Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Learning Community Accounts Pilots Case Study Report 1

TDG

Research

GSR
GOVERNMENT SOCIAL RESEARCH
Analysis for Policy

Learning Community Accounts Pilots
Case Study Report 1: TDG

Audience   The voluntary and community learning sector, providers of training and DCELLS programme delivery, funding and planning departments.

Overview   The evaluation of the Community Learning Account pilot has involved individual evaluations of each pilot and a collective evaluation of the overall approach. This report presents the individual 'case study' findings for one of the five pilot projects.

Action required   None

Further information
Julie Owens
Research Analysis Manager
Research and Evaluation Team, DCELLS
Welsh Assembly Government
Unit 6, St. Asaph Business Park
St. Asaph, Denbighshire
LL17 0LJ

Tel: 01745 538540
Fax: 01745 538501
E-mail: Research2@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Additional copies   This report is available online at
http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/research-and-evaluation/124540/?lang=en

Related documents   Case Study Report 2: CwmNi
Case Study Report 3: Fairyland (Neath)
Case Study Report 4: Caia Park Partnership Limited
Case Study Report 5: Cardi gan and South Ceredigion
Evaluation of the Learning Community Accounts Pilots

Contents

1 Introduction to the Learning Community Account Pilots

In 2007 BMG Research was commissioned by The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Welsh Assembly Government, to evaluate the Learning Community Accounts (LCA) pilot projects. The LCA pilots ended in March 2008.

The aims of Learning Community Accounts were to:

- transfer skill, knowledge and resources to communities to enable them to participate and design solutions to community learning needs by upskilling key individuals

- embed learning and skill development within community regeneration, by supporting communities, families and individuals to develop and engage in learning activity which is learner focused, flexible and accessible to all, and

- provide a mechanism that integrates communities in to the local planning process, and also supports and empowers them.

The desired outcomes of the LCAs were:

- increased learning activity that contributes to community regeneration, widening participation, skills and employment;

- opportunities to engage and up skill socially excluded individuals and allow progression to employment;

- a cohort of qualified development workers focused on learning and a general increase in the capacity of individuals involved in community development; and

- the availability of a collaborative and quality provision that meets the needs of communities and contributes to community regeneration.

There were five pilot projects in total:

- Caia Park Partnership Ltd, Wrexham

- Cardigan and South Ceredigion Regeneration Forum

- CwmNi – Communities First, Treherbert, Rhondda Valley

- Fairlyland Communities First, Cwmafon, Neath

- Cymorth Cymru –Housing Associations (pan Wales) Known as Tai Dysgu a Gwaith, (TDG)

The first four of these were identified as primarily geographical communities, whilst Cymorth Cymru is a 'community of interest' focusing on homelessness.

Each LCA project has been written up individually as a 'case study'. Case studies are often described as a form of 'qualitative' or 'thick' descriptive research of an activity viewed in depth. This approach allows the provision of a comprehensive description of the project(s) being evaluated including the specific context and an exploration of the experiences of the people involved in it. In this context, therefore, they provide a detailed understanding of how each LCA pilot works and what the experiences were of those who have been involved. There are five case study reports in total, each reporting on one of the LCA pilots. This report focuses on the Cymorth Cymru pilot project (now referred to as the Tai Dysgu a Gwaith Cymru – TDG).

An evaluation report has also been produced, which brings together and synthesises the information from each of the case studies to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the LCA pilots in meeting their objectives as well as identifying areas of good practice and 'lessons learnt' with regard to this approach to community based learning. This in turn has informed the future development of Learning Community Accounts, and community learning as a whole.

1.1   The research approach and method

The research aims and objectives suggested that a mixed-method 'triangulation' approach was most appropriate. It was agreed therefore that the evaluation should comprise a combination of qualitative and quantitative work, as well as incorporating available monitoring and administrative data.

As each LCA pilot project was different, both in terms of its set-up and organisation as well as its delivery stage, the evaluation adopted a case study approach. An evaluation framework was developed which was applied across all case studies (detailing, for example, the key research issues, proposed method and key stakeholder groups) with the acceptance that some projects would be able to provide greater access to an evