successfully integrate former prisoners into the job market, which may have an impact on the number of re-offenders (Daddow, 2009). The Senior manager at Buxtowne Prison believed that the recession will have a major impact on undermining education as a priority for the prison, given the difficulty in ex-prisoners being able to successfully integrate into the labour force. She stated, "one of the big aims of education particularly from the LSC point of view is to get people into employment and we were sort of reasonably successful with that up until about November of last year [2008]. Now a lot of people are being made redundant, then ex-offenders aren't really high on the list of people who are going to be taken on. Quite a lot of people went into the construction trade and obviously there aren't any jobs there, so in some ways we're training people so we're hoping the job market will pick up before they go out". With the recession, she stated, "it takes some of the priority away from education as a means of rehabilitating people when they leave".

The recession will also likely to change the way in which the prisons in Britain are funded. As a state prison, which is market-tested, the tender process in terms of deciding who actually gets to run the prison every few years relates to "quality but a lot of it will, particularly in the present climate, it's to do with price" (Senior manager). This has the potential to shift the prison into the private sector and undermine the provision of education in the prison, when the focus is predominantly on cutting costs. The Senior manager stated that "because of the financial climate, there is going to be changes to funding situations, I mean lots of prisons, not particularly ours because we run on a service level agreement but a lot of prisons in the area are expected to make huge budget cuts and so that will not impact on the actual education service at the moment but it will impact on all the services which support education".

#### **4.4. Good practice 5: Open University**

##### **Open University in prison**

### **Objectives of the practice**

The aim is to allow access to first degree study for those prisoners who have not previously been able to complete a course of higher education. The scheme is a partnership between on the one hand the Prison Service and individual establishments, and on the other hand the Open University and its regional centres (PSO,1999:1.2).

In prison, many of the successful applicants have few or no educational qualifications before commencing their sentence. The use of combination of the OU's quality learning materials with the support offered by education staff in prisons and OU associate lecturers and their regional colleagues, make this form of study appropriate for some prisoners for whom education is an integral part of their sentence plan (PSO, 1999:1.3).

### **Target groups**

To be eligible to apply for an Open University course, the prisoner must (PSO, 1999:3.2):

- ✓ be in a designated establishment,
- ✓ have sufficient time left to serve to be able to complete the OU course for which they have applied,
- ✓ be able to demonstrate evidence of appropriate learning, for example accreditation through the Ruskin College pack 'Preparation for Higher Education by Distance Learning' or key skills at level 2 or equivalent,
- ✓ have the potential and motivation to benefit from degree level study.

Unlike other universities, the OU does not have entry requirements for most of its courses and you do not have to take tests to gain entry<sup>64</sup>.

### **Funding sources**

There are a number of possible sources of funding for prisoners registering for Open University courses from 1999 (PSO, 1999:9.1):

- ✓ the prisoners private funds,
- ✓ funding is obtained via a third party, e.g. relatives or a charity,
- ✓ funding may be applied for through the prison materials budget,
- ✓ a combination of the above in which the Education Manager takes responsibility for payment of the full amount.

Prisoners are not eligible to apply for financial assistance from the Open University or Open University Students Educational Trust, or to open an account with Open University Students Budget Account (PSO, 1999:9.9).

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www3.open.ac.uk/contact/faq.aspx?t=S&cat=1-1GSQZ7> (accessed 2 April 2010)

Externally, the OU has good relationships with all key stakeholders, and a new Prisons Scheme for prisons in England has been re-negotiated with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the Department of Business Innovations and Skills (BIS). This has resulted in an improved financial arrangement with BIS, which pays fees for Openings and the first level-one course of prison students (via the Prisoners Education Trust), and for the additional work involved in supporting our students in prison. The new Prison Service Order, which more clearly defines the registration procedures and support arrangement for OU students in prisons in England, is now nearing completion. Re-negotiated schemes for other nations should follow<sup>65</sup>.

### **History of the model**

Born in the 1960s, the 'White Heat of Technology' era, the Open University was founded on the belief that communications technology could bring high quality degree-level learning to people who had not had the opportunity to attend campus universities. The first prisoners were admitted onto the undergraduate programme with the Open University (OU) in 1972 from HMPs Wakefield, Albany, Gartree and Wormwood Scrubs<sup>66</sup>.

### **Number of participants**

The Open University, almost since its inception, has provided courses to students in prison. Currently the OU has approximately 1,500 students on more than 200 courses across all faculties in approximately 150 prisons (covering all security categories) in the UK and Ireland. Many students continue their studies when released into the community. In 1999 the number of participating establishments exceeds 80, and over 300 prisoners register annually for degree level study. In 2010 more than 1,400 prisoners are taking OU courses in prisons across the UK (Open University, 2009-2010:11).

### **Location**

The task of supporting Open University students studying in prison study centres is shared between the Education Manager and staff, the Open University regional centre and the associate lecturer allocated to support the individual student (PSO, 1999:11.1).

### **Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

The recent Brain Cells<sup>67</sup> report into prison education, commissioned by the Prisoners Education Trust, confirms the value of education in prisons. It states: "Investment in education for prisoners is worthwhile and productive; it changes prisoners' outlooks and attitudes and encourages new motivations for their future. It equips them with better chances of gaining employment...

"Studies have shown that education is associated with reduced re-offending, and recent research has

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.open.ac.uk/colmsct/activities/details/detail.php?itemId=4612674ad4bc3> (accessed 4 April 2010)

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.open.ac.uk/about/ou/p3.shtml> (accessed 4 April 2010)

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.open.ac.uk/platform/news/society/students-prison-have-options-too> (accessed 4 April 2010)

argued that prison education is good value for money when compared with the cost of re-offending.”

A new Prison Service Order, developed jointly by the Prison Service and the OU, aims to give more support to higher education provision in prisons in view of its clear economic and social benefits.

Some OU courses involve the use of a computer. This is likely to increase as the OU uses technology to both teach and communicate with students. Before approving applications for courses which require the use of a computer or CD ROM, the education manager should ensure that the necessary equipment is available and meets the University’s specification<sup>68</sup>.

At present, most courses which involve the use of Internet are not available to OU students studying in prison.

Some courses require set books and other materials or equipment which you would normally be expected to buy. These will usually be provided free of charge to students in prison who receive OU funding for their course (Open University, 2010-2011:3).

There are many barriers to learning in a secure environment. The security regime itself hinders movement and reduces access to study space, material and support; crowded conditions necessitate sudden transfers and disruption. OU tutors provide face-to-face tutorials or telephone tutorials where possible. Requirements for security clearance are often extraordinarily difficult and lengthy – it can sometimes take up to 6 months before the tutor can gain access, by which time the course is almost complete (Open University, 2009-2010:11).

However, one of the biggest challenges for students in prison is the lack of access to computers, storage media and the internet. The amount and type of technology available to students in prison varies greatly and this is not necessarily connected to prison security category (Open University, 2009-2010:11).

The Virtual Campus provides secure web access using existing systems. It is being trialed in prisons in two English regions. The OU is testing components of courses with the aim of going live with a course in October 2009. Secure e-messaging, via a guardian, is anticipated and should allow students to access their tutors and the OU’s e-assessment system – a huge step forward. An intranet has been developed in a high security prison in England. The OU course modules sit on the third-party Moodle platform and the trial has consisted of a few students who are able to access the course material but no other internet-based tools. Although the system is not attached to the internet, students found that accessing web-pages ‘online’ rather than on paper was more like a real internet search. Other nations are investigating similar trials (Open University, 2009-2010:11).

### **Methods of feedback and evaluation**

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<sup>68</sup> <http://www.open.ac.uk/platform/news/society/students-prison-have-options-too> (accessed 30 March 2010)



Each course is surveyed on the courses and qualifications website. The most up to date survey for each course is usually displayed, but OU only publish results where the response rate is over 50%. The website gives the percentages of students satisfied with ten key areas of their study experience<sup>69</sup>:

- ✓ The workload on this course was higher than I expected. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ The course met my expectations. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ Overall, I was satisfied with the teaching materials provided on this course. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ I enjoyed studying this course. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ I was satisfied with the support provided by my tutor/study adviser on this course. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ I would recommend this course to other students. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ The course met its stated learning outcomes. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ The course provided good value for money. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ Overall, I am satisfied with my study experience. (Mostly / definitely agree)
- ✓ Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this course. (Mostly / definitely agree)

As well as feeding back the overall results to participants so they can see how their experience compared to that of other students on the course, displaying the overall results alongside the reviews allows prospective students to see an overview of how the course performed, and helps them to make an informed choice about their next course.

### **Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model**

The recession has sparked an increased interest in personal finance with The Open University's 'you and your money' course attracting more than 5,000 students since it first launched. Registrations for this May (2009) are up 29 per cent compared with May 2008, a sign of the increased interest in personal finance in the light of the current economic state<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> <http://www.open.ac.uk/student-surveys/p4.shtml> (accessed 30 March 2010)

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.open.ac.uk/platform/news/business-and-finance/recession-proof-your-finances-10-top-tips> (accessed 29 March 2010)

## Chapter 5 Government department officials

### 5.1 Background information

In order to generate a picture of the policy framework in England, we conducted interviews with three officials of official agencies. None is, as such, a representative of the government – of, for instance, a ministry. Although we approached the (then) Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills, no representative was available to be interviewed. However, we secured interviews with staff of significant official agencies: of the Learning and Skills Council, of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, and of a regional Development Agency. Organizations such as these form the framework of policy formation, and of policy delivery, for post-compulsory education in England; and though there has been a good deal of organizational turbulence in recent years (such agencies can be formed, dissolved and restructured surprisingly often), the pattern of policies being (in part) formed and delivered through semi-official intermediate agencies, some involving representatives of ‘stakeholders’ of various kinds, is long-established.

### 5.2 Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

The Learning and Skills Council (replaced on 1 April 2010 by the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People’s Learning Agency, as explained above) was responsible for allocating public funds on behalf of the government to further education colleges and like organizations for students aged 16 years and above. The LSC employed some 3,300 (full-time equivalent) staff, at its headquarters in Coventry and in regional offices a number of regional LSC offices, which engaged with colleges in their region, and by sector skills councils, which advised on the skills requirements of particular sectors of business and industry. Approximately 1,800 of the LSC staff are transferring to the Skills Funding Agency including 400 to the National Apprenticeship Service. The regional offices seem likely, in large part, to transfer to the SFA.

### 5.3 Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is responsible for distributing public money to universities and colleges in England that provide higher education. Most of this goes to the 130 universities and higher education colleges in England. HEFCE also funds higher education courses in 124 directly-funded further education colleges. HEFCE funds are directed towards four main areas of activity, which derive from its strategic aims and government policy (as set out currently in the white paper, *The Future of Higher Education*).

The broad policy framework for HEFCE's work is set out in a 'Management Statement' between HEFCE and the BIS; the terms and conditions under which BIS makes funds available are set out in a Financial Memorandum between the two organisations. Both documents are revised from time to time. HEFCE is governed by a Board of fourteen members, eight of whom are academics – mostly vice-chancellors and senior managers. It has a number of standing committees: teaching, quality and the student experience; widening access and participation; research and innovation; enterprise and skills; and leadership, governance and management. Its permanent administration is led by a Chief Executive, and organized in three directorates: Education and Participation; Research, Innovation and Skills; and Finance and Corporate Resources.

## 5.4 Regional Development Agency (RDA)

England's Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were first launched in 1999, with the London Development Agency following in 2000. Their mission is 'to spread economic prosperity and opportunity to everyone in the nine regions of England'. They 'take a business-led approach and bring vitality and expertise to the task of economic development and regeneration in the regions', working 'closely with businesses, local authorities, universities and other organisations to agree priorities for economic development' which are intended to help 'drive growth and ensure international competitiveness for each region's economy'.<sup>71</sup>

At a regional level, there are three main components to RDAs' work: gathering evidence and creating Regional Economic Strategies, investing 'our own resources wisely', and influencing others and 'aligning activity'. This includes analyzing economic strengths and weaknesses, brokering collective understanding and agreement about economic challenges, opportunities and priorities, and (through Regional Economic Strategies), providing 'agreed frameworks for collective, multi-partner, cross-sector actions that will deliver regional economic growth'.<sup>72</sup>

RDAs are responsible for 'developing Regional Skills Strategies that detail the skills needed to support sustainable economic growth'. This is intended to 'ensure that each region remains competitive and that businesses have the skilled and motivated workforce they need to be productive. RDAs also play a key role in driving up demand and investment in skills through our business support and innovation programmes. RDAs work closely with a range of stakeholders including employer affiliated organisations such as UKCES, HEFCE, SFA, Jobcentre Plus and Sector Skills Councils, to achieve these goals.'<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.englishsrda.com/who-we-are> (accessed 6 April 2010)

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.englishsrda.com/what-we-do> (accessed 6 April 2010)

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.englishsrda.com/what-we-do/people> (accessed 6 April 2010)

## 5.5 Interview transcription 1

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The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges. It aims to promote high quality education and research, within a financially healthy sector. The Council also plays a key role in ensuring accountability and promoting good practice.

HEFCE is a Non Departmental Public Body and was set up by the Government in 1992. It means that this institution works within a policy framework set by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, but is not part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). HEFCE has distinct statutory duties that are free from direct political control.

John Selby is Director (Education and Participation) at HEFCE. He is responsible for all HEFCE's work in teaching, learning, and widening participation, and for the North institutional team. He also has responsibility for a number of key policy areas including HEFCE's links with JISC. Before joining HEFCE, John was Head of Educational Partnerships at Coventry University. He is a sociologist by background with a PhD from McMaster University in Ontario.

**Note: Since there seemed no practical way of concealing the identity of HEFCE, no attempt has been made to do so in the transcripts. This is by agreement with John Selby. However, this is on the basis that 'I would like to check any direct quotes'. For one section he asked 'I would like you to check with me before using it at all'; this has been withheld (see below). Although he said that 'otherwise I don't have any problems with thoughts being attributed to me', it is essential that this report is not published outside the project without Dr Selby's approval in the respects set out above.**

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*Why the term 'Government department' is inappropriate?*

We are an NDPB, Non Departmental Public Body, right, and that means that we are, we have our own board, we are not therefore an agency of Government in quite that sense, we are independent. Clearly all of our money or practically all of our money comes from Government, but we stand between the sector and Government as a, the term often used is a 'buffer body' and in some ways that's fine, I think a buffer body is rather a passive term you know, things hitting you in the middle, but I think of ourselves much more as a translation body, in other words that we speak, we translate what Government says to the sector and we translate what the sector is thinking and feeling back to Government and/or an interpretative body. I think that's a better way of thinking of it.

*Translation was the term you used?*

Translation or interpretation. You know in other words Government can tell us exactly what to do and they do it within certain limits, they're constrained by law. So they could not for example tell us that we want you to give some money to the University of [city], nor could they tell us how we should decide

how much money to give to the University of [city]. They can say to us we'd like you to spend more on research or more on teaching, but they can't say to us we'd like you to make sure that the University of [city] or even say the Russell Group does well. So they can't, you know that's statutory, they're not allowed to do that.

*Could they say we want the north of England to get more or ...?*

No, well, they could, well they could ask us to look at that question. There's an important difference between what they can ask us, so they can ask us to do all kinds of things, but instructing us, there is an important distinction there, so they can ask us to look out and to consider and all of those sorts of things. So that's quite important. So we have autonomy but clearly that autonomy is constrained by the fact that if we did things that Government thought was really stupid they'd stop giving us the money and they might give it to somebody else or they might fund institutions directly. But they value actually being slightly detached from it as well because we take some of the flak which they quite like as well. So you can see benefits on all sides, and the sector feels much more protected by having a group of people who, actually we have had sector representatives on our board, we have vice chancellors on our board and that we are, we have people who have, you know in many cases come through, I worked in the sector for many years, come from the sector and have that closeness of understanding and involvement with the sector. So that's that. Sorry, that was just a bit long winded but by way of background.

But if we look at the first question, so within HEFCE we have a number of strategic committees but we have one strategic committee which is the widening access and participation strategic advisory committee as it's now called, it has been called various things, equal opportunities, access and LLL it was called for a long while, then it became the WP one and it's now widening access and participation. And it's a committee which directly advises our board and is responsible for all of the kinds of issues that you've talked about in relation to learning and teaching. We have other committees which are responsible say for research, so issues about equality, issues in relation to research would be the responsibility of that. We have an enterprise and skills committee which also would be concerned with the, you know in the sense that the whole organisation has to be concerned with equality issues, that they run across the organisation. But in relation to the issues that you're specifically concerned with which is adult learning, that committee would take the lead, and I am director for education and participation is my title, which includes learning and teaching and widening participation as the two key thrusts of the work that I do. And I have a team of colleagues, we have a head of widening participation policy and I have a team of colleagues that work on widening participation and LLL. It's fair to say that our prime focus is the formal education sector and the HE sector, I mean we are responsible for funding HEIs and FE colleges that deliver HE formally. So we do not directly fund the informal sector, but of course we fund HEIs which have continuing education departments which are much more closely connected to and linked with those and also we do have links with the WEA, informal links with the WEA and NUS, those kinds of organisations. But essentially that's what we do.

And one of the pieces I think that sits there is the transition over the last decade or 2 in university continuing education, particularly in the pre 92 universities from a very non formal structure to much more formalized structure.

*Yes. I don't know whether that comes in but it's ...*

Yes it does come in and we have, I mean essentially we really only fund accredited learning. Now that doesn't mean that people who sign up for a continuing education course and fail or, actually what it, if they don't submit for us, that's formally speaking we can't fund them, and that's been the difficulty<sup>74</sup>, there used to be a direct grant from DES as it was which went directly to [city] was one of the universities which had responsible body status for that informal adult learning. And so we are not directly responsible for funding informal learning, and that is something that the LSC currently funds rather than us. And that, so in as much as universities fund informal, non accredited adult learning, they do it from their own funds in other ways, and they are, from our point of view what we pay to universities is what grant (£10.23) and so if they want to do that kind of cross subsidy they can, but from our point of view what we are funding is the accredited learning.

Now the other thing that is important to say is that it is in as much as Government policy has I think particularly over the last decade focused on young people and widening participation for young people ...

*Young people defined as ...?*

Well I mean in terms of widening participation that is people who are under 18, in terms of trying to improve the participation of underrepresented groups. However of course we, our funding is not age related, so universities can recruit anybody of any age and we don't differentiate, and we strongly support them in doing that. But in terms of the active thrust of the policy of Government it's been very much focused on links between HE and schools and colleges and progression from them, through the early years into higher education. So we've always been committed to LLL, we've always supported LLL and allowed for LLL, but the thrust of our policy in widening participation in these underrepresented groups has focused particularly on younger people, not exclusively but that's been the dominant focus over the last decade.

*And would you say that the, to the extent that there has been a focus or funding of LLL that hasn't particularly been focused on or oriented towards widening participation in terms of social groups?*

No, I think what I would say is that our, we have a strategic aim which is widening participation in HE. That strategic aim informs everything that we do in as much as all of our strategic aims are supposed to inform everything that we do, but that is particularly one which is much more thematic. So for example when we think about HEI's third stream activity, business in the community, we would ask questions about the extent to which that activity also recognises minority communities, disadvantaged communities, works with small and medium enterprises, all of those sorts of questions. And so widening participation as a theme relates to all of the learning and teaching process. But in terms of the active policy in which we've been trying to encourage widening participation, the strong focus has been on young people.

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<sup>74</sup> At the moment, students who complete but fail are fundable but students who do not submit for final assessment at the first opportunity are not fundable.

*Right.*

But the sector of course has always had a focus on adults and my own experience was coming through, you know the access courses into HE which were specifically aimed at that group (?13.58). So we're certainly supportive of and interested in that, I'm not saying that we've in any sense not wanted to do that, but all I'm saying is that of the policy thrusts, the dominant work has been with young people.

*Yeah, right, and there's a little question here about whether your WOP committee ...*

Yes WAPSAC (Widening Access and Participation Strategic Advisory Committee) we call it! LAUGHS . Sounds like knapsack!

*... has any representation from target groups, from at risk groups and so on.*

Not formally. What it has is practitioners working in the field predominantly, so people who are responsible for this area of policy within institutions, pro vice chancellors with responsibility for, and heads of widening participation would typically be the dominant membership. It also has NUS membership to represent the student voice, but we haven't explicitly, other than in the sense that we are always concerned to make sure that our committees are representative because of our widening equality agenda, but we do not have the learner voice formally represented on that committee, except in one area where we do have some work with disabled groups, where we have an advisory body, and a separate advisory ...

*That's different from the WAPSAC?*

That's different from the formal committee yes, it's a, what we call, and I had to look it up because it's a, (reading) a widening participation involving disabled people strategy contact group.

*Right!*

But in other words what we do, rather than bringing, having different groups represented on our committees formally, those committees, the people are there as individuals not as representatives of particular groups, and what we then do is when we are dealing with issues of that, we then would consult with bodies that represent those learners rather than explicitly putting them on a strategic ...

*So you would have consultation exercises with the at risk groups?*

Yes, or representatives of, yes, we would certainly want to involve those groups, yes.

*I mean can you describe what you do in any of those, or one example? For example in relation to LLL in some, widening access and LLL in some way? Is there an example?*

Well I mean the example; I gave you the example of disability ...

*Yes, yes, yes.*

I gave you the example of disability, I'm just trying to think of other areas. I, we do a lot of course to encourage the learner voice in a variety of ways but not directly in our formal structures, and that actually is an important question which we need to ask ourselves I think, I think we haven't done enough of it.

*OK thank you. I'm moving down the front page, as you look through it you'll see there's quite a number of questions.*

Yes.

*It's really a question of monitoring, is the position of responsibility of the Government department to monitor and implement all these issues, so that's your WAPSAC?*

Yeah, but I'm, and myself as the director responsible and we have ...

*Would you have staff who were focused on that particular ...?*

Yes I have a team of, we have a head of widening participation policy and there are a team of about 8 staff working on that whole area of widening participation. The other thing that's important is that because it's a strategic aim within our strategic plan, we have key performance targets which are, which we report to, on, to our Government department which is DIUS. So our strategic plan has key performance targets in relation to widening participation and DIUS monitors our performance in relation to those targets.

*Right.*

So there is a formal reporting structure into Government.

*And so one of the things you're looking at when you're looking at the funding of HEIs for example is saying how far have you met your targets on widening participation?*

Yes, it's not specifically focused on LLL but it is on widening participation in HE.

*Yes I understand. OK. Structures for strategic local, regional and national discussion and communication at or around these kinds of issues. So how do you relate down to the regional level or do you deal directly with all English HEIs?*

We do, but we also do things regionally in a number of different ways. We have kind of generic connections to regions. We have, we have what we call regional consultants, we have institutional teams which cover regions of the country, and they have a responsibility for taking forward the general regional agenda. So that's relationships to the RDAs, to the regional LSC, those kinds of things. In relation to widening participation, more specifically, oh and we also fund the regional association. So the [region] Universities Association gets some funding from us to encourage that kind of regional focus. But in the widening participation area, we fund, actually they're predominantly now sub regional bodies, we fund Aimhigher which is a joint initiative between us and the Government, and that is organised in I think it's now 42 areas of the country. Doesn't actually have a regional structure but it has a sub



regional structure. So typically it's at kind of county level, that sort of level, or big cities, there's Birmingham and Manchester have big ones of their own. So that's that level. And we have a team called Action on Access which again we fund, which is a team of people drawn from the sector, and also have, who provide support and advice to Aimhigher, to institutions, and they typically work at a regional level as well. So there are regional structures which we support to coordinate that activity across the sector.

*Right, OK. There's a question here about support, whether you give any support to people with specific responsibilities for developing adult education in the region, I take it the answer you're saying is no.*

The answer is no. That's absolutely right, the answer is no. We have, that's a much, institutions do that themselves and we give institutions a block grant and it's really for them to use.

OK.

We obviously do have relationships with organisations such as UALL ...

*Yes the sort of representative organisations?*

Yes, and NIACE, UALL and NIAS.

*And then the final question in that section, structures for dialogue between different Government departments in this kind of area. What sort of dialogue do you, do you work entirely with DIUS or are you actually as it were communicating with other departments about ...*

Essentially we work with DIUS, there are some areas in which we would have connections with other departments, for example in the enterprise and skills area, we would work a bit with BERR, but that would be really through DIUS. I mean pretty much now, since the creation of DIUS and the movement of the research function into DIUS from DTI, I mean we now really work with DIUS on just about everything and we have occasional contacts with some other bodies. We would have contacts directly with things like the Sector Skills Councils which would obviously have an important link to, you know obviously to the LLL agenda. But fundamentally in terms of other Government departments, no.

*OK, OK, I'm just going to move it on to the next one. So on strategic issues, Government strategy on these various topics, social inclusion, to what extent is there a national Government strategy on these things?*

Well there is, I think it's been focused primarily on the learning and skills sector and less on our sector. I think there have been some criticisms that it's been overly focused on young people as well, I think that's changing and I think particularly the recent Government document on informal adult learning has been very important, I think there's been a recognition in Government for some time that since, well David Blunkett stopped being Secretary of State you know there's been a kind of move, and perhaps the informal other(?01.12) agenda has not been stressed enough, and I think they've recognised some of that and they've moved back. So there is a strategy it would be very much part of a Government, a DIUS responsibility. Where I think it connects particularly to our work is that we recognise that the line

between formal and informal, accredited and non accredited learning is an important funding line, but it doesn't really reflect the way in which learners move along a learning path, in other words many learners start informally, move, and they don't, people's learning trajectories are not linear, all of the things that you know one understands about all of that. And so in terms of the outreach and access agenda, I think the notion of informal adult learning, because our particular thrust and the thrust of Government policy has been very much on the 18-30 year olds in terms of access to higher education. And so the outreach and access agenda has got that kind of informal dimension to it, but within HE the informal component is very much something that is the responsibility of HEIs themselves rather than something we explicitly and directly fund.

*And do you think that's going to remain the case? I mean let me put in, in a sense if you take the informal, you mentioned the informal learning white paper, that doesn't have, as I recall, sort of a strong sense of performance indicators in relation to informal learning, it sort of sets out pathways for development and visions and things of that sort.*

Yes.

*Do you see it being translated into targets and performance indicators or not?*

Well at the moment I think probably not. I think there is potentially growing interest in older learners, and I think there may be some wish to look at that, but at the moment I don't think that Government policy is focusing on informal learning, but it may come back once you start talking about you know the third age and ...

*So when you talk about older learners than, you refer to the third age, you know the kind of retired rather than or are you ...*

Well I'm talking about 50 onwards really, you know so pre retirement, and again because I think Government does recognise that the very sharp boundary between formal skills acquisition between formal learning and informal learning doesn't really reflect the way in which people learn, it's understandable why it has to take that kind of position, for funding purposes. So I think there will be some of that. But I think we also have performance indicators for underrepresented groups in HE but at the moment they focus on under graduate provision as such.

*OK, specific funding for key elements of the strategies you've got, the ...*

Yes there is, there is a formal, there is a block grant which we give to institutions, so what we, how we allocate our funding does not need to translate into how institutions then spend it. But we do formally allocate, we do formally have a widening participation allocation which is allocated to institutions, and as part of that, and this is something that links back to the previous question, as part of that we have asked institutions to produce strategic assessments of their performance in widening participation and we're just asking for those now. And they also have access agreements with OFFA, the Office For Fair Access, but that's about, really about entry to under graduate education rather than the LLL agenda. But we've asked very specifically for institutions to look more broadly across all of their provision and to

think about the widening participation agenda and underrepresented groups in relation to all of their provision.

*So if you looked at the budgetary issues, you know the volumes of budget going to different sectors you couldn't, and I'm speaking here of the HEFCE budget as well, you couldn't actually distinguish what goes on adult education for example or could you?*

We can distinguish through the statistics that we gather how many mature students there are and what, we, and we do that. We have rather less good quality information about mature learners for quite understandable reasons, particularly as they get older people are often, who are enrolling those students, often less keen on asking them all of the questions about themselves, for quite understandable reasons. So the quality of the data that we get submitted through HESA is a you know, less detailed ...

*Things like your parents' occupation ...?*

Yes all that sort of stuff, and you know your prior qualifications and things like that, you know when people are saying actually I had a disastrous school experience and I'm now going back, you don't want to then ask them how many GCSEs and A Levels you know that sort of stuff. So the quality of the data for quite understandable reasons gets worse. We also have a rather interesting situation which we're just talking about, which is that we've just been asked and are considering with the other funding bodies in the other countries whether we could develop a performance indicator for part time students' retention<sup>75</sup>. And the ...

*The other countries, they're being within the UK?*

Within the UK, the other funding bodies in the UK. And because we have UK wide performance indicators, the performance indicators that we produce are UK wide, almost all of them, and we've just commissioned some interesting research on part time learners and what's very interesting is that the concept of retention or completion for a part time learner is a much more complicated concept than it is for a full time learner because people may sign up to do a module which is a credit bearing module for a degree and they've maybe enrolled on the degree formally speaking, but that may not be their intention at all, they may just, and somebody says, the admissions tutor says oh sign up for the degree new ? (08.35) it doesn't commit you to anything, and that's a way of kind of sending them a signal that they really could progress. But then to define those people as having withdrawn in some way is odd, whereas when somebody signs up for a full time under graduate programme, in a sense you can talk about that kind of intention. So we've had to look at part time intensity of study, you know more than 30% of full time seems to be a threshold where people have a different attitude to what they're doing than below 30%. So they're much more likely to continue and to complete, to move on and those sorts of things, whereas people doing less are very often dipping in and dipping out, using formal learning

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<sup>75</sup> Since this interview, we have introduced this from the 2010 publication figures, due to be published on 15 April.

actually for informal purposes in some cases, or for very specific vocational, you know doing a particular module because it meets their particular professional development needs. So it's quite complicated.

*Yes, is this the point to raise the whole ELQ question and how that's ...?*

I'm happy to come on to that, can I just say one other thing? That we have also supported LLL networks and they are quite important, we've actually invested £105 million across England which are designed to support particularly progression for learners from vocational programmes into HE. Now that's not informal adult learning but it's very important in terms of disadvantaged and underrepresented groups who are more likely to be found in those programmes, and more likely not to progress, much less likely to progress to HE. So if you have a level 3 vocational qualification, only about 50% of those learners are currently progressing in HE, whereas if you come through an A Level route, over 90% progress to HE. So we've tried to address that kind of agenda. Again it's not informal but it is again another dimension of the LLL agenda. And you know your question there is partly about informal and partly more traditional ...

*Yeah absolutely, they're both there.*

Yeah, and the other thing that I think we're also doing which I think is quite important is we've invested a relatively small amount in flexible forms of learning, so looking at different modes of study. So compressed degrees, 2 years, 3 years compressed into 2 years for example, but also much more looking at the way in which HE can offer its programmes more flexibly so people can take credits and build them up and move and change institutions. So we're trying to support some of those structures.

*That's tended to be talked about for a long time but not actually ...*

Yes, talked about, tried, there are some important issues about coherence and about currency, you know once people start studying for a very long period to get to a degree, what's the value of the early knowledge that they have, and all of those sorts of questions. And we also are supporting, our funding now also supports from this year what we call partially completing students, so students who we don't fund by credit, but students who are enrolled for say a full year's study as an under graduate and who then complete two thirds of it or something like that, the institution gets funding for that. So we're trying to recognise flexibility and respond in a way to what is becoming an increasingly diverse student population. And the other thing we do a lot of is provide funding to support learning through the use of technology. So we support JISC, the Joint Information Systems Committee which is looking at all of that, and we also support the Higher Education Academy which is looking at improving learning, making learning more flexible and all of that kind of stuff. So a number of things that we support which support LLL. And the final thing is we're doing quite a lot of work to try and help HEIs work more closely with employers. So employer co funded learning is an important thing that we're now trying to develop and encourage, and foundation degrees, a number of new things that we're trying to do. So what we're trying to do is not do things ourselves, but support the sector in doing things.

*Right OK. I don't know whether you want to come to ELQs or when ...*

Well at some, I'm not bothered when we come to it, I think it is part of the soup as it were of this topic. I'm still sort of working our way through the strategic issues. Future plans by national Government to develop LLL at specific ISCED levels. I mean I guess HEIs and HEFCE is not going to be bothered with ISCED levels below levels 4 and 5, it's ...

*That's right.*

I mean in the sense that there would have been a time when funding was going to HEIs to do that through the old RB system and all that kind of stuff, but that's now ceased and there's no replacement of any kind for that.

No, I'm ...

*Access is that ...?*

Well access, that's a very interesting ...

*And I guess foundation degrees are also a ...*

Well all of those, I mean the dilemma is between the boundary between level 3 and level 4 and ISCED levels 3 and 4. And actually in that sense our levels 3 and 4 really, because that's essentially, the language is the same. The, because when you say post secondary non tertiary education you know, I mean it gets quite difficult and there are complexities there and even in a sense we would make a distinction between when we talk about level 3 that includes what, some of which, or some of the stuff that would be in level 4 in that definition and some other stuff that would be in level 3 in the ISCED definition. So we don't fund formally anything below English level 4, formally speaking. However, what we do is we fund, I'll come back to access provision, we fund HE institutions to deliver what they deliver and if HEIs deliver stuff which spans that boundary, that's fine. So we fund, we do fund foundation years, year zeros as they were traditionally called you know, that provision which is A level equivalent which is linked into, directly linked into an HE qualification. But also we fund under graduate provision and of course universities teach *ab initio* for example ? (16.22), and we fund that, we don't have a problem with that, so long as it is part of a degree qualification. So some languages you can do a degree in some languages without having an A Level.

*So let me press that one a little longer. So who is it, I mean if you take level 1, university level 1 stuff, who is it to define what is level 1 and not level 1? Is it entirely up to the university?*

Yes, formally.

*So if a university chose to do I don't know literacy work or whatever, and include that within its level 1 stuff, that would be ...*

Well I think that would be, I mean that would be stretching it, but clearly universities fund EU students and teach them English.

Yes.

As part of that, their funding, and so long as those students are enrolled on a degree programme or on a programme which leads to ...

*So there's a good deal of grey area here?*

There is grey area. I taught social science and I taught students who were doing a social science degree, I taught them research methods, and that involved statistics which was probably at GCSE level.

Yes.

And that's absolutely fine because the qualification as a whole was not and the first year provision was not. But equally I had people on my social science degrees, some of whom had A Level sociology and some of whom had never done any social sciences. And so there's, none of that matters from our point of view, provided the HEI says that the qualification as a whole is at HE level. We have more difficulty in FE colleges where we fund HE in FE colleges but that's perhaps a small question.

*I'm realising my timekeeping's not too good.*

Well don't worry I'm OK until 5 o'clock if you're ...

*Yes that should mean that we're about halfway through and I don't think we are!*

Well OK, I may shut up. There's one question you didn't ask me about, please comment on measures taken by national Government to support adult learning outside the major cities in your country. And the Government has and we have, before Government developed this initiative something called New University Challenge which is about developing HE centres in places where there isn't HE. And we funded quite a few in towns you know and in places like Cumbria and Cornwall, in rural areas as well. So there is something that we very explicitly tried to do, to do that. So that's a simple answer, I can give you more details if you want.

*Yes I think that's, yes, I mean how, no let's leave it there, let's move on, I think yes it would be fascinating to follow it up but I think we need to cover the territory as well as the ...*

Yes OK, if there's time we can come back to things as well.

*Yes, the, moving into the formal sector, national policy territory, is, the state incentive for third level institutions training teachers, is there any specific policy to reserve places for underrepresented groups, ethnic minorities, etc, etc?*

We don't fund the training of teachers, it's unusual. In Scotland and in Wales the funding councils fund the training of teachers, in England the Government has set up the Training and Development agency for schools, what was the TTA, Teacher Training Agency, and they fund teacher training, except where we fund under graduate degrees in education which might have a PGCE component built in, but those are now much rarer, it tends to be that people do an academic subject and then do a PGCE and we don't fund those.

*Right.*

But the answer to your question is yes but it's not our responsibility.

*Obstacles or, well if you have those incentives I guess there's no obstacles to ...*

Well I mean formally speaking we could fund it, legally we're allowed to fund it, the Government has asked somebody else to do it so we're not responsible to do it.

*And is there any logic to, sorry I mean I have a feeling there is a logic, but what is the logic for doing that in England when it's not done in Scotland and Wales?*

You'd have to ask Government that.

*Thank you!*

I think it's different decisions which are made. There are different decisions for example about the funding of doctors' training which comes through us, whereas the funding for nurses comes directly from the NHS, and that's just, I think just the way in which things happen to have fallen out.

*OK, reserving places for underrepresented groups within third levels institutions, HEIs, such as ethnic minorities, etc etc etc, are there state incentives for that?*

There are state, only in the sense that not particular occupations but there is, there are 2 things, there is a general incentive to widen participation in that our widening participation allocation is calculated on the basis of the number of students who are recruited for underrepresented groups, defined in quite specific sorts of ways. So in as much as we give institutions money to widen participation, if they are successful in that they get more money. So the University of [city] gets less money than [city] University proportionately because [city] University is more successful at widening participation than the University of [city]. So there is, and if the University of [city] is more successful, it would proportionately get more money.

*But proportionately within the sector, not within [city]?*

No, no, it would be within the sector, so it would be relative to the rest of the sector as institutions improve from within what is currently a fixed pot, but the shift, the balance of funding would shift, and it does shift from year to year because some institutions do better in some years than in other years, that's true for disability as well, we fund, you know fund in relation to disabled students, but not specifically for particular course or occupations, it's not done at that level, it's done at the institution level.

*OK, the issues about the development of incentives of those kind, what, I mean there must be a number of issues knocking around, you know, I'd rather not lead you on this.*

Well we don't formally have any legal barriers which stand in our way of doing it. We have an issue which has always been there in our funding which I think is a principle that we've tried to follow which is

that our funding is designed really to recognise costs, not to provide incentives. The reason for that, the reason for that is that what we don't want institutions to do is for example to adjust academic decisions on funding grounds. So wouldn't ask(?) institutions for example to say well if we took students with lower entry qualifications we would get more money because we don't want to incentivise institutions to take decisions other than on academic grounds, what we want to do is to recognise costs of particular decisions. So we'd provide institutions with additional funding to recognise the costs of recruiting students with, ought to contribute towards the cost of recruiting students with lower educational qualifications, they need more support. But what we don't want to do is to in a sense over incentivise that to the point that it distorts their academic decision making.

*So let me think, in relation to under graduate students for example, you fund different types of students, different subject areas of students in different ways don't you?*

Yes.

*Different ways, different ...*

Yes, weightings.

*Weightings that's it. Does that sort of think apply in relation to widening access issues?*

Well only in the sense that we have, we don't directly fund for individual students, what we do is we fund on the institution's profile of students. And in all cases what our differential weighting is designed to do, at the moment, and we're asking questions about this, but at the moment is to say that we give more money for clinical medicine because it's more expensive to deliver clinical medicine and we want to recognise the cost of delivering clinical medicine. What we don't want to do is to have clinical institutions funded to make a profit if you like out of public funds, for teaching clinical medicine or for teaching physics or chemistry, because we don't think that's, in a sense our job, we think our job is to provide institutions with a balance of funding so that they can look at the range of provision which they want to offer, what the market is saying, where they can get money from elsewhere and know that they don't lose money on public funding. So that's, so in, the concept of, using our funding directly to incentivise within our core teaching funding methodology is something that we've been reluctant to do because we don't want to kind of distort either the standards which institutions set or distort their choices in ways that are inappropriate.

*So to make the, you do have bits which relate to widening access?*

Yes.

*But that's different from the core funding methodology is it?*

It's identified as different, we have something called teaching enhancement and student success which is a funding stream to improve teaching, some of which recognises the different student profiles that institutions have. So it reflects the fact that institutions recruit, some recruit students with weaker entry qualifications and therefore those students on average need more support. But in all cases, and then we



have our widening access allocation which is about outreach, again which is based on the current profile that institutions have, but in all cases those are designed to contribute towards the costs, not to meet the whole cost because institutions also get fees and they get income from other streams, and not to incentivise the behaviour, it's very important that we want to rep, because, and we may change our policy on this, but at the moment our position has always been we don't want to distort you know, we don't want to end up distorting academic decisions for financial reasons.

*You say you may be changing your policy on this.*

Well there is a lot of interest in Government now at what is called skills activism right, which is trying to send a slightly different kind of sig, using our funding to send out particular signals about saying we want to incentivise certain, we want to encourage students to do stem subjects for example.

*Right.*

Our position so far has been, and we're in discussion with Government about this, our position has been that if you want to incentivise students to do things you should incentivise students to make choices that you, if there are demand side problems in getting more people to study stem, institutions will respond to demand from students or from employers and twisting or trying to manipulate the supply side to produce a change in demand is we think not a sensible way to go. And I think Government hears that argument very clearly but may want to do a bit of both.

*What have we got? School building, after school hours for adult education, I don't know, do you have anything to say about that? Obstacles, opportunities to use school buildings for ...*

Well school buildings directly, clearly it's not our responsibility. All that I would say is that formally our money is a block grant and institutions use their buildings in all kinds of ways and we want them to do that, we encourage that, so they do all kinds of things which are not formally what we would do. We don't expect them to say we can't spend public money on I don't know an art gallery or a theatre which is open to the public because that, they have a total income and our funding contributes to it, as long as they deliver what we expect them to deliver they can do that in whatever way they think is appropriate. So we're certainly not opposed to it and keen to see it, but, and so that's that one.

On the final one in that group are there particular gaps in employment and training for adults? I think that the area which we are looking to develop much more is work based learning and learning in which employers have, make a contribution both financially but also in terms of curriculum and steering some of that. And I think institutions are developing that side of their work more and we've provided funding to support that.

*Is that affected by, or how is that going to be affected by the recession?*

Well (LAUGHS), it's obviously going to be more difficult! But more important, both more difficult and more important. And of course we've actually put some specific funding into an initiative called the economic challenge investment fund, in which we put some money into institutions to try and address the needs of the recession and they've matched it with their own funding. So we're conscious of that,

but it's early days and we still don't know I mean the impact on you know, some bits of the recession are possibly helpful to people going into education and training, I mean for all kinds of reasons, and some employers are wanting to hang on to their workforces and upskill their workforces in order to be better placed after the recession where they can afford it. Where it's most difficult is for small and medium enterprises.

*Can we take, well is the non formal sector so much not part of the HEFCE business that we can sort of skim over it or do you helpful things on your briefing note as it were!*

Well my briefing, this is the one section where they said John's personal view ...

*Oh right let's hear the personal views then.*

Well I think, I think all that I would say on all of this really is that there are 2 things, generally speaking, all I would say is generally speaking that I would want to recognise and want Government to recognise what I've said earlier which is that people's learning trajectories are complicated and that therefore (announces sneeze), all of this you know, the informal side of things, in as much as it brings people into HE in a variety of ways is something that I would want to see encouraged, particularly for those groups that are underrepresented who may for a variety of reasons not find it easy at least initially to get into the formal learning process. And we, so the line between FE and HE, level 3 and level 4 in English terms is one that I think needs to be quite permeable and that people's learning trajectories are not linear, you know they go up and down and some people who are graduates may then need to go to FE. So some of that I think needs to be recognised and clearly always the equality agenda is an important thing. So in a sense that's my kind of generic answer to all that set of questions.

*[At this point, two questions, and John Selby's answers, relating to the government and HEFCE policy on funding students taking programmes at a level equivalent to, or lower than, a qualification they already possess has been withheld at Dr Selby's request.]* A view which is probably recognised as being perhaps over simple, that people who have had an experience of HE are likely to be more able to pay than people who have not. And then you get all of the stereotypes about middle class people doing leisure courses and things like that. And I think that most people including I'm sure even Government recognise that there are complexities, and of course we've got a lot of exemptions in the policy which we put in, partly as a result of recognition of what Government does and gives(?) students support regulations, and partly because we put them in, we put the ? (04.47) in there to recognise some of that, that people do not go straight up a linear path and that at certain points they need to go in, if they want to change direction they have to go back a bit in order to go forward. In a sense Government's made some decisions about its way of prioritizing funding, people might make different decisions in that you could do it in another kind of way, but in a sense that is a decision for Government and I think it's obviously made informal adult learning much more difficult. I would say, and I will be saying this, I'm going to be speaking at the Institute of Continuing Education at Cambridge in a couple of weeks, I would say as I will say there, I think that continuing education departments, institutes within HE have probably not historically done enough to correct the misperception that they're all about leisure classes for middle class people. OK, and you may disagree with me about that, but I think the misperception is there and

that they haven't really made that agenda strong enough in the way in which they've presented themselves. I'm sure, I know that actually a lot of that's going on but I don't think it's been fully understood and it was hard there for an ELQ debate to get Government to really see beyond what I think is rather, recognisably an over simple understanding.

*Yes, yes. OK. Does that move us past non formal sector into recognition of prior learning?*

Yeah.

*Where are we as far as HEFCE's concerned in the recognition of prior learning, particularly non formal learning and work experience?*

Well I think there are 2 things. In a sense we would always say that admissions policies are matters for institutions, so what, you know that's very clearly formally the case, we don't have a say or a view, and therefore the recognition of prior learning for entry is a matter for institutions. The recognition of prior learning for credit is a more difficult issue for us because we fund provision and we fund essentially teaching, and therefore in a sense the recognition of prior learning is not, is non provision if you like. It therefore is much more difficult for us. People make it clear to us I understand from having been in an education development unit that did some of this, that AP(E)L, particularly A P E L is actually expensive, it's not something that is cost free.

*No I understand, no.*

And APL, accredited learning is nearer to a rubber stamp but even then it isn't always. And I think that our funding system partly reflects behaviour in the sector, and because we are always trying to recognise costs within the sector, the recognition and accreditation of prior experiential learning is still relatively rare in the sector. And so we get into a slight chicken and, our funding system responds to what the majority of the sector does, the majority of the sector doesn't do it and therefore it doesn't really show, but that means that those parts of the sector which are trying to do it say but your funding system doesn't help us, and I understand that but in another sense the, the only way we can get money is by taking it from the rest of the sector in order to fund that. So we can't really, we don't predominantly use our funding system to steer the sector in particular kinds of directions. So in some senses there are some barriers but I think the barriers are also much more cultural in the sector. All of the stuff about credit frameworks, recognising credit, you know the whole sector sees an undergraduate degree as 360 CATS points universally, even the University of Oxford and Cambridge will say that that applies. But in reality most HE isn't really credit based in the sense that once you start to take your credit from one institution to another you have much more problem in that and all, so that we aren't in that kind of a world, and the sector is culturally not really in that kind of a world, and there's lots of pressure for us to move our funding model but actually moving our funding model would not help lots of institutions and would create complexities. So those are some of the difficulties.

*I mean do we need to do more to develop flexible accreditation systems?*

I think that by the state is the bit which is kind of European language rather than English language! I think there's been quite a lot of attempts within HE to try and do that and it hasn't really, hasn't got beyond the formal.

*Yes OK, let's move to future plans.*

I think we're getting near the end aren't we?

*It's surprising how much there is.*

Oh yes there's quite a lot actually. OK, well I'll try and talk more quickly!

Future plans, what are the, well HEFCE's priorities used to improve access to education for groups most at risk of under representation.

Well 2 things. We've asked institutions to think strategically about all this, to assess where they are, to set themselves targets, we don't set targets for institutions, to set themselves targets for widening representation, and that I think is the first thing and it's most important.

*Do you tell an institution that its target is excessively modest?*

We would have a dialogue with the institution is how we would put it, right? And we would ask those kinds of questions. I don't think most institutions' targets are too modest, we want targets to be realistic but stretching to use the cliché, and I think most institutions want their targets to be realistic and stretching. And so we would have that dialogue. But I think it very unlikely that we would ever get to the situation where we would withdraw the funding, so that I think is the important thing. I think within all of that what we also do is we try to extent and embed good practice, so we do a lot of supporting the sector in talking to itself and providing mechanisms for it to learn from you know, and we publish research reports and we support groups that do that kind of dialogue, but those are the key things. In terms of priority issues, I think what is increasingly going to be an issue and is an issue is the participation of men in HE, particularly young working class men, but at all levels the participation of men is an important issues. We would not want that concern to outweigh the other concerns, particularly the social class issues, but it's going to be an important issue, but it's very closely embedded with and entwined with class issues.

*Yes, when you say young men, do you attach class to that?*

I said particularly young working class men yes, so class is, for us class is still or inequality, social inequality is still the key dimension, but within that there are clearly gender and ethnic dimensions as well. The participation of ethnic minority students in HE is actually greater on average by the time you reach 30, overall, for all minority groups except perhaps for Bangladeshi women than it is for white people, but the distribution of ethnic groups across institutions is very uneven and across subjects. So they're very heavily concentrated in London institutions and in certain kinds of institutions. So there are important issues about fair access, about access, but not about overall participation rates. So the debates get quite complicated and you have to desegregate them.

*OK, changes over, what do you hope will have happened in the next 5 years to promote access for those groups most at risk of under representation?*

Well I think we've made a lot of progress actually. In a climate in which actually the society overall has been becoming more unequal on many dimensions and measures. And the fact that HE has at least maintained widening participation and actually on some measures improved widening participation, while at the same time maintaining success rates is actually a very positive story overall about HE. And I think it's important to say that because it's so often presented as a failure. So in terms of continuing achievements, I think we still have, or the continuing need for improvement, I think we still have very important issues really about 2 areas, one I would say the most disadvantaged communities, which is an agenda which is not by any means the overwhelmingly the responsibility of HE, but HE has a contribution to that. We sponsored some research in some, including in [city] North in disadvantaged communities, so you know we're, and community access and the role of communities is going to be very important. And the second thing I think is going to be making the links between schools and colleges and universities much more strategic, universities have huge outreach links to schools, but they're much still not strategic I think, they're still primarily about marketing, they're not as strongly focused as they could be on disadvantage, and I think the issue we've got to really address as a society is the real risk that we create an underclass, that predominantly you know lots of mobility from people who are already some way up the ladder, and the bottom of the ladder just falling off and not being part of the ladder at all, that's the risk.

*Yes, what do you realistically expect to be achieved in the next 5 years? Will there be reserved places for underrepresented groups? Will there be free childcare? Access officers reach 3rd level institution, outreach strategies for each community?*

The answer to most of those is there won't be reserved places as such, we, I think we'll, I think it very unlikely that we would get into a situation where we have reserved places. What we will have is I hope institutions which should admit on the basis of a holistic assessment of students' abilities and potential to succeed using contextual information and all of that. So that I think we will see. And I think we are seeing outreach strategies for each HEI, we are asking for that and that's what we're getting. The other things, free childcare I think is very unlikely on a HE level and it would be a matter for Government provide or for institutions to decide to offer and I don't think it, it's not realistically going to be funded.

*OK priority target groups, I think in a sense we've done that in discussions (rustling papers)*

Yes.

*Prison education? Does HEFCE, how does HEFCE bother, sorry(!), does HEFCE have a particular view on HE? There obviously are HE students in prisons.*

Yes there are, oh we've gone over the page. Yeah, we don't explicitly have a policy in that area, we've been in some discussions with the LSC which does have a policy for offender learning. We're interested in 2 things, one is education of people in prison and clearly the Open University is the most important single provider but it's not the only one, a number of other institutions have had a tradition of that. But

also and very importantly, progression from prison education into HE when people leave prison. And there I think there is an important issue because it's possible that, I suspect probably that the OU may be a very good model for people in prison though there are some important issues about on line learning in prison because of access to the internet and stuff, but once people leave prison it may be that they need a more supportive form of learning, and therefore the transition from the OU into other institutions is something that probably needs more work, and that's something that should be the OU working in partnership.

*OK, outreach strategies, what can national Government do to support outreach to engage the, those who have become formally, sorry become alienated from the formal education system? What can HEFCE do?*

Well we do a lot. I've talked about the things that we do, we fund outreach from institutions and we are requiring institutions to produce outreach provision that is accessible, and that is about reaching to the most disadvantaged communities.

*But you're looking to the institutions to come up with those strategies and those ...*

Primarily, but we also support direct outreach activities through things like Aimhigher. So it's a combination, we believe that there are, that the prime responsibility must lie with institutions, but that there are important ways in which we can support collaboration between institutions and LLL, that whole set of structures which we've got to try and build the bridges between sectors.

*Are at risk target groups involved in designing or implementing outreach approaches to reach those most excluded from education?*

Probably less than they should be.

*Right.*

I think it's fair to say. I think that one of the things that I've picked up from these questions is an issue for us in looking at the whole question of the learner voice. In outreach I think there's lots of learner voice participation within HE but in outreach I think it's probably less developed and it's something that we need to think about.

*Well it's more difficulty until you've reached the ...*

Yeah, yeah.

*Government ministries putting childcare funding, which, what Government support childcare funding and availability for the adults who want to attend adult education courses, formal or informal ...*

We are not allowed directly to support students.

*OK.*

Right, we support educational provision. Government does have an Access to Learning Fund which is a way of providing support to those which we formally administer on behalf of Government, but it's not part of our grant as such, it's a separate strand of funding which Government asks us to administer on its behalf but it is not our funding in that sense. And it is really for Government to decide student support in all directions and this childcare is part of student support.

*Many traditionally, many people from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds have no space at home to study, what physical sites would be made available for them to learn in?*

HEIs do offer all of those learning sites and facilities. Obviously for those students who are residential in HE their housing ? convention (25.02) which is connected into study and there's a study space but universities do provide study space and they also provide outreach, either through FE colleges where they work with FE colleges, or in the community in a variety of different ways. So there are a number of things that they do but again it's not something that we formally require or fund directly.

*OK, efforts to get schools to be sites for adult education in the community? I mean ...*

It's not something we very directly fund, no I think it's probably fair to say we don't directly fund. We, HEIs do deliver through schools and sometimes directly to school age pupils, sometimes in other kinds of ways and they use school buildings, but I don't think that's something that we directly fund. We don't stop it going on but it's not something we would formally recognise.

*And I'm just working down this final, yes the final page, national level strategies to support training or education, community leaders or teachers nearer to social deprivation, marginalisation.*

Well, again we don't have a formal strategy for that. We would again want institutions to design those kinds of strategies. I mean clearly I think, and again the TDA funds teachers directly and has a very explicit recognition of the need to reach disadvantaged communities and to make its workforce more representative of this facility, but those are issues which we don't directly fund.

*Which Government department funds libraries?*

It's DCMS if you're talking about public libraries, we fund HE libraries obviously and, though not as a separate funding stream, we support libraries in a variety of different ways directly but it's fundamental, we have a very small fund which supports some libraries, museums and galleries, some very specific ones. And we do all, for research purposes, that is primarily for research purposes, so there are some national libraries that get funded. But there are some initiatives for joint funding of libraries between DCMS and ourselves, so that there's some work going on particularly in Worcester it just so happens, where they're developing a joint library with the community, a public library joining with the university.

*I mean does HEFCE have a view on public use of university libraries?*

Not formally but what we do have a view of is that we think HEIs should be engaged with their communities. We fund community engagement, we've got what we call beacons of public engagement

which we fund, and included in that will be things like public access to university facilities of various kinds including libraries.

*Yes OK, well whistling through the last view, distance education for libraries I think we can cross over. Digital divide between different social groups?*

We do a lot of work to fund the GISC which is looking particularly at the whole use of ICT to support learning, and included in that we've funded some specific projects looking at widening participation and particularly also at progression from FE to HE. So we're concerned about that as an issue but it isn't something that is either central to the work of the JISC or central to our work.

*Right, do you have any recom, are there any recommendations which have come out of that work?*

There are some sets of recommendations which are a lot to do with trying to make digital systems speak to each other across different learning providers, so that's true in terms of student record systems, so that you can track learners which, there is work going on which we are joining in with to try and make you know a unique learner number for people so that they can be tracked through. And also for the different data systems to speak to each other. So the learning and skills, individual learner record and the HESA record will speak to other. But also in educational terms, in terms of virtual learning environments, those kinds of things, there are some, there is work there which I think will help but it's not, it's part of its agenda but it's got other elements to it as well.

*What about the recession, what effects do you think that's going to have on LLL in this country?*

I think unpredictable effects actually. Past experience has suggested that the recession has given a boost to LLL, in particular that people who, you know that as a result of the recession people have reskilled and felt the need to reskill and in other cases people who might have decided to go out into the workplace may decide to stay on in learning for longer. But clearly certain kinds of LLL are going to be put under more pressure. The other pressure that I think I'm ...

*Which kinds?*

Well I think employer supported learning, particularly the employer supported learning which is not very directly related to the employers' needs, so that where employers have had a quite liberal and progressive policy about encouraging their workforces to learn without a very very direct vocational focus, I think that would be more difficult. I think the other thing that I am worried about, very worried about, is that if there are pressures on public funding to reduce public expenditure as there will be, and HE bears its share of that, that is likely to mean that the most disadvantaged groups are going to find it more difficult to access, unless we can be very active into making sure that they don't. So it means that the widening participation agenda is more difficult but more important.

*Right, thank you. We've now reached 5 o'clock.*

I mean at 5 o'clock I've got a few minutes if you've got a few minutes.



*Well I've got a few minutes. There's a number of questions here, I think ...*

*From SP3 yes. SP3 was a previous ? project which did, but I think to some extent, in service training, teaching staff, we know that, or we know your answer to that anyway, do we, would reducing enrolment fees to help access for traditionally underrepresented groups be a good idea as something which national Government supports?*

Yes it does, it provides for full time students, it provides loans so it doesn't directly reduce the fees but for all students it provides loans, which means that up front students don't have to pay and it provides a system of grants and bursaries and requires institutions to provide bursaries in order to charge ? (33.32) fees. So there is Governmental intervention, most strongly for full time students, there is much less Governmental support for part time students, but it is there, there is some there.

*Right where we? Reduced costs for exam fees and books, are there any initiatives that might help to reduce such costs?*

No, I think is the answer directly. Institutions themselves do have all kinds of cross subsidising, but it's cross subsidising, it's not funded by the Government.

*Remedial classes during the year?*

Yeah.

*Does national Government support remedial classes at different levels across the year?*

Yes, yes it does, through the Teaching Enhancement and Student Success funding, it doesn't formally say here's money for remedial classes but what it says is for institutions that take students with more, more students with lower qualifications, they get more money to support those students formally and though they're open to all kinds of students, they're not restricted to ... But yes so there is explicitly a recognition that recruiting students with lower entry qualifications does require more support and that may take the form of remedial classes or drop in centres or all sorts of things that institutions ...

*OK, preparatory programmes to increase access for traditionally underrepresented groups?*

Yeah.

*Can national Government do something to encourage that or support it more or ...?*

Well it does, access courses if we're talking very specifically about access courses, are fully funded at level 3 by Government through the LSC and will continue to be funded. HEIs themselves have developed a number of forms of outreach which either they deliver themselves, for example year zero provision, or they work in partnership with FE colleges or other providers to deliver them. And they have for international students which includes EU students of course, all kinds of provision, bridging provision from FE, from entry into HE.

*Would a policy of reserving places for disadvantaged groups be helpful?*

I think not. I think there is a sharp distinction to be drawn between the way in which we have approached affirmative action, quote unquote, in this country from the way in which it's approached in the United States, where it's very explicitly, there has been a history of quotas and reserving places. We've always resisted it, in most cases it would be illegal, it would be very difficult to do anything other than breach the law, and it is our view and I think the general view of the culture that where people have disadvantages you should recognise and support them to overcome those disadvantages, rather than reserving places for particular groups of people. So the way in which we have in this country traditionally sought to address disadvantage is in a way which doesn't create quotas or reserve places, what it does is to try to help people overcome those disadvantages or, and this is the bit which is more controversial but which I think is entirely appropriate, or to recognise that 2 students with the same level of achievement, one of whom has come from, and overcome disadvantage and one of whom has not, the first one who has overcome the disadvantage has probably demonstrated more potential to succeed in HE than the one who has achieved without overcoming this barrier. So that whole question of contextual information to understand.

*But is that done principally at the full time under graduate level or does it affect ...?*

Well in a very direct sense it's done principally at the full time under graduate level, well or part time under graduate, I mean you know at the formal level if you like. I think there is an increasing recognition that we're going to have to start looking at post graduate provision and thinking about disadvantage in relation to access to post graduate provision, particularly because of the question of student debt building up over part time study and in a sense what we do about that.

Yes.

And I think that that's, but that's an issue, an agenda item for the future really, it's not something that we've really thought through as much as we should.

*Do you, I mean sorry ...*

I've got until about 10 past.

*Right, the thing that we skated over as we went through it was you mentioned the university challenge, the ...*

Yes the New University Challenge

*Can you, I mean from looking at that, not describing what its formal requirements are as it were, but say how it feeds into this particular agenda that we've been talking about today.*

What it's saying is that there are people who are geographically or spatially disadvantaged in their access to HE and that that disproportionately affects groups who are socially disadvantaged. In other words there are lots of people who live in rural areas who have very good access to HE because they can go away and study and become under graduate students. But there are people in rural areas for whom local access and also in towns, that don't have provision, for whom that is not what they're looking for,

they're looking for locally available, part time provision and they tend to be, it's mainly part time, or it's entirely part time, they tend to be more likely to be disadvantaged. So there is an argument which says that what you need is a distribution of HE, a geographical and spatial distribution of HE which makes it reasonably accessible to people so that they do not have to move to access it. Now the OU does an awful lot of that kind of provision but there is a view that there are different kinds of groups that want more traditional forms of education face to face and need it to be locally accessible. And that's why we've funded provision in places like Cornwall and Cumbria and in places like Hastings and Barnsley and Burnley and a number of different places around the country, and why we're looking to do some more of that, which is what Government has asked us to do.

*And is there a particular approach that's been taken to that? Is it working with the existing HEIs and asking them to move into ...?*

Yes, yes, it is overwhelmingly that, I mean we, all of those provisions, all of those developments have been with the existing HEIs, often working in partnership with FE colleges and because very often what you want is to make HE locally available and to build on FE provision. And it's often in partnership with RDAs and in some cases with large employers, you know all of those kinds of things. But the essential logic of the argument is that the traditional model of going away to study, the traditional middle class model of going away to study is something that is not appropriate for all people and that particularly more disadvantaged groups are more likely to want to have something more locally accessible. And also people who work and a whole set of other, and older learners may find it more difficult to ...

*Is there a perception that particular kinds of HEI are more appropriate for that kind of thing, or are taking it up more and more interested in doing it? I'm thinking here from the point of view of you know is it something you know post 92 universities are keen on and the Russell Group will hold up their nose at or is that too ...?*

Well I don't know about, I think it's, as a reflection of predominant trends that's probably true, but actually if you look at the University of Cornwall, combined universities in Cornwall, that's a collaboration between 3 institutions but the University of Exeter is one of them. If you look at some of the provision in places like, in Blackburn and Blackpool, University of Lancaster has been very actively involved. So I think, if I'm thinking through predominantly it has been post 92s, but those are the key examples of pre 92 institutions, research intensive institutions which have been involved, so it's not ...

*There are examples but it's not ...*

Yeah I would think predominantly that that's the case. I mean Sussex and Brighton are collaborating in the South East coastal communities work, so there again you've got 2 different kinds of institutions. Russell Group institutions have, I'm just trying to think, in terms of directly outreach into those communities, they would do it in different kinds of ways, but they're very committed to it, lots of work which Russell Group institutions have done for access, but not specifically that I can think of in centres in new communities. Another example of course is Birkbeck working in East London.

Yes.

So there are a number of institutions, pre 92 institutions which have worked in that direction. OK? Has that been useful?

*That's been helpful, yes thank you very much.*

And it's been useful to me because you've made me think about a question which I probably, or these questions have made me think about a question which I've not thought about enough. And I really must dash because otherwise my trains get very infrequent!

*Indeed, well thank you very much.*

And if there's anything more that you want don't hesitate to drop me a line or if anything doesn't make sense or all of that.

*Thank you very much.*

And in terms of writing it up if there are things where you, I know it's all supposed to be anonymous and all of that, but if there are things where it would be useful for you either to have a quote or to look at some official policy document, again don't hesitate to get in touch.

*Thank you very much*

## 5.6 Interview transcription 2

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was a non-departmental public body which began work in 2001, taking over the roles of the former Further Education Funding Council and Training and Enterprise Councils. LSC was responsible for planning and funding high quality education and training for everyone in England other than those in universities. The Council has national office in Coventry and nine regional offices overseeing the work of local partnership teams throughout the country.

David Brown<sup>76</sup> is a director of economic development for the [region] based in [city].

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*Tell me about your role here, you're the economic development director?*

Yes so the LSC is divided into 9 regions across the country, this is the region[al department] and then it's divided into local offices and we're sitting in the [city] office. My role is as director of economic development for the [region] based in [city] and essentially it's, the nub of what I do is try to ensure that the skills ?(00.36) is part of the wider holistic economic development and regeneration agenda of other public organisations. So we try to promote skills, essentially through partnership work and through our own funding streams as well so that skills become inseparable from the bigger economic development picture. So that's really what I do. And as well as being in control of some budgets for the region, most

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<sup>76</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

of the activity I've been involved in recently has not been focusing on economic development and regeneration regrettably, but has been focusing on the economic downturn.

*OK.*

And there lies an issue for all of us because those individuals who you are particularly interested in who are in a sense furthest away from LLL and employment and training are now in danger of being marginalised even more because undoubtedly our attention and our funding has shifted to a much larger base of individuals who find themselves without a job and try to give them the skills they need to get back into that job. So for those people who have unemployed for 6 months, 12 months and less, their children are unemployed and their grandparents are unemployed and they've always been unemployed, that's a marginalised group, they find themselves, not purposely or wittingly actually but inevitably almost at the back of that very very long queue and that's one of the consequences we're trying to address at the moment.

*And now the focus on skills, is that really about employment, is that the central ...?*

It is, I think the Government, I mean the LSC has been around for nearly 10 years as a funding agency and it probably came about with the agenda of trying to shift the emphasis away from purely funding learning for learning's sake, my background is very much further education where you know ironically what goes around comes around, because LLL and we kind of have this phrase which I was using 15 years ago, the sector was using 15 years ago and then it sort of lost its kudos. And the LSC was very much about steering public funding in towards enhancement of skills for work and that's been the drift of the agency's funding direction. We've not been entirely successful in doing that, or unsuccessful depending on your perspective, but we have moved a lot of public resource away from funding LLL in that broadest sense, people who come and learn for leisure or who learn a particular skill for a whole range of reasons, social as well as education and we've moved it largely away from that to this is a qualification driven funding and in essence it's to enhance your skills and to enhance the skills of Great Britain Plc. Because particularly following the Lynch report, there's nobody now in the education sector certainly who is not aware about declining position internationally and we must do something about that. Whether the way we're going about doing it is the right way, the jury's still out but that's where we've shifted very substantial amounts of public money towards qualifications for employment. And the LLL agenda I would say, it's interesting actually because I heard the phrase only at a conference two days ago, it may be having a renaissance because you know now you're here talking to me about it again but it's not been on the agenda I don't think in that way, in that broadest sense for a long long time, as we've pulled funding out of that area towards a sort of something for something mentality.

*Right.*

So LSC funds all 14 to 19 year education, sorry all 16 to 19, that's where most of our money goes, a little bit of 14 to 16 on vocational diplomas and then all of adult education and training. So right up to pre, in terms of traditional routes, we don't fund the ageing (?) sector but all of FE, all of the private training providers, all of that vocational side as well as school 6th forms, so it's a very large quango (?) which as you probably know is about to be broken up to other quango!

*Yes! What would, oh a 2 part question, first what does an annual budget look like and 2) how are you funded?*

What is the annual budget of the LSC?

*That's right.*

They're the kind of questions you don't want. It's about £10 billion and so that breaks down to a local area like [county]shire would be about somewhere in the region of £230 million, £240 million, that sort of size. It's a lot of cash. I have to say the proviso for all of that is most of that probably up to about 80% of it, probably 75, 80% is we are almost passporting it, my colleagues might disagree with that word but in essence we have to fund the 6th form colleges, we have to fund young people's education and apprenticeships etc, the discretionary element is being squeezed out of the system by a more directive Government policy. So it's a very substantial quango and the drift now is towards breaking that up and breaking, and I think also regrettably, revisiting the distinction between adult learning and young people's learning in terms of creating two funding agencies and giving the money for young people back to the local authorities to commission the work.

*So you talked about partnership and you talked a little bit about the different kind of areas where funding is allocated, can you tell me a little bit more about partnership, for example prisons or universities or colleges?*

So we would work with our largely public sector partners such as, in relation to this agenda, such as the voluntary community sector and their consortium that they have. We'd work with Jobcentre Plus in order to access and help the unemployed. We'd work with local authorities in relation to their agenda to tackle poverty, deprivation, the local area agreement with I have to say a somewhat bureaucratic approach to addressing issues, we are heavily engaged in all of that. Public sector compacts, another vehicle for us to access, to get our funding to the right client groups. The list goes on in terms of regional organisations such as the RDAs, regional development agencies, Government office, not so much with universities although I have to say that does vary from area to area. [region] has been a pretty light touch in terms of that, we partner them on forum, but we don't fund hardly any of their activity, little bits but hardly any. So I think we try to, and we have to for statutory reasons, play our part in addressing the holistic bigger picture agendas such as I say community cohesion, tackling poverty etc, and we try to bring what resource we have to make sure it comes to bear and is aligned with those who have other funding like the RDA and their subsidiaries. And there lies a national issue because each agency, each bureaucracy, each sub regional set up has its own targets, it's own agendas and I spend a disproportionate amount of my time trying to make sense of that, I wouldn't say on the ground but we're closer to the ground, by saying well we've got this money, you've got that money, we're heading in the same direction, let's try to align it a bit more closely. And that takes an awful lot of time of public civil servants and local authority officers I think. That's just an observation, you know we are where we are, each Government announcement makes that picture more complex and each minister likes to make a new announcement!

*Yes!*

So that's what we have, we have lots of individual ? (10.01) and in my area it's just the tip of the iceberg really. I mean if you talk, as I'm sure you have, if you talk to others as equally about whether the range is health or mental health or policing, anti social behaviour. I mean my involvement in local area agreements has opened up a whole other world which I'd rather not have been opened up to actually about the complexity of their agendas outside my world of education and training. But I think the thing that this Government to its credit has tried to do has, is a sort of recognition that you need to work together because if you spend, you know what's the best way to tackle anti social behaviour and deprivation in the inner city? Is it to give large sums of money to those individuals who find themselves in that position or is it to give it to the LSC to help fund their education and training and get them into work? So I think that, I don't think we've got an answer to those kind of questions but I think it's been very, I think that's one of the positive things to come and where LLL obviously fits right in the centre of that as a cohesive agenda for, because not just good for its own sake but good because it has all these spin offs for all of our agendas. I think the tendency however has been to burden us all, if that's the right word, with insular targets, so we've tended, we've said oh yes we'd like to cooperate with you but we have this target to meet and this is where we're spending our money. So there's always that tension which is easing off a little bit at the moment but you wouldn't get a more target driven agency than the LSC, we're absolutely, you know we're fixated on our targets! Interestingly whether that will continue of course because a lot of what's happening in the economic downturn has meant that we're skewing off some of those, they look unattainable for obvious reasons. But Jobcentre Plus similarly are having to go back and say you know you gave us this target, it's not realistic, ??? (12.27)

*Yeah, now across these different kind of agendas, are there any central committees, for example in the LSC with specific responsibility for different things, for example social inclusion, access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups, LLL, literacy, the non formal education sector, are there different committees for these different areas?*

Yes, although again it depends on which geographical sort of spatial area you're talking about. But as a very broad generalisation, all of, not all of the ones you've mentioned but certainly nationally, regionally and sometimes locally you would have office(r)s and sometimes committees to address each of those agendas, not all but say for example you'd have heard of LLDD pick somebody who is the lead on LLDD in the regional office, we wouldn't have somebody who was the lead on social inclusion or poverty, that's a little bit sort of lateral, peripheral but it, we've very much got a lead for a range of others which would fall as I say under the LLL issue. I'm desperately trying to think of some, ESOL for example, that's a specific area, ethnic minority under representation, again there's a specific committee, there's a specific, so yes there's a whole infrastructure, of mixed effectiveness I would say you know, I don't have a particularly informed view on whether that's the right way to address all of these agendas, I'm not sure. But certainly the infrastructure is there within the LSC to do that.

*OK, now within the areas where there is infrastructure, are there representatives from at risk target groups that would be a part of these committees or offices?*

It's just slightly outside what I would know to talk authoritatively about. My feeling is no, my feeling is that that's not the culture within the LSC. We are a funding agency, so we are in some respects at arm's

length if you like. Having said that there are areas where we do get involved directly with clients, customers, individuals but they would be probably not at our instigation mostly. So you know we'd be party to voluntary community groups but you know, at which we would meet individuals and representatives from the community, but we wouldn't necessarily be the drivers of that if that makes sense. So that would relate in all of the areas I've said. We will invite them formally into our committees. Where the exception is on that is employers where we do have an employer engagement agenda, so that's the kind of one area I would say where we stand up and say we must have outside representation of what we do, to inform what we do, but not on the underrepresented groups, I don't think.

*OK, now where there's not any infrastructure around, you mentioned social inclusion and poverty, where there's not maybe committees or offices directly engaged with that type of work, are there plans for the LSC to develop policy in this area or ...?*

I didn't say there wasn't policy ...

*Policy, maybe I should say developed committees or ...*

Yeah you're bound to find documents where every at every base I'm sure it will be covered and I think obviously we have a ? driven ? (16.17) in many areas that we have to participate as such a significant Government funding agency. But I'm not aware of plans to change that and of course we're now very much into, this may not particularly interest you, but we're now very much into sort of wind down mode, so the LSC will be replaced by the Skills Funding Agency but it will also, that will be the adult part, but we'll also be replaced by the Young People's Learning Agency, so the idea of the LSC now having a coherent how we're going to develop, that's gone, it's the new agencies that will pick that up and as yet the smoke hasn't cleared, actually if they're going to be different at all. My feeling is that with the Skills Funding Agency it will be even probably more one step removed from an active meet and greet agenda with those who are, or who are in a position of being socially excluded etc. It's not what we're going to be doing I think in the future.

*And do you have a sense in the new movement in a new direction what will happen to the agenda's access for example or LLL, do you get some ...?*

Well I think, these changes by the week, but I think probably across Britain at the moment the movement for these agendas is more towards local authorities. I mean my general take on it would be that the local authorities are in the ascendancy in relation to funding and expectations and statutory requirements etc, and we're moving towards quangos like ourselves as being a conducive funding and policy rather than on the ground presence. I mean we're talking in the new set up of field offices, you know, but I think that would be quite light touch ish or certainly lighter touch than we have. Now, and I think, you see the new administration which will undoubtedly come with the Conservatives, they may change all that, they don't like a lot of what I've just described, they like the local authorities I think surprisingly enough because most of them seem to be going Tory at the moment, going Conservative, so they might continue that trend, but certainly the RDAs I don't think they'll like any of the post LSC structures, I think they'll change quite a lot of it. And what direction they'll go in I don't know. Certainly



in terms of, we're expecting, I would expect a more extreme version of what I've described for the LSC in that I think they'll have a smaller funding organisation to dish out the money, that's it, not to drive agendas particularly, and that means that they'll be picked presumably on, closer to the chalk face by councils, I assume.

*OK, oh that's interesting. In terms of, are there specific structures for communication? I'm thinking at a strategic level between local, regional and national levels with regard to issues of social inclusion or access to education, LLL, these various areas that we've touched on. What kind of strategic communication exists or partnership exists, if any?*

Again that's a big question and I'm not sure I can answer it adequately. Again my impression is, if I was telling you the party line I would say that, and this must be the case to an extent, that at our national office in Coventry there is open and closed dialogue between what our funding agency does and that of other similar bodies like Job Center Plus, like the national, like Ofsted, the inspectorate such as the national voluntary sector organisation. So you know I would say that there is a line of communication and therefore I would be amazed if there wasn't a forum on which there is a process in place. I think you probably however want to take that, I refer it back upwards, because I think the question is about well what's the communication at a ministerial level and between departments? And the only ones I'm even partially familiar with is DIUS and DWP and whilst they seem to meet pretty frequently, the officers, I'm continually reminded of the poor communication at that level in relation to the skills and employment agenda and I, being a little bit of a cynic, can't help thinking that it's not as bad in local areas is what I'm saying, you know but I couldn't really give you chapter and verse on what committees exist, how effective are they etc, that's just a general impression.

*OK, does the LSC provide any support for individuals with specific responsibility for developing adult education services at a local or regional level?*

Yes. What do you mean by adult education services?

*Well I think it can be meant quite generally. These questions are used across European countries, so sometimes they might be too ...*

Let's go back to what I said before, we fund it all, so with the exception of higher education nothing really moves without the LSC funding it, with a few peripheral exceptions. So we fund what's called PCLD, now you're going to ask me what that means and I'll have to think about that one, while I'm trying to remember(!) which is basically the old, what was called leisure learning, so we fund that. Now we give that out as a contract and if you take [county]shire as an example it's run by [city] County Council and I believe a college in the centre of [city]. So they organise the brochure, the courses etc, so that would be part of our funding. Then the other, we're talking here for adults. Then the other part of our funding is the adult learner responsive budget which we give to largely but not exclusively I think, to colleges to put on courses for individuals post 19. Then we fund the employer responsive budget which again goes to a range of providers to respond to the needs of the economy and the employers, which is about qualifications for adults. So there's I think I'm correct in saying, three principle pots of money there, the latter 2 are much larger than the first one I mentioned, the PCLD fund, the leisure learning if

you like. So it's really about qualifications for adults, qualifications for adults via their employer and that gets large slabs of money from us. Again backing up all of that you've got those other funds that you referred to earlier on, such as OLAS, which we also fund which is education in prisons and education and training for prisoners who are on probation and help with the voluntary and community sector again to engage adults etc. So underneath those very broad headings there's a raft of other things, significant but declining chunk of money is the ESF which we also administer on behalf of the Government for education and training.

*OK, are there structures for dialogue in a common strategy with Government departments, for example education or justice or employment on a national level? I'm think of a partnership ...*

Yes, I say yes because I don't know what else to say really. It's a kind of a yes. I'm not party to any of that but we have a grant letter from the minister which says this is what you've got to do for the coming year, this is what I'm giving you money for, public money, go away and do it. But after that there is an ongoing dialogue about proposals that we come up with has to be agreed by ministers if – there's little or no leeway actually but as I say there are new initiatives which we are increasingly the, we are an active of having a proactive dialogue on I would say.

*OK, so when you, when the LSC has, I mean what I'm getting at is do you propose things to ministers and you're really an implementation ...?*

I would say increasingly so. You might get a different view from and national colleague or somebody else who is here who might say no, no, no, in the past we have said to ministers for example that we should be more proactive in taking on the role of providing pre employment training for those people who have been made redundant. We propose that to ministers, they thought that that should come via us and we did the background work and presented it to them and they agreed. The nuances about who said who through what I don't know, but I've heard that presented in that way in the past. I think at the moment it tends, it's increasingly the other way round, so Gordon Brown makes an announcement and we scurry round and implement it.

*OK, now I'm getting the set of questions are about national and regional strategies, so if you want to speak from kind of an [region] perspective that's fine too, but are there specific strategies on behalf of the LSC for access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups?*

Yes there are. We have a, the ones I mentioned earlier on, we have strategies for each of those.

*OK, OK, so in terms of where there is committees, or there's an infrastructure, there's likely to be a strategy?*

Yes, and if there's a regional member of staff, an officer, it wouldn't necessarily be a director, although there is a director who is responsible for LLDD but it is a, you know it's incumbent upon those individuals to have a strategy about what they're doing in the region and on behalf of the LSC, that then goes

through our regional management team, they sign off the strategy and it informs our activity and our funding.

*OK, and with these strategies, for example access to education or LLL are there specific targets set for progress? You said it's quite target driven?*

Yes undoubtedly yes, sure, for those very vulnerable marginalised groups yes there are. Yeah we have and LLDD plan with associated targets within yeah.

*OK and with those targets is there specific funding allocated for the progress?*

Yeah.

*OK, if you can give me an idea, do you know about the percentage of the budget that goes to adult education?*

No.

*OK, either formal or non formal ...*

I think I'm giving you a kind of an idea ...

*OK that's fine.*

... but it's a very ball park figure, I think it would be about 20%.

*OK goes to?*

Goes to adult education, but I might be wrong, but that's what I've always, yes that's what we've always worked on, because the sheer numbers involved of our budget in the sort of 16 to 19, that's where you know, and also of course that's all full time education, so that's disproportionate, the actual number of learners is probably less, I know it's less, it's a lot less then the adult side, but they're obviously doing very thin bite sized little qualifications or no qualifications at all, a few hours a week, that might be it. Full time education that's where most of our money has to go.

*OK OK, so now in terms of that kind of funding that's allocated to adult education, do you know what percentage might go to formal education versus non formal education? So education that yields a qualification or certification and that which doesn't maybe more leisure learning?*

No I don't know, but I would guess that it's mm, I would guess about 95% of it is geared towards qualifications. If you'd asked that question 10 years ago it would have been a very different proportion but we've been driving towards you know funding outcomes you know qualifications, that's been the mantra that we've been saying to all of our providers and we've shifted the look of further education quite substantially, which has had its supporters and its critics, depending on how you, you know how precious you felt about what we did before. And you know certainly the, and I measure education rather on the cells that whole side(?) of it non qualification education and training have complained bitterly that they, whilst there is a guarantee for their level of funding, it's just too low. It's guaranteed

at too low a level and you know particularly with the, they often see that as a not qualification, training and education as a way of engaging people and moving them on to qualifications and further progress in their life and their employment. So they complain that the reduction of that budget has you know *de facto* pushed people further away, and they might be right. I think when we looked at it, I say we, when everything was looked at, a significant proportion of the PCLD budget, the adult leisure learning budget was and still is spent on the 3rd age sort of learners for which there is a weaker economic argument and I think the hard-nosed response was well if they want to do those things then they have to pay for it. The public would not pay for that, we will pay for things for the good of general society and ... you can argue against that but it is difficult.

*Sure yeah, yeah. How about measures taken by the LSC to support adult learning, both in urban areas and in rural areas? Is there more of a proportion of the fund ... You know what kind of ...*

Sure, if you look at something like ESF, I mean ESF is specifically focused on the most deprived and we will, that money has been poured into areas of deprivation. Similarly we've been involved in things like the city strategy initiatives for the central Government and again that's focused on the most deprived wards, the most deprived areas, the most deprived learners and so there's a great emphasis on that, so much so that in an area like [county]shire you have, the other or the alternative argument would be to say well what about the rural areas and the small market towns, particularly, I don't know how well you know this area, which have still not fully recovered from the decimation of the mining industry 30 years ago. So there are areas in [county]shire where people still don't work and haven't worked since that time, for a wide range of reasons. So it works both ways. I think the somewhat depressing thing for me is that I don't think that the partner agencies probably across the country but certainly in this area, have found the, I don't want to mix my metaphors, the key to the door to really make a big change, I think what we've tended to do is we've done all the right things and produced all the right policies, statements etc, about focusing resource on the most needy, but in doing that have we crossed that Rubicon about you know breaking that cycle of poverty in a deprivation area. So that's quite depressing for a sort of die in the ditch sort of socialist like me. You know where does that leave you with public policy because it, you know such, whether you want to call it social class or whatever you want to call it, these deprived groups have stayed stubbornly deprived and you know the streets on which they literally all live, we're getting very ? (33.27), they're still living there and their children are coming up in the same culture as them and we've failed as a public sector to break that cycle, not everyone, obviously every cloud has a silver lining and there's been some fantastic success stories, but statistically when you look at it, it's not been a good news story, I wouldn't say across the country but in large areas of the country I think that's the case and I find that massively and personally frustrating but I suppose not entirely unexpected. And I think we're still looking around at the moment and I don't think either this Government or the next one has any definite insight into this, about you know if all this money, all this public money that we've been pouring into the area of deprivation and disadvantage has not succeeded, you know where do we go now? It's a bit like really if we go back in this country to the sort of 60s and 70s with the comprehensive education and we moved away from selective education to comprehensive, it was going to be a great level playing field, it didn't happen, you've still got class structure, OK people don't wander around in flat caps any more, it's not as visible as it was, but in terms of an analysis of their

deprivation and disadvantage you know we've gone backwards, all the evidence suggests we've gone backwards. Young people's life chances, well you ...

*No, no.*

It's as bad now if not worse actually, some of the sociological data is suggesting we're going backwards in terms of ? (35.06) So it's massively frustrating and I feel that no matter how many committees we set up etc, you think to yourself well this is the wrong tune to be playing really. But if you then said well what is the right tune, much more difficult.

*Yeah, well the ...*

And then you come across, then a minister will come sweeping in in their car and they'll have agreed with the Treasury and they'll make a speech, I'm going to announce, I know I'm going to announce a city strategy, here you are [city], or here you are Manchester, here's some extra money to spend on the deprived people and we go great, this is really good news and then we spend it the best way we possibly can you know and it's own, I wouldn't say it doesn't make a difference because every bit helps but it doesn't have a step change difference, we fail continuously to make a step change. There you go, that's ...

*That's really fascinating.*

That's my soap box for the day!

*What is a fat cap?*

A flat cap.

*Yeah what is that?*

Well if you were to be studying social class in Britain ...

*Oh I understand.*

You could stand at a factory gate in the 1960s and you would know the social class of everybody who came out because most of the men, certainly in this area would be wearing a flat cap and probably 50 years ago pushing a bicycle. Now as you walk round the streets, there are indicators of social class, you know without sounding too ridiculous, very generalised you know, I'll give you some illustrations, tattoos are a good example that's one but not that reliable ... I was listening to the radio the other day, shell suits, you know people don't wear bowler hats any more but you know there are some indicators. So class is a little bit less overt than it was but it's still there in exactly the same way actually as it is in the States as well although you don't use that phraseology.

Well you can tell by the way I talk as much as anything else, you know the fact there's a university education, all these kind of indicators, they've all got a lot softer around the edges. When I was at university, only 12% went to university, now it's 48% you know. There's no doubt that university

graduates earn more but they don't earn as much more as they used to, in terms of the ... So there's all kinds of things where you could say well ... We're getting into a sociology sermon! It's all softened round the edges but it's still, when you look at life chances, it's actually as apparent and the agenda you're interested in about access, not just access actually but making that step change for people's individual circumstances, it's as bad as it was. So there's enough research to suggest it's going the wrong way. And you can go into any state class and look at a bunch of 6 year olds and know who their parents are and what they're doing and make some pretty unfortunate predictions which are quite likely to come true about their lives. So I think that's a grim situation I think for a meritocratic society that we're supposed to be. But you know I'm involved in it on a day to day basis and yeah you know I shouldn't get too depressed about it because we doing our level best as public servants you know, I feel every day I come to work it's worth coming to work for because I like to think I can make a difference. Now in my more doom and gloom moments I'm a little less confident about that! I'm certainly not as confident about that as when I first joined the LSC 6 years ago, I really thought I could make a, well it sounds a bit silly and naïve but I thought, I hoped I could make a difference and I have less hope than I had which is a bit grim.

Yes, issues of deprivation are robust, but the discourse of Government certainly sounds like it's in the right direction.

*Oh yes it is, it is.*

I think, I mean you're making very broad generalisations but relative to the States probably but not, you know the American dream I think is less, there's a more cynical approach taken to that here by perhaps the whole population. Now whether that's sensible or pessimistic I don't know but I think you know the idea that if we are in a meritocratic society, anybody can make it I think is less common here than it is in the States.

*Yeah certainly.*

I think, I may be wrong, you probably see it more than I am now if you're going into schools a lot, certainly you look at what happens to little kids' aspirations and you see them and they want to be astronauts and train drivers and then you know, then they're not quite so sure they're going to make it to that and in the end so many of them leave with no qualifications and vanish to a life of low skill, low wage.

*No, no, but there is a more swallowing of the dream, I think that's right.*

Education is not a sorting mechanism actually, or not, if it was to sort out the wheat from the chaff, if it was to sort out the able from the non able then education would be doing, I think probably doing us all a favor. Of course what it does is it compounds it, it doesn't actually sort it particularly effectively, so if you come from an upper middle class background, certainly if your parents can afford for you to go to private education you know you've got such a massive leg up and start, you're ahead in the race before you've reached the age of 4 you know. And that's not just Britain obviously because you know parents across the world can buy their child advantage and they do it here probably less so than in some other

areas. And you can't break that, but, and I think on the bigger agenda, there's a sense of frustration I imagine in this new, in the Labour administration and central Government that they haven't been able to make a bigger impact, that all that money they've spent seems to have produced the same ish kind of end product. We could have been having this conversation 30 years ago and if you're pessimistic 30 years in advance I think about these disadvantaged groups who are ... And you could say well that's a product isn't it of a society in which everything is relative, it's got to be somebody if it's on an equal society. But I think the size of the issue one would have anticipated that it would have shrunk in the time of boom over the last 15 years and I don't believe it really has. Unemployment has shrunk but other indicators, social, well social cohesion, anti social behaviour, all those other indicators don't look good at the moment, they've been stubbornly staying pretty much I think where they are, if not getting worse.

*In terms of the economic downturn, what happens to learning for learning sake, what happens to the social cultural purposes of LLL from your perspective you know, from the LSC?*

Well I think, I was about to give you my own opinion!

*Oh no you can give me that too!*

The LSC's perspective is LLL is facilitated by all of our funding streams as I've described them to you, that there is a protected budget for the LLL leisure element of the LLL agenda and we are putting most of our money and our effort as best we can into meeting the economy's needs and the individual's needs together which will, there is a strong belief that that will serve the country and all its inhabitants better. So the kind of logic and the policy direction is clear, the fixation with qualifications is in vogue at the moment and may continue to be so, who knows, as I say what kind of goes around comes around, so it will probably go out of fashion a little bit longer. The view at the moment, and I don't think there'll be much change in the next few years, is that as I say anything which isn't, that's not a direct line of sight to use as a, between a qualification and a skill enhancement and employment progression, anything outside of that with the exception of protecting the disadvantaged, everything outside has to be funded privately, it's market driven, you want to do something, you want to enhance your, you know whatever your current employment is at the moment, if you want to learn a language which may vaguely help you at some time in the future you know if you could speak fluent German, then you must pay for that yourself. If it's to help your employer immediately, then he or she must pay for that. And that's the general gist of policy I would say and I don't see a lot of change whichever administration comes in. Part of that comes down to and it's going to get tougher over the next few years is that we're now spending a very substantial proportion of GDP on education and training and we probably have reached the end of spending more, so where else is there to get it from, it's from the individual because that's what they want to do. And so I think we're going to see things like university fees raised undoubtedly and that will have, in my personal view a very detrimental effect on this agenda and it will enhance the divide between those who have and those who have not, and those who are willing to risk going onto higher education you know in the economic downturn where you're no longer guaranteed a job at the end of that HE stint to pay off your debt. So I think we're going to see quite a lurch backwards in terms of the progression of the most disadvantaged through education and training.

*Going back to some of the percentage of the budget, what percentage is spent, what percent of the budget goes to, individuals from different educational backgrounds? So the lowest level to maybe the highest skilled background, what percent, or in ? (47.23) strategies where's the target?*

Yeah I'll tell you that in very broad terms. Nearly all of the LSC's expenditure is focused on level 2 and level 3, you know the GCSE equivalent and A Level equivalent, we spend virtually nothing on HE because that's not our remit, we do do a little stuff on Level 4 through NVQs and then we do spend again a relatively small amount on pre level 2 on things like return to study courses, level 1, basic skills is a big agenda for us. But the vast bulk, I couldn't give you a percentage that was accurate, but I would again think we're talking in terms of 80, 85% is on level 2 and on level 3, I would have thought it's as strong as that. I would think.

*OK, now there's, I suppose these questions are trying to get at national policy and sort of the formal educational sector, so if anything, if you can't sort of speak on this that's OK, but I'll ask it nonetheless. Is there any incentive for institutions training teachers to reserve places specifically for underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, traditionally disadvantaged groups, so that they can become teachers, is there any reserving of places specifically for different groups that you know of?*

You're right with your first assumption that I won't know, but I'd only know as somebody who's interested in the area. The Government as you know, although I'm a bit hazy about this, has initiated a number of schemes to attract and retain teachers into private areas. And again this is one of those which going back to the 60s they had EPA, Educational Priority Areas which did something similar. Now whether they have a kind of ethnic minority encouragement I'm not sure, they tend to be a, if you stay in this tough school we'll give you an extra payment sort of approach, or if you do maths or golden hellos and that kind of thing. So I don't think there's any which is directly related to specific groups but I may be wrong.

*And what about for reserving of places not just for teachers but for ethnic minorities or other traditionally disadvantaged groups so that they can enter courses for different professions or maybe so that they can be of particular influence to ...*

I think the whole use of your is interesting about reserving of places it's a bit of an anathema here that you, my impression is that the British education system has veered away from quotas, I know they tried in the States a bit, but I don't think that features. What you would get however is financial incentives, policy drives, recruitment drives, marketing drives which emphasise the importance of addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups. Now how much that translates into money and actual doing something different, you know it gets a little bit more hazy but if you, I can't really give you a decent example I'm afraid, but if I give you probably one that's on the top of my head and that is the, we have something called the EMA, the Educational Maintenance Allowance which you probably know and heard about which is a bit of a debacle this year because the company we employed made a complete hash of it and the young people didn't get their money when they should have done. But the gist of that is along the lines I think you're questioning on, that is about using public money to target more deprived young people to encourage them to stay on in education and give them the finances to do that, that's what



you would say that is about, the more deprived you are by index of your parents' household income, the more money you get up to a certain point. And I guess a number of other interventionist policies such as university grants you could say are the same, sort of maintenance allowances etc. for apprenticeships and everything else. So there's hardship grants that we give to our provides as well so that in extreme examples where an individual needs support and help whoever they are actually in relation to anything which would interfere with their studies we try to assist, we assist with assistance for sick parents, we fund a variety of schemes to ensure that they can leave their children in state nurseries, etc. So there are a plethora of interventionist strategies to help you know a range of groups that come under our funding. You know I think the policy direction is, generally speaking it's right. It's to facilitate access and to, once, and it's more than that, it's to facilitate progression and sustainability you know once you're in, that's just the first hurdle because can you afford to stay being educated and trained and where will it lead you to?

*And what obstacles and/or opportunities exist in the use of school building after school hours? I know that's a big kind of trend at the moment to use school buildings for adult education courses and LLL goals. What do you think the obstacles and opportunities are for that and does the LSC work in that area at all?*

No. No, that's all part of our, I mean I say no, again we're one removed. University for Industry, the UFI funding which is distance learning they use such facilities regularly don't they, and providers of leisure courses, colleges use schools, buildings in partnership for their adult learning, responsive budget you know to put on courses. I think it's a bit of a patchwork quilt. I have to say, and you've probably seen this more than most, schools shut down at 4 or whatever and they close, you know a few schools light up a little bit in the evenings but it's pretty poor I think, it's a poor use of public resource and I hope that the new buildings that we're putting up all over the country in schools will make a difference to that access policy, I am a bit sceptical about it. But we don't get involved in all of that.

*OK and are there particular gaps in employment and training for adults that you envisioned there'll be in the near future, or the LSC envisions developing?*

In employment and ...?

*And training yeah.*

For adults, particular gaps? Well I think the issue we have at the moment is I don't think there's necessarily gaps in the provision that's being put on, I think there's gaps in the way in which we, our, which we can provide it, I think the area, you've got the, one of the other parallel mantras that we work to is that we should meet individual needs, so it very much focuses on the individual. Now that's all very well but it's easy to write that in a policy document but to implement for a provider or a private sector provider is extremely difficult and to ensure the quality. So the idea that an individual can roll on and roll off a course sounds fantastic but the reality of it is that the whole of the FE structure finds that difficult to respond to. So we are, I think for obvious reasons in FE, still stuck in a sort of mentality of the course starts here and finishes there because most courses and so much learning is linear. Now you know if it's an educationalist, if there was one here in the room with us they would be probably be

saying whoa no, if you're learning at work you learn you know according to when the opportunities arise and that surely is bespoke to the individual. I think that's true when it happens at its best, learning at work. I think we are guilty, this is really off the party line, we are guilty of paying with public money to certify an accredit prior learning, the amount of actual training that we're doing at work I think is a bit grim, personally I have an old fashioned view of what training's about, in other words you don't have a skill today, you get trained and you have it tomorrow and you pay for that bit of training that you have. Now we don't, we do it like that, we have a person who, to whom the person gives the opportunity to develop the skill as they would do as part of the job, so you know you learn how to wire up this new light and you've not seen ??? (56.51)

LAUGHS

And you learn how to do that but you would probably do it anyway, and an assessor comes in, assesses the fact that you've done that and we give the assessing organisation money to do that assessment and then you get a bit of paper which says you've done it. Now many people seem absolutely happy with that, that's accrediting prior learning or learning at work, it's much better than say many of them taking the person into a college and saying this is how you do it, everybody this is how you do it. I'm not so sure, I think, we pay for a lot with public funds that we needn't have paid for but we're very much driven, and I go back to what I was saying earlier, by if you can wire that light up it gives you a bit of paper that says you've got a level 2, ??? and then we put that on our statistics and say look how many level 2s we've got. So we're very much driven by a desire to show that the British adult population is becoming more skilled, even though sometimes we're actually just recording the level of skill that they already have. That is not an official LSC line.

*Oh no that's OK! In your opinion can the LSC support outreach attempts, to reach those who aren't traditionally engaged?*

Yeah and we've done that and I think that's, all kinds of, if you look at the work that we do and the funding we give to the voluntary community sector, the contracts that we issue for private providers, the word 'outreach' actually doesn't seem to feature so much but in the community you know you can't get through a funding specification without saying meeting community needs and you know it's going on everywhere. Now again once it's going on everywhere I think it's very difficult to maintain the quality of that, so there's some pretty dodgy stuff that I don't think we're really getting value for money, or anybody's getting value for money for actually. But you know you have to live with that and if you want community outreach work it's expensive, it's difficult to do effectively and the hit rate is quite poor in terms of you can be in the community but you know you've got to be in a building somewhere and getting the community to come in to you is another thing altogether. I speak as somebody who used to go round many many years ago, years and years and years ago, we had a bus which we used to take around a learning bus! You know the old double decker routemaster buses from London and the college I was working at. At that time we had money, we converted the bus into 2 classrooms, classroom's the wrong word, learning centres and I would drive the bus on to council estates and we'd park up and occasionally we'd get one or two learners coming and we would engage them in learning.

*Really?*

Yeah, occasionally. But it was very expensive, you had to, so yeah that's, to be fair there's learning buses all over the shop.

*Sure OK oh that's interesting, I've not heard of the learning bus.*

Oh yeah they're good, conceptually they're better than they are actually on the ground, there's an awful, but they can be part of a jigsaw, they can be a part, you need a lot of promotion and you need really excellent staff to do that, not your traditional staff.

*Is there anything that I haven't asked about the LSC that seems particularly important for a study on LLL or access, I always like to finish an interview with the open question. If there's not that's fine, but if there's an area that hasn't been touched on that you think might be important ...*

Well I think you've certainly exhausted me!

*OK!*

So I don't think I've got anything to say, so if it's gleaned what you want or as much as I can give you, you know those answers to the more detailed proportionate budgets etc would have to be referred elsewhere to get the accurate answer, but I think I've given you, hopefully I've given you the drift of the general policy direction and the difficulties of implementation. And I've got nothing else really to ...

*That's exactly what I was after really, so that's great.*

### 5.7 Interview transcription 3

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The [region<sup>77</sup>] Development Agency is one of nine Regional Development Agencies in England, set up in 1999 by Government to bring a regional focus to economic development. EMDA is aiming to increase the economic growth of the region while reducing disparities between the [region] and other English regions. The Agency works in partnership with public, private and voluntary organisations to deliver the goals of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), which we produced on behalf of the region.

Mary Taylor<sup>78</sup> is skills development manager.

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*OK so if you, if we could just start with a bit broadly about EMDA, what's your role here?*

OK, I'm skills development manager in the skills team with main responsibility for our relationships with higher education institutions but also further education colleges and any kind of project to do with high level skills.

*And you've been here five years?*

Mm mm but I've only been in the skills team for, well it's about a year, previous to that I was kind of innovation knowledge transfer policy.

*OK and what are the different departments in EMDA, or there different areas of focus?*

OK the agency is split into four directorates, so there is regenerate directorate which the skills team sits in and that does a lot of capital investment projects, infrastructure projects, skills team and it has our partnerships team, so people that liaise with partners around the region, so that's one directorate. Then there is, you're testing me now! There's the corporate services which is kind of internal services so HR and finance and our internal appraisal team are all in corporate services. Then we have business services which is all the business facing activity that we do, so that's Business Link contract, Train to Gain contract, UK TI, innovation team, inward investment, that's sort of all in there, so that's kind of our business facing customer. And then the last one is our kind of policy and communications, so marketing and our pure policy team sits in that directorate and that also has at the moment the European team, so the ERDF team.

*And in terms of EMDA's role in promoting access, you know so what is EMDA's role in terms of education and access for adults to education?*

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<sup>77</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

<sup>78</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of institutions and participants.

OK well we have, what we follow really is the regional economic strategy, so our role is we write the regional economic strategy but we write it on behalf of the region, so we do a significant amount of consultation prior to developing any regional economic strategy and we've refreshed that every three years, the current one runs until 2020 I think. So the regional economic strategy at the moment, I can get you a copy of the kind of, just an exec summary but essentially it has three main themes, ensuring sustainability, ehm (laughs), productivity, productivity, sustainability and equality. So, and there are little words in front of that but essentially they're the three things. So everything we do should be around those three areas. We then have ten priority themes which everything else then fits into that, so we do have a strand on employment, learning and skills, that obviously encompasses adult education, but we do also have another strand around economic inclusion which is where obviously a lot of the quality and diversity work goes on. But they are separate strands so they, even though there are aspects that overlap they are dealt with by separate teams and in separate areas. So everything we do should fit into those ten priority themes. So within the employment, learning and skills then we have our main priority actions are around supporting the current and future workforce development, so 70% of the working population in 2020 is already in the workforce and things like that, so where we're looking at supporting, and a kind of shift in emphasis from education for eighteen year olds, you know that big group of eighteen year olds that go to university the demographics are changing so we have to stop and think about people who are already in the workplace.

*Oh right and in terms of you know, is there any central committee in EMDA with specific responsibility for social inclusion?*

There is a social inclusion adviser, so she would be able to speak to you separately, so we do have a kind of plank of work that she leads around social inclusion. But I would say probably it sits on the periphery of activity and they're trying to get it to be mainstreamed and for people to consider that for everything that we do.

*OK and is there any sort of central committee for access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups?*

I don't think so. We have an employment and skills partnership and they would look at kind of winding participation and access for disadvantaged groups as part of the work that they're doing but we wouldn't have one single thing that looks purely at that.

*OK and how about a committee that focuses on lifelong learning?*

We have projects that focus on lifelong learning, so I mean we have two HEFCE funded lifelong learning networks within the region and there'll be EMDA representation on those LLL networks. And then we also have a sub regionally funded equivalent LLL network which is called CHEER which is in the north of the region.

*OK, is there any central committee in EMDA that focuses on literacy?*

No.

OK.

Because we aren't responsible, we aren't the lead or responsible body for skills below level two, that's the LSC's responsibility.

*OK, and what about the non formal education sector, is there any committee that looks at that?*

That's kind of like professional development do you mean?

Yeah.

Well within the skills team we do work with universities around kind of professional development and CPD but again it's not in our main responsibility but we do support partners who do lead on that.

*OK and in any of these committees that we've been talking about, are there representatives from at risk target groups involved in any of these partnerships?*

I think where we would, if we were developing something specific then yes we would engage with certain groups to, in the kind of early research stages, there would be no point in us doing it without them, just doing it to them, we wouldn't take that perspective normally.

*And where there aren't representatives from at risk groups are there any plans to develop policy or monitor this in any way?*

I think you might have to speak to the social inclusion lady about that because she'll know what's either coming up or what's previously been done and why they want to change that.

*OK and is there any movement towards for example doing more in literacy or doing more in the non formal education sector? Is there any movement in different policy areas?*

I mean we are very much focused around work based learning, so the move to support people learning in the workplace rather than taking them out we're expecting the normal key demographics to take that standard education offer, so we do quite a lot of work with providers around changing their offer in order to target like the disadvantaged groups or specific groups that you wanted to allow and open up access to it. You know they may not be disadvantaged groups but they wouldn't normally either be able to access or have the confidence to access HE for example. So they'll have left school at sixteen and never gone back.

*Right, and is there, what are some of the obstacles in establishing any of these committees if you will in EMDA, is there any obstacles to getting these different things going?*

I think the issue is that it's not necessarily our responsibility, so we're either joining in other people's areas and trying to influence them, but we wouldn't be leading on it specifically because it's not, we don't, that's not what we're funded to do, we're an economic development agency and we have to look at productivity first.

*So if it fits within that focus you might see different strands of it but it wouldn't be you know an independent policy push on its own, but if it fits within for example I'm thinking of work based learning, if it fits into different target groups is that where you'd see some of that?*

I think it's difficult because we do separate, we very much separate kind of pure policy work to delivery, so the delivery of our projects and our kind of corporate spend within the region are, they are separate entities and so where policy development may be happening in this area the transfer over to it being kind of business as usual hasn't happened yet I don't think. I mean as part of the appraisal of any project they would look at access to our target groups, how, if and why, so that's part of the mainstream approach.

*And this is quite a general question but who might these different target groups be?*

We have our disadvantaged groups defined that we have to aim for, so black and minority ethnic, disabled and some are female dominated projects and also we do some work with kind of the aim higher targeted groups, so first into education from particularly geographically disadvantaged areas.

*Going back to some of the, as we're calling them kind of committees, but is there a position within EMDA for someone who looks at monitoring implementation of for example social inclusion?*

We do have targets around kind of specific disadvantaged groups so they would be monitored, but it's on a project by project basis and then it would be kind of collectively reported.

*And is there anyone appointed to specifically monitor access to education or LLL or do those run similarly?*

I think they would all, yeah, no, not specifically.

*OK, so if for example progress isn't kind of made in any of these areas is there someone who takes responsibility to push things forward?*

I think that would be our kind of, the policy lead would look at best practice and then try and embed that within the mainstream business.

*And in what ways does EMDA communicate on more of a strategic level between for example the national Government or between regional and local Government? What kind of strategic partnerships are there?*

I would say that we, our biggest commitment to kind of diversity and equality was in this regional economic strategy that we published, so it was the first time that it was you know one of the top three things that we were going to do, and we were the first regional development agency to say yes it's about productivity but not at any cost and we had the empirical formula that they used to kind of measure it prior to this and what they'll do at the end was develop specifically for us and took into account you know sustainability aspects and quality and that was the first time that that was done, so that was in 2006, obviously it was worked before that but it was published in 2006.

Sure.

So that would be our kind of number 1 message back to Government and it was really well received that we'd done that and other RDAs then took that on board and embedded that into what they were doing.

*OK and are there partnerships for example around social inclusion, specifically between EMDA and national Government at a strategic level?*

I would say there probably are but I don't know what they are.

*OK and what about access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups, is there any kind of strategic communication between national Government and EMDA?*

Only through Aimhigher sort of thing.

*OK, how about LLL?*

That would be through the networks I think and HEFCE directly.

*OK and anything with non formal sectors, is there any strategic communication about that between EMDA and national Government?*

I'm not sure.

*OK and how about between, on any of these, EMDA and local, is there any strategic communication or partnership between the regional and local levels?*

We have employment and skills boards which are done on a kind of sub regional, sometimes county based approaches where money's been devolved down then they have these implementing skills boards that look at the specific needs of the local region and then develop either policies or projects around those specific needs.

I noticed one of the, as you mentioned you do some work in widening participation and I suppose we don't use that language but that's I think what we're trying to get at in terms of access, is widening participation to education. So even though we're not using that language you know we're talking about it as access, I suppose that's you know what we're talking about.

*In EMDA is there any support provided for individuals who look to develop education services for adults at local and regional levels?*

I think it's difficult because everything we do is on a single project basis, so we have you know loads of projects and I would only know about kind of the ones that I'm specifically involved in, so (pause) can you say the question again?

*Yeah it's really asking if RDA provides support for individual who would be responsible for developing adult education services, so for example adult education, you know people who are organising services which would reach adults and ...?*



I guess we would support them as they developed it, I'm trying to think, I mean we have a project that you know will be starting soon which we've designed that will support businesses identify if they have skills needs within their business and their workforce and it will take them through the whole process of identifying the skills need, building together a package that's right for those people that are in that particular business, working with local providers, universities, colleges etc, and then embedding that within the business. So we have people that are supporting people to access because I think that's, it's not just a problem for disadvantaged groups or hard to reach groups, it's a problem for anybody, the education system does seem quite impenetrable for a lot of people. So even if they know what they want they don't know where it is.

*Yeah, yeah, so there are kind of, within projects there are people who might help to you know locate these services and facilitate access in that way.*

Yeah.

*OK, OK, is it possible at all to get a sense of the range of projects, would that be available on the website for example?*

LAUGHS I mean if you look on, when you came in the room and that's only just gone up yesterday!

*Oh it's great actually!*

So that's, they're our kind of showcase highlight things of all the things the agency has done over the last ten years. So there may be a document that goes with that that you could have a look at. But other than that we haven't really showcased a lot of what we've done collectively, we talk about the odd thing here and there on the website but it would be current, you know this has just been launched or this has done so many etc, but I think the focus of our projects are always that they're not individuals, our service is for the business or our service is for an organisation, we don't support kind of individuals very often.

*OK, that's interesting. In terms of kind of a regional strategy and you've mentioned the document that was published, is there a specific strategy for social inclusion?*

There's a whole chapter in there about social inclusion.

*OK and is that publicly accessible to be able to look at?*

Yes, yeah.

*OK, and is there a strategy within, or is there a regional strategy for access to education for underrepresented groups?*

I don't know whether that's in that particular part. Because we're not, we don't deliver education then I'm not sure that there would be anything specific but there is an aspect around opening up the opportunities available through HE so that may be just worded slightly different to what you've just said. I think there is that, I should have brought it with me.

*Oh no that's OK, but yeah so if it's publicly accessible then you know I can get a bit more of the background. Is there any strategy for LLL, or I should say regional strategy for LLL? Is that through the networks?*

Mm it will be through our, well there's two HEFCE funded networks and then the one that we've got.

*And how about, is there any regional strategy for literacy?*

Well I think the LSC has nationally got a target hasn't it to raise the number of learners up to level 2 but again that's they're, they're the lead for that and we would support, we do support them through the ESP, the Employment Skills Partnership, the LSC are members along with kind of Jobcentre Plus but we don't directly fund anything that's below level two.

*And anything, any regional strategy for non formal education sector?*

Not that I'm aware of.

*OK, yeah I think broadly speaking non formal wouldn't yield any sort of certification or qualification so it can be any type of professional development or education but just I think that's how we see the difference between formal and non formal.*

Mm I mean we do support things like graduate placement which is about them becoming more employable, you know employability skills and a couple of the LLL networks are working with professional bodies to accredit some of their modules that they've done and so I think it's, IMECKY (?22.09) is working with one of the LLL networks so that if people undertake specific modules that they've reviewed then they get so many extra credits towards professional development through that society. So there's bits of activity happening but not anything specifically cohesive I don't think.

*OK and with, if there's this, the chapter on social inclusion in terms of a strategy, are there specific targets set for progress, you know to monitor progress?*

Yes, they're in the document as well.

*OK and is there any specific funding allocated for progress on key elements within that strategy?*

Each of the ten strands has got a designated allocation fund in each year.

*And what, to the best of your knowledge what percentage of EMDA's budget goes to adult education both formal and non formal, just generally speaking?*

We don't fund education, we don't fund the actual delivery of it, you know we only would fund access, accessibility, supporting people to find the right provision. We would, we do fund some work with the universities where they're doing curriculum development but we don't fund provision.

*OK and can you comment at all on measures taken by national Government to support adult learning outside major cities in the country?!*

Why major cities?!

*I think it's trying to get at distance learning or something but ...*

OK rural aspects.

*Yeah and again this might be something that's more you know geared towards the national Government, like a representative from HEFCE for example.*

Yeah I mean they, HEFCE recently, well recently(!) a year or so ago, put out their core didn't they for the university challenge around university provision in more rural or areas that didn't have a specific city university or anything like that. I think the only area we had a kind of, we have a deficit of HE is in the North Notts and Derbyshire area of the county, so the Peak District there's very little provision up there. We did push quite a lot around broadband because we said that to enable people to access business support and education they would, in those kind of more rural remote areas they needed access to broadband, so we had big broadband for all campaigns and paid for lots of activity like that a couple of years ago. So I suppose in some ways that gets back to kind of the budget thing even though it's not quite adult education provision but there's, it's such a big area to try and understand because there are things like broadband or distance learning or ICT. Well we do pay for kind of capital infrastructure so we pay for like Stonegrave University to have a site out in Boston, so you know areas that really struggle who have very very low numbers going or accessing HE.

*And how about across all skills levels, what are the future plans to develop broadly speaking LLL or access issues?*

Well it would all fit under our kind of main priority actions in the employment learning and skills part of the rest, so it is about opening up opportunities associated with HE and supporting current and future workforce. So everything that we do would be around that in the skills teams specifically. I mean we're really trying to push businesses to jointly invest in skills development in their people and to co-fund provision.

*And so do you work, in terms of work based learning or, do you work with providers? So that would be regionally and what are some of the strategies?*

Well we've worked with Foundation Degree Four to try and encourage greater provision and curriculum development of foundation degrees and we're, we had a very very slow uptake initially but we're up to the national average now. We've supported institutions to kind of change their infrastructure to allow them to provide more flexible learning opportunities.

*OK, what kinds of things would make learning more flexible, I mean childcare or hours or ...?*

I'm trying to think, some of the employer engagement projects that have been funded by HEFCE but then we're part of the work that they're doing. I think it's the way that the course is delivered so it's moving away from a part time course just being a full time course delivered over a longer period, so about bits of distance learning, maybe an intensive week long session or day visits or delivery in

different areas, so the learners don't come to you, you go to them. So yeah different methodologies. Making sure that the library is accessible to people at all times of the day and night depending on when they need it.

*And with these you know different, pushing for these different kinds of strategies, is there any follow up on that, is there any help for providers to do that or I'm trying to get at is it more of a policy kind of push or ...?*

I think it's a policy push that we support that. The institutions have been funded by HEFCE to do it and so I guess we're just part of that change as it gets implemented.

*And in the experience that you have on these different projects are there any, is there any push towards more non formal, as in professional or personal development or community developments?*

Not that I'm aware of. I mean we would, I mean as an agency they support their own internal employees to do LLL and to do community activity and so people are given time and flexible working arrangements to allow that to happen, but I don't think it's something that we push any further. It's just part of the kind of HR policy I think of the agency.

*The next kind of set of questions deal with recognition of prior learning, so in your opinion what are the main obstacles to establishing a mechanism for recognition of prior non formal learning and work experience in order to open access for adults to the education sector?*

I think it's the inability to compare isn't it and to understand progression agreements I think with other institutions as well, so if you do kind of small bite size bits of learning to be able to package all of those up and take them somewhere else. And competition between the institutions I think, they're essentially competing with each other for funding and for numbers.

*And how can any of these obstacles in your view be overcome?*

They need to change the funding method so that part courses and students that would drop out say of a year, but the institution still gets paid for the first six months that they delivered or they may get top ups because it's harder to deliver, it costs more to deliver part time so they may need to think about kind of top up if institutions offer it in a more flexible way. It doesn't just cost the same amount just over twice as long.

*Yeah and what plans need to be developed for further flexibility of accreditation systems, I suppose both regionally and nationally?*

I mean this really is kind of HEFCE's area isn't it? This has got to be done nationally because it's got to be done irrespective of where the individual learner is, it's about kind of just which institution they're with at that particular point in time. So I'm not sure that there'd be much that we'd be able to do on that.

*And what in your opinion is EMDA's kind of priority issue in terms of widening participation for groups who are most at risk for under representation?*

I don't know, I mean I think the shift for us is to make sure that underrepresented groups are considered in the development of any project, so it's taking that and making it mainstream. So whenever you're developing any project that's available to anybody, you ensure that you consult with those particular groups so that they're not excluded. Just by saying a project's open to all doesn't mean that it's accessible to all, so I think just considerations and that should be probably the main shift or transition, so that it's not an add on and it's also not, if it's not necessary it's not individual discrete projects just for small groups, but there's flexibility built into any project to allow for those groups to access.

*And what changes do you hope will be achieved in for example five years time to promote access to different groups who are at risk for under representation?*

I think there will always be groups that are underrepresented but I'd like to think that actually with a bit of support or a bit of handholding they could get where they need to be but then you'll always have the groups that don't know where they want to be, so how can you tell them what they don't know or if they're not demanding it you won't do, you'll never be able to find it.

*And I suppose that gives the next question, what changes do you realistically expect will be achieved in five years to promote access for different groups who are at risk from under representation?*

I think things will have been, I think procedural wise I think things will probably be in place, so open access to kind of procurement opportunities as well as individual projects. I think procedurally they'll all be in place but again that doesn't necessarily mean that those underrepresented groups will still be able to know or find what they want.

*And will there, are there any plans for outreach strategies for different communities or do you hope there might be?*

I would say that we would review it in the next, when the RAS gets refreshed and things like that. I worry that a lot of the good work that's been done will now get stopped because of the recession. So because everything's now about productivity again and businesses then a lot of the work that was seen as nice to do, the budgets will be cut and we won't be able to do it anymore.

*So you do think that the recession will have some effects on widening participation on LLL? So it's basically budgetary and ...?*

Yeah, I think things like that would be down on the priority list.

*That's interesting, when we first developed these questions that wasn't one of them and it, you know it had to be tagged on and it's one of the more important issues I think.*

I think that's right, I mean a lot of the projects that we started or have tendered out were designed in a very different climate that we're in currently and are facing challenges themselves because what they were designed to do is not there anymore.

*Yeah that's right.*

So you know the landscape's definitely changed.

*So when you were bringing up the strategy that was drafted in terms of productivity not being the only thing, that there being other aspects, how do you see the recession impacting on that strategy?*

I think we will move back yeah, we'll move back to it being the only thing you know and maybe at any cost. I don't think we'll ever get back to, I think there are too many legal aspects to reasons why you can't do it at any cost but it will, I think it will get slimmed back to kind of what you have to do legislatively in order to comply rather than I want to expand that because it's a nice thing to do and that's the right thing to do. It will be what's the minimum requirement?

*Are there any strategies, I know there's no provision for example for adult education, but is there anything where there's pushes for reserved places, you know to facilitate access or to facilitate ...?*

A lot of our projects have kind of set numbers in them, so if say we have to, like a lot of the business support projects if they have to support say forty companies then there would be numbers in there where there has to be so many disabled owned businesses, so many female owned businesses, so many black minority ethnic owned businesses contracted to get their money as it were. And that has to be measured. And a lot of the European projects they have to measure that in a lot more detail than the single programme money that we have.

*Is there anything that EMDA has to do with prison education?*

We don't have to do it but we do, I think again the social inclusion adviser has done something about getting people back into work and we've also done some work around supporting migrant workers with either English or community understanding.

*Can you say a little bit more about that, either one, either the prison education or migrant workers?*

Well the migrant workers was designed because we had a big influx of migrant workers in kind of Stonegraveshire coast and also in the very south of the region and so there was a kind of a big push around getting those people skill, you know skilled enough to be able to be productive in the economy. But that's gone away a little bit because a lot of them have gone home because of the recession!

*OK that's interesting.*

And also you know in the current economic climate it was not seen as something we should really be doing when there are people being made redundant anyway while we're encouraging and supporting migrant workers. So I don't really know what's happened to that, I don't know whether it just got frozen. But the social inclusion adviser will be able to tell you more about the prison work.

*OK, OK, I'm just thinking that in a region like this there are such different, such a disparity between the urban areas like [city] just with the more rural areas. How do any of these strategies for widening participation target different rural and, because that would be an underrepresented group I would imagine.*

Mm we do have a rural proofing strategy as well which is supposed to be applied to lots of, well to any project that you're doing, so it's to ensure that you've included the rural aspects to your project. But I think that's more about any particular project and how it gets applied within a rural context, not necessarily how you ensure access in rural areas.

*And the next set of questions, they have to do with outreach strategies and some of them are more your opinions about national Government and that sort of thing, but how in your opinion can national Government support outreach attempts to reach those who aren't traditionally engaged in the formal education system or those who have been alienated from the system?*

I think it comes back to how people are funded and what they're funded to do, so you know there's been a lot of outreach and widening participation activity done through the university sector but they've been given the money to do outreach as they feel fit and so everybody's had a different view on it. And so if you take some of the Russell Group Universities what they mean by widening participation is very different to you know someone else's definition of it, it's been about supporting people in geographically disadvantaged areas but who are gifted and talented, so really they haven't had to do that much hard work, they've just had to move away from the private schools and gone into other good schools with gifted and talented students. So it's not really widening participation, that's just a numbers game for them recruiting and looking like they've done widening participation and ticking the box and getting the money for it.

*And ...*

??? come out there isn't it? (43.00) BOTH LAUGH

*No it's OK, it's OK! Like some of my own! And are there representatives from at risk target groups involved in designing or implementing any of the outreach approaches that you can think of?*

Well when we, we have a stem programme that's aimed at encouraging more young people to take the stem subjects and when we were designing that programme and implementing that programme we engaged with people that were supposedly experts in kind of outreach and widening participation, so Aimhigher and the stem points and people from disadvantaged areas and asked them what their issues were and then tried to embed that within the programme. But it's more an *ad hoc*, on an *ad hoc* basis, project by project rather than very specific ...Yeah and what Government ministries and that could be I guess regional that you know of or national support childcare funding and availability for adults who want to attend education courses, whether formal or informal?

*Who funds childcare? Yeah or who supports I guess childcare funding as a way of increasing access or widening participation?*

Mm well I think DIAS have said that it needs to be done more but it's DCSF I think isn't it that funds it actually.

*And is there anything regionally that you're, I mean is that more kind of a national strategy or is there any kind of body regionally who is pushing for these sorts of things?*

Not that I'm aware of.

*OK, and many people from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds have no space at home to study, what alternative physical sites do you think could be realistically made available for them, for their learning?*

Well there has been that new, that policy that came out only the other week that they were going to open up public spaces for people to learn anywhere, so you could learn in the pub or you could in the library and you could learn anywhere, it was informal learning wasn't it? So they were talking about just opening up general public spaces but again I didn't really know how it was going to work because if people were doing it anyway, just having a room to do it in wouldn't change anything. (whispers)

*Right.*

If they've got no space that could help them. (whispers) It depends doesn't it, because if they've got childcare they can't get up and go somewhere. I don't know!

*And I suppose it's linked to the big effort to get schools to become sites for adult education, so have there been, I suppose not with EMDA but what kinds of efforts do you see being made to transform schools into sites for the community or sites for adult education?*

It's not specifically around adult education but I think a lot of the work we've done around enterprise has changed the way that schools are seen or are run, so we've paid for infrastructure changes in certain schools so that they have an innovation centre or an enterprise centre which may mean that businesses are based there, which means the young people sometimes can go and do a work placement in those small businesses so that they then think about setting up and self employment as another option. And then it encourages the people that are based within the school to perhaps take up other learning opportunities or to think about professional development I guess. So it can be a two way, in an ideal world but ...

*And is that enterprise, is that regional?*

Yeah.

*OK and is there any way to get a description or anything kind of in written form to take away?*

About those particular projects?

*Yeah just yeah those types of projects would be of interest ...*

There's a website around kind of regional enterprise culture and what they're trying to do.



*OK, OK. And is there any regional level strategy or support to provide for training education for community leaders?*

Yes we do pay for management and leadership for community, for voluntary and community sector organisations or for community kind of individuals, so if they're leading a, I don't know, a subcommittee or whatever then there is that, but I can't remember what it's called. It will come to me and I can send it to you.

*OK that would be great.*

There is a, yeah, there is a particular programme that we've paid for.

*And is there any strategy for teachers to provide training or education for teachers?*

Only through our stem programme because again we don't fund pre sixteen education or anything to do with it.

*And which Government department funds the libraries in England, do you know? Or is there a regional support body for libraries?*

Local authorities pay for libraries.

*OK, and is there any projects that have to do with libraries and access to libraries?*

Not that I'm aware of.

*OK and how about distance education?*

Only kind of infrastructure with regard to broadband, I think that would be the only thing that we ...

*OK and is, the next sort of one is kind of open ...*

Although a lot of our work based learning is remote.

*OK and remote in what sense?*

The individual kind, does modules as they go along and then would only kind of have contact with a tutor on a kind of three monthly basis or something like that. So kind of the OU model but in the workplace.

*And can you comment on ways of overcoming the digital divide between different social groups?*

No not really! I know that we, we don't do it but kind of the New Deal for Communities initiative funded a lot of kind of provision of laptops to young people or diverse and disadvantaged communities when they first set up, but I don't know what they're doing now. And that was a, I don't know who funds New Deal for Communities.

*And the next and last set of questions is drawing on some previous research where we did a large scale survey to over 1,000 adult learners at different skills levels and backgrounds. So we found that almost 98% of different level institutions provide in service training for teaching, for teaching staff, is there any kind of regional support for in service training or for teaching the staff? Is it considered a good model of practice I guess is what we're getting at?*

Through the LLL networks they've done, delivered and supported a lot of training in the colleges and in the universities mainly to support delivery of teaching in different environments and under different circumstances.

*And we also found that a good almost, well over 90% of different level institutions reduced enrolment fees to help increase access for traditionally underrepresented groups, is that something that national or regional Government would consider a good model of practice?*

It is but they've also done some research that shows that they get higher dropout rates if it's subsidised.

*OK and only a small per cent, around 6% of the higher level institutions reduced costs that would relate to exam fees or books, are there any initiatives that you know of that might help to reduce such costs at universities or ...?*

No, only individual universities that have kind of hardship funds, which named as a hardship fund just means people don't want to apply for it!

*Yeah it doesn't do much to sell it does it?*

No! I'm so poor you know I've got to apply to this hardship fund, it just makes you feel really good about yourself! BOTH LAUGH

*And again talking about these kind of upper level institutions, 97% organised remedial classes during the year, is there any support for the provision of remedial classes across other levels, lower levels?*

Again not that we fund but the LSC they do, you know they're all about literacy and numeracy.

*OK, and a good amount of organisation organise a programme that facilitates the increased access for traditionally under represented groups, but there's only about a quarter of the five sort of upper level institutions which would provide incentives to develop such programmes, so there's kind of a disparity. Is there any kind of push, policy push to help the kind of higher level institutions reserve places or increase access?*

Well again I think HEFC and the Aim Higher pushed certain institutions to do that but some of them failed. So Oxford and Cambridge had a lot of their Aim Higher money clawed back because they said they would do it but they didn't. So I think there has been help out there but it's either been abused or it's not been done in the kind of light that it was intended. It's been a little bit manipulated I think.

*Mm OK, and do you think the policy of reserving places for disadvantaged groups would be or is helpful?*

I don't know because I think, I think you have to take away your kind of personal view of things, so you know as a female I wouldn't appreciate being given an opportunity against somebody that was better or it was more appropriate for just because I was female. So that, there are kind of in principle reasons why I don't agree with them.

*And I mean generally what's ...*

But they can, you know they can change people's mindsets if they've got specific targets to reach then they will try harder where they may not have done.

*Mm and what are some of the sort of strengths and weaknesses of reserving places?*

I think it's whether or not it's kind of unfair skewing of the opportunities, you know are you, by saving those places are you disadvantaging other people?

*Yeah.*

Or there is plenty of places and actually you're just ensuring that the provider changes their standard spiel or marketing or whatever or the way that it's delivered and actually does try to encourage different groups.

*Yeah and is that, should there be a reserving places, should it be done differently for different people at skills backgrounds? I'm thinking of lower skilled backgrounds, people who are from, don't have traditional backgrounds in education, should there be a different policy for reserving places based on that?*

I don't really know enough about it.

*OK, just sort of cross skills levels or for example institutions which are looking at level two for example, should there be more reserved places for traditionally underrepresented groups to access education versus maybe you know like Cambridge or Oxford?*

I think especially up to level two (interruption) ... Are we?

*Yeah I'm almost done so yeah.*

OK let's see if she'll let us have a few more minutes. I think it would be use, I think it's, I would say that at kind of level two then everybody should have free access, everybody should be able to get up to that level and so saving places I don't know whether it would, it's as relevant.

*It can be one or two!*

Unless she's got external visitors. Anyway carry on.

*No no actually, yeah, I'm really I'm at the final question and that's in talking about your role here and all these different areas we've touched on is there anything I've left out, anything that sort of sticks out to you in terms of widening participation regionally that would be important for our project?*

Not anything jumps out.

*Yeah, it's just really to give you an opportunity to tell me you didn't ask about this key area and you should have!*

No I just think that the kind of work that we do on you know specifically on social inclusion and diversity I won't have covered.

OK.

So it may be worth you following up with our social inclusion adviser just to get a kind of holistic view, so I can send you her contact details.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion and Good Practice Summary

### 6.1. Conclusions

#### *(a) Widening Participation in Pre- and Post-1992 Universities*

The contrast between pre- and post-1992 universities' approaches to widening participation, though hardly surprising, is nonetheless marked. Although our pre-1992 university has adopted a strategy for widening participation, this is clearly less of a concern to the institution as a whole than to its post-1992 counterpart. Less attention appears to be paid to implementation of the strategy across the institution: the pre-92 university, for instance, collects less detailed information about 'vulnerable' groups: as one of our interviewees commented, 'we don't collect a lot of information' about the age, ethnicity and social background of students who enrol in the Lifelong Learning centre. As a consequence, he thought, they had encountered difficulties with retention of adult learners. In contrast, in the post-1992 university, 'admissions and retention teams monitor widening participation data and indicators, including performance indicators by gender, region, disability, ethnicity, first generation students, and social class' and there are also 'mechanisms for students to provide feedback and evaluation, including informal and formal evaluation of courses and instructors'.

In the view of one of our interviewees from the pre-1992 university, the key policy developments took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s: on the one hand, separate funding for university adult education was abandoned; on the other, the research assessment exercise meant full-time academic staff would no longer teach in lifelong learning 'because the entire promotion prospects depend upon getting research grants and publishing'.

Certainly there is evidence that it is finance, rather than rhetoric, which drive institutional policy. Our impression is that our pre-92 university perceived the need for widening participation almost in terms of the need to please political masters. It was important for the university to show that it was responding to stated national political priorities, but (outside the specialist lifelong learning unit) there was little active commitment or enthusiasm. Meeting the policy agenda has been devolved onto the lifelong learning unit, rather than being 'owned' across the institution as a whole. In the post-92 university, by contrast, widening participation had become a principal objective: 'we decided as an institution back in 1993 that we would be an accessible institution'. Although this is in line with government policy, it is arguable that it represents less a response to policy rhetoric than a recognition of the centrality of such students to the institution's financial health.

#### *(b) Competitiveness and the Curriculum*

Across the universities, further education, prisons and the non-formal sector we were struck by the emphasis on employment as the principal objective and rationale adduced for educational provision. This was particularly strong in prison education, where employability is seen as an absolute necessity for reducing the rate of re-offending. 'For the prison, the objective is to rehabilitate individuals to successfully re-enter society and the labour market,' said a Senior Manager: courses are offered in IT, bricklaying, painting and decorating, plastering and industrial cleaning. In further education, too, reaching out to employers has been important for many years, but the growing emphasis is on 'getting people back into work' which – 'suddenly' – has become 'an enormous priority'.

However, the employment imperative went far beyond prisons and further education. According to a senior manager in the post-1992 university, the institution's 'primary purpose is the employment focus', while even in the pre-1992 university, the lifelong learning unit is tasked with leading on 'employer engagement' for the university; the unit's director thought 'employer engagement fits in very neatly with our overall mission'. There are, however, clear differences of emphasis between the two types of university. For the post-1992 institution, partnership with local and regional businesses involved a different relationship with business – the university 'being more humble' toward knowledge emanating from companies, as one lecturer put it. In the pre-1992 university, although benefits for the lifelong learning unit's teaching and research were seen in 'developing long-term relationships with employers', the director of the unit suggested that government 'at the moment, ... almost seems to be ... discouraging [community engagement] ... and pushing universities into very traditional agendas like research and teaching degrees'.

The growing instrumental, employability emphasis in education is perhaps most marked in the non-formal educational organisation. Traditionally, this organisation was firm in its commitment to the importance of non-vocational learning: indeed, for most of the twentieth century its funding from the state depended on provision being 'liberal' and *not* vocational. Today, however, it sees the need to develop a 'flexible credit based structure' which combines a 'personal development' dimension comprising relatively 'standard educational elements' on the one hand with 'functional ... or basic skills with more vocational elements' on the one other.

One of the underpinning 'drivers' in this vocational trend was clearly the link between funding and accreditation. Some of the interviewees underlined the dependency between formal qualifications and external funding: cooperation with local industry and enterprises is often emphasised, but none of our interviewees referred to the risk of education becoming over-dependent on business, or even allowing its perspectives to dominate their provision. Perhaps ironically, the economic crisis and the recession seem likely to strengthen the subservience of education to business funding and business perspectives. Yet the progressive narrowing of the curriculum, a shift away from the 'liberal' and non-vocational, is universal in the organisations we studied.

### *(c) Creeping Colonisation of the Non-formal by the Formal*

We noticed a pronounced and intensifying emphasis on formality in educational provision: that is, an increasing valuing of courses which lead to qualifications of various kinds, and a commensurate

discounting of the role of non-formal learning. This seems clearly driven by funding. Our HEFCE representative commented, for instance, that ‘essentially we really only fund accredited learning’ – a marked contrast with the past when there was a direct grant from the Department of Education and Science direct to various universities for non-formal adult education. In further education, similar policies apply. A senior manager at the FE college regretted that it was so difficult to get LSC funding for courses below level 2 because ‘there’s a lot out there that I think could enhance people’s life really, and ... for somebody to come in and do a big chunk of qualification is quite daunting’. But as the college was ‘so target driven, really’, and ‘unless there is a qualification that is for level 2 attached to it, you can’t draw any funding down’, this seemed unlikely.

Even for the non-formal educational organisation, public financial support is by and large restricted to formal, accredited learning. The Association, previously committed on principle to non-accreditation, had been compelled over time to accept the view that accreditation and qualification structures are essential in learning programmes.

Similar pressures apply – perhaps surprisingly – even in prison education. Prisons appear to prioritise accreditation, in accordance with recent government initiatives. Most courses offered qualifications. Bonuses were available for prisoners achieving accreditation. This seemed to have led to a desire to expand accreditation of ‘activities that are going on in workshops and around the prison, a big push to make sure men get their first level 2 ... in line with government policy for the rest of the population’.

*(d) A Demand-led Approach Advantages the Advantaged*

As we have commented, the strong policy emphasis across all areas of lifelong learning has been to expect it to respond to the ‘competitiveness’ agenda: to reach out to the needs of employers, to raise levels of vocationally-relevant skills, and so forth: ‘to enhance economic development and the strength and vitality of society’, as our HEFCE interviewee put it. We thus find the post-1992 university’s strategic vision for the next five years includes a focus on partnership with business, industry and regional associations in order to generate capital and create a highly skilled workforce. The pre-1992 university targets employers for workforce development. The regional development agency takes ‘a business-led approach and bring vitality and expertise to the task of economic development and regeneration in the regions’, working ‘closely with businesses, local authorities, universities and other organisations to agree priorities for economic development’ which are intended to help ‘drive growth and ensure international competitiveness for each region’s economy’.

The policy stress is that provision should be demand-led: that lifelong learning providers should respond to demands from business and from individual learners. One of our university interviewees commented that ‘there is almost more demand than we can adequately cope with’. In these circumstances, the pragmatic strategy for providers is not to seek out those hardest (and most costly) to reach: it is to direct their activities and resources towards those businesses and individuals most likely to respond, or most able to contribute to the costs of provision. One RDA representative argued that ‘we’re really trying to push businesses to jointly invest in skills development in their people and to co-fund provision’:

the problem is that co-financing can be secured only when the business or individual has finance to contribute. This is not a recipe for supporting the most needy: it means supporting those who have the financial or other resources to contribute to meeting their own needs. Some may, to be sure, want expert help in identifying their needs, or in providing training.

Overall, however, a demand-led approach means meeting demand which is expressed, made effective, in the market-place; and inevitably this means those sectors in the economy and society which already have some or the required economic (or cultural) resources. As so often, the need for the economy to be competitive prevents the bulk of resources being directed those who need them most.

#### *(e) Distance Learning in Prison Education*

A major problem in prison education are the limitations on internet access. A prison senior manager thought 'the lack of the use of the Internet' was a problem, 'because a lot of courses now rely on the use of the internet, particularly OU courses, ... everybody becomes more reliant on the Internet and prisoners do not have access to it here'. One of the biggest challenges for Open University students in prison is the lack of access to computers, storage media and the internet. According to the OU, the extent and type of technology available to students in prisons varies greatly – and not necessarily in relation to the needs of prison security.

Some experiments are in progress to provide limited, secure, internet connection from prisons. For example, although prisoners 'don't have access to IT on the [prison] wings for learning purposes, somebody who was doing an OU course would have to either do the IT element in the classroom or in the library'. A Virtual Campus, providing secure web access using existing systems, is being trialled in two regions: secure e-messaging, via a guardian, would allow students to access their tutors and the OU's e-assessment system. An intranet has been developed in a high security prison in England.

#### *(f) Inequalities in Financial Support Available for Full-time and Part-time students*

Our strong impression is that, despite the formal equality which generally exists as between funding and support available for full-time and part-time students, it is full-time education on which the institutions and their staff focus most. The HEFCE representative commented that although 'there is much less government support for part time students' than for full-time, 'it [support for part-time students] is there, there is some there'. In the LSC, 'the sheer numbers involved' meant that the bulk of the budget went on full-time students aged 16-19: 'Full time education that's where most of our money has to go'. The result is felt in institutions. As one FE interviewee put it, 'the funding for somebody ... wanting to do part time HE study is rubbish', most of the finance going to full-time 18-20-year-old students doing 3-year degrees. 'And it's interesting there's nothing really for part time youngsters, ... or adults really, they can't access the grants ..., and even if they get a grant ... they're still going to be ... at least £12,000 in debt when they come out. So I do feel they're disadvantaged in that respect.' By and large, from an institutional perspective, part-time students are more difficult, and more costly, to manage: funding regimes which calculate their cost in full-time equivalents according, for instance, to the proportion of a



full-time student's credits which they are taking in a year do not do justice to the additional costs involved in recruiting and supporting part-time students.

## 6.2. Good Practices Summary

The interviews with governmental officials, teachers, managers, tutors, and other representatives of the universities carried out in frame of SP5 allowed to identify good practices. The access widening strategy and adult learners access to education is supported by activities described under each chapter of this report. Some of them however are difficult to apply in other countries. Thus this section describes other good practices which are transferable to other countries context. These institutional actions are considered as successful and possible to implement in various settings at the same time.

### Multiple entry points

This strategy allows an adult learner to join an educational institution (i.e. college) at any time. In the institutions where such strategy is used there is no need to wait until September to start a learning process formally.

According to the Diversity Manager flexibility referred to multiple entry points plays important role in outreaching traditionally under-represented groups. “[B]eing needs led, being genuinely inclusive” is one of the most important rules in terms of access widening strategy. (p.23).

The college where learners have an opportunity to enroll when they are ready to return to education consider it as a very successful tool in terms of widening participation. Such solution however entails further administrative and organizational challenges. The curriculum and college staff need to be prepared to welcome new students during the academic or school year. Some of these difficulties are managed during short preparation pre-entry courses.

The college senior representative stated, “(...) We’ve always had multi entry and some programmes are what we would call roll on, roll off which are kind of again harder to manage but we do have some of those in the college”. (p.35).

The Inclusion and Diversity Manager also reflected on the need for flexibility in the Further Education sector: “if you’re not flexible with the provision, it won’t work. I think FE used to fall into that dreadfully static if you don’t start in September, you can’t start until the following September, and the adult learning service were always far better at being reactive, and that’s a big shift in FE, I think we’ve realized now that if you’re not flexible, then you can’t meet need”. (p.35).

### Learning Zone

To avoid stigmatization associated with remedial classes a structure called Learning Zone was created. This is a place where mentor and peer support is provided to every student in need. As some of the interview participants noted the continuous support of vulnerable students is of extreme importance to increase their retention rates. Learning Zone was established to ensure that every student receives personalized and most efficient help to secure not only equality in access but also equality in school

success.

Learning zone “is open generally office hours, 9 till 4 so you can drop in, (...) so if you think oh I’m struggling with my assignment, there are people in there who staff it and can support you. And I think that’s a really good service that’s offered” (Senior). (p.20).

According to a lecturer in the college, ESOL support is provided through the Learning Zone, where “there is a referral procedure where we refer them. And also the mentors are there to help them”. In addition, there are significant “peer supports that come from the student body, they get quite an extensive training package. We’ve had (...) peer mentors and peer supports, they’re usually people who have struggled themselves, who have then wanted to give something back really. A lot of work, we’ve done a lot of work with the student liaison team who offer enrichment activities” (Inclusion manager). p.20.

The college staff believes that advance supporting mechanism is necessary to increase the real chances for graduation of disadvantaged learners. This belief was an original motive of Learning Zone creation. It plays crucial role in an overall college support.

“So you’ve got support in the classroom, you’ve got the learning zone in the library where people can go in to get support with science and so on. You’ve got dyslexia workshops, staff development, again wide, so our learning support is massively strong”. (p.29).

### **Sports Academy**

To be successful the widening access strategy should encourage the potential disadvantaged learners in best possible manner. One of the colleges investigated in this research uses sport as an activity which could be helpful in widening access. The participation in a sport club is considered as a positive first contact with an educational institution to be further continued by the mainstream courses enrolment.

The perceived idea behind the sports academy is to “get learners who might be thinking about college but you know if you’ve got this hook of I can join their sports academy, people will be trailed and then you know allocated certain teams. And then part of the timetable is to allow people to take part in the sports academy. So we’ve timetabled around some central sports sessions. I think the first one is going to be mainly the football, boys and girls, and then we’re looking to develop that further, so possibly looking at other sports. So it’s a kind of a reward system for you know your academic, but it might be an attraction to get people in. And we’d look at developing that over time with perhaps in terms of dance or you know some other things. But that’s fairly new and will take place in September” (Senior). p.27.

Non-formal and non-accredited courses provided by universities or colleges might play an important role in widening access strategy. As one of the participants of this study pointed out the enrolment to the formal course is for some of the adult learners considered as difficult or even impossible while less formal activities might help to overcome psychological barriers. Sports Academy is also a good opportunity to social life participation which, if possible, encourage people to become students.

## Mentorship

Basing on the interpersonal relation mentorship is considered a very effective strategy in disadvantaged students' sustain in their educational career. Mentors are recruited from both groups: teachers and students. The main objective of the mentorship programme is personal support of the students who finds themselves in difficulties. Flexibility and efficiency of this solution makes it useful in a diverse setting, including prison. Efficiency of mentorship is connected to the individually dedicated treatment of every student thus every mentor adapts and uses methods according to his/her student needs.

Mentors make a massive difference because if somebody's not attending, they follow that up, and often that's all you need! They give pastoral support, they give overall support, they know if there are young people in danger of dropping out". p.30.

One of the most important elements of the mentorship programme is social interaction intensification and personal networks development. Other students' presence who previously experienced similar difficulties encourages disadvantage students to overcome the obstacles met. Peer mentor school success shows them the potential possibility to achieve success.

The college (...) targets its own students to become mentors. This is perceived to be a positive practice for the college: "usually they're people who have been students, so have come through the system themselves and then, I think they might do something while they're here as a student as a peer mentor, and then some of them go on to get actual employment." (Senior). (p.26).

"[P]eer supports (...) come from the student body, they get quite an extensive training package. We've had both actually, we've had peer mentors and peer supports, they're usually people who have struggled themselves, who have then wanted to give something back really. A lot of work, we've done a lot of work with the student liaison team who offer enrichment activities" (Inclusion manager). p.20.

The prisoner peer mentoring scheme, a one-to-one mentoring service, is a good example of this strategy efficiency in an extreme setting. To be a peer mentor, "you've got to be at least working towards a level two qualification or at a level two qualification, apply for it, you've got to pass a security thing to say that you're eligible to work with other men" (Manager of education department). This has been successful in providing men support networks within their residential wing. (p.93).

Lack of the basic skills is pointed out as a very important obstacle in a process of successful rehabilitation of the prisoners. As this report showed the lowest level of formal education the highest reoffending of the released prisoners thus prisons are greatly concerned about education. Peer mentorship is seen as one of the most successful strategies in education providing in this difficult environment. Past negative school experiences are overcome by using mentorship programme. The personal guidance of another prisoner supports an effort in read/write learning and avoids a typical classroom situation.

In this scheme, "one teacher is responsible for prisoner mentors and they go through a

structured reading scheme on the wings...it's a very structures reading scheme, and it has to be done every day for something like 20 minutes to half an hour, so somebody is supposed to sit down with their mentee every day and just go through a section of the book each day" (Senior manger). p.99.

### **Free childcare**

Free childcare provided by the educational institution appears as a controversial issue. On the one hand our research participants pointed out free childcare as an important tool in widening access especially in case of young parents; on the other hand interviews with governmental officials show institutional unwillingness in free childcare funding.

"(...) [F]ree childcare I think is very unlikely on a HE level and it would be a matter for Government provide or for institutions to decide to offer and I don't think it, it's not realistically going to be funded (Director of HEFCE ). (p.131).

The college where this research was carried out aims to target parents, particularly lone parents and young parents. As perceived by the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, "we've been doing a huge amount of work with young parents, not just lone parents, young parents over the last three years, a lot of work because they just weren't going to anything" (p.27).

One of the ways that the college supports learners who are parents is by offering childcare services. The facilities are located at the college and "in new build we're doubling the size of the nursery, so I think we can take 40 children going forward, I think we can only take 20 at the minute...it's always a popular facility really I suppose and people might have to wait for a place, so I suppose it does limit it if you need childcare, but we also have lists of local childminders so if we couldn't support you in that respect we might be able to refer you to somebody who is a registered childminder, you know so rather than you not coming at all. And I know that lecturers have been very eager to facilitate, you know somebody says well I've got to leave at 12 to pick my child up, provided they've got the work and they know what they've got to do, you know I think we'd all say we've accommodated that. And we look at things like half 9 start for certain courses where it's predominantly women who have got children and got to drop the kids off at school, and you know we think about finish times" (Senior). p.27.

Free childcare services provided by the college meets the participants demands. It is perceived as a very important tool in social inclusion of young parents as well. Non-formal adult education institution included this scheme to the general overarching strategy of disadvantage students.

So [...] we've succeeded in building adult education in some geographical areas that were considered sort of pretty hard to succeed in. [...] I could point to areas where we've succeeded in engaging people in adult education which people felt were a lost cause, you know particular sort of estates or something like that [... through] very intensive outreach activity and putting on provision around people's interests and finding good venues and making it free and providing childcare and all that sort of thing. (p.72).

### **Barrier-free setting**

The barrier-free setting in college and university strengthens social cohesion of the local community and provides opportunity to integration. Full participation in social life is very important for every society member. It is an inevitable element of equal opportunities. As stated by a representative of senior management, “when I first worked here the doors you had to push open but now they’re all automatic and there’s ramps and lifts. So it’s kind of geared up for people in wheelchairs. And we’ve had students who are blind and those difficulties and we’ve accommodated them” (Senior). p.18.

### **Institute of Lifelong Learning**

One of the universities in this study has created an internal institutional body to better meets the lifelong learning objectives. Institute of Lifelong Learning is a key institution within the university (...) which is both a separate “department and it’s also overarching the whole university in terms of its responsibilities” (Professor) (p.36). The objective to widen participation is carried out by the Institute of Lifelong Learning and the university through a number of different initiatives, including partnership with regional businesses, employer engagement, distance learning, and the development of foundation degrees, among others. For example, the university’s strategic vision for the next five years includes a focus on partnership with business, industry and regional associations in order to generate capital and create a highly skilled workforce. (p.37).

The Institute of Lifelong Learning includes a wide range of areas, such as professional development, adult education, a counselling and psychotherapy programme and different social and cultural events. Fostering regional partnership is significant for the Institute of Lifelong Learning and one of the key objectives is to work closely with Further Education (FE) colleges, public-sector organisations, voluntary and community organisations, and private companies in order to meet different education and training needs of the region. There are part-time degrees, diplomas and certificates, offered during the daytime, evening and there are also distance learning opportunities. There are non-accredited short courses and Saturday schools, which are intended to be “taster courses”. Financial assistance is provided through government schemes and bursary funds. (p.36).

The university, and the Institute of Lifelong Learning, are active with “employer engagement work” (Professor). According to the director of the Institute of Lifelong Learning, the university is undergoing extensive restructuring and “in terms of lifelong learning, I suppose the big shift has been a shift towards, nationally as well as for this university, is the big focus on employer engagement for HE” (Director). One of the central remits for the Institute of Lifelong Learning is “learning on employer engagement across the university. The other area that we lead on is partnerships with FE, so we have a college’s network as a partnership of the university with a number of colleges across the region where we look at the progression of students and the development of staff, so they’re two big priorities” (Director). (p.37).

Here in the Institute of Lifelong Learning, we do run a number of preparing to study type courses, we run those from time-to-time. All of our courses anyway, well a lot of our institute courses are open to people with no traditional academic qualifications, so they are designed for

people to come on to them when they haven't actually had an academic qualifications backgrounds" (Director). (p.38).

## Glossary

APEL – Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning

BERR – Department of Business, Employment and Regulatory Reform (a short-lived government ministry responsible for business and employment; successor to Department of Trade and Industry)

BIS – Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (government ministry now responsible, *inter alia*, for further education, universities, etc.; successor to BERR and DIUS.

CAB – Citizens' Advice Bureau (voluntary agency with national coverage providing advice to citizens)

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

DCMS – Department of Culture, Media and Sport (government ministry responsible for these areas)

DIUS – Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (short-lived government ministry responsible for colleges and universities; most of its work had formerly fallen under DfES; it now forms part of BIS)

DTI – Department for Trade and Industry (former government ministry; superseded by BERR; its work is now carried on within BIS)

ELIS – English language services for international students

EMA – Educational Maintenance Allowance

EMDA – East Midlands Development Agency (a government agency focused on economic development for the East Midlands region.

EPA – Educational Priority Areas

ESRC – Economic and Social Research Council (research council funding social sciences research, largely in UK universities)

ESF – European Social Fund

ELQ – Equivalent or Lower-level Qualification

FE – Further Education

GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education (school examinations, typically taken at age 16)

HEI – Higher Education Institution

HESA – Higher Education Statistics Agency (collecting, collating, analyzing and publishing statistics on UK higher education)

HEFCE – Higher Education Funding Council for England

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education, designed and promoted by UNESCO. A classification of education into six levels.

JSA – Job Seeker’s Allowance (the main unemployment benefit available in England; available to people of working age who are out of work or who work on average fewer than 16 hours a week)

JISC – Joint Information Systems Committee (an independent advisory body that works with further and higher education by providing strategic guidance, advice and opportunities use to use ICT to support learning, teaching, research and administration)

LLDD – Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

LSC – Learning and Skills Council

MBE –Member of the Order of the British Empire (honour awarded by HM the Queen to individuals on the advice of government)

NAVCA - National Association for Voluntary and Community Action

NDPB – a ‘body which has a role in the processes of national Government, but is not a Government Department or part of one, and which accordingly operates to a greater or lesser extent at arm’s length from Ministers’. At 31 March 2009, there were 766 NDPBs sponsored by the UK Government. This consisted of 192 Executive NDPBs, 405 Advisory NDPBs, 19 Tribunal NDPBs and 150 Independent Monitoring Boards of Prisons, Immigration Removal Centres and Immigration Holding Rooms. (Cabinet Office 2009)

NEET – young people Not in Education, Employment or Training

NIACE – National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales) (independent NGO representing the adult learning sector, and conducting research and development)

NRF – Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (government fund which ‘aims to improve the quality of life of those living in the most disadvantaged areas’ (see <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/neighbourhoodrenewal/>; accessed 12 April 2010)

NUS – National Union of Students

NVQ – National Vocational Qualification

OFFA – Office for Fair Access (government agency designed to ensure higher education institutions are fair across social, ethnic and gender groups in their admissions decisions)

OLAS - Offenders’ Learning and Skills Service

PCFC- Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council



PDR – Personal Development Review

QAA – Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

RAE – Research Assessment Exercise (process designed to evaluate research in UK universities, as a basis for funding decisions by HEFCE, etc.)

RDA- Regional Development Agency

SDI - Specialist Designated Institution

SFA – Skills Funding Agency (NDPB set up by government to fund and regulate adult skills training in England, taking over some of the work of the Learning and Skills Council which on 31 March 2010)

SPOC - Student Perception of Course

SSC – Sector Skills Council (independent, employer-led, UK-wide organisations designed to build a skills system that is driven by employer demand; there are currently 25 SSCs covering over 90% of the economy)

TDA – Training and Development Agency for Schools: the national agency and recognised sector body responsible for the training and development of the school workforce (teachers, support staff, school leaders, etc.)

TTA – Teacher Training Agency; now replaced by the TDA.

TUC – Trades' Union Congress (confederation of major trades unions)

UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

U3A – University of the Third Age (a voluntary organization providing courses on a self-help basis for retired people)

UFC – Universities Funding Council (NDPB responsible for funding universities)

Ufi – originally to be the 'University for Industry', now an brokerage agency offering online learning, especially in the skills sector. Now, Learndirect.

WBL - work-based learning

WEA – Workers' Educational Association (voluntary organization providing education for adults)

YOI – Young Offender Institutions (custodial institutions for offenders aged 20 or less; there are various categories of such institutions: see <http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/> (accessed 12 April 2010)

YPLA – Young People's Learning Agency (NDPB launched on 1 April 2010 with responsibility for 'championing education and training for young people in England'; replaces LSC in respect of young people aged 16-19)

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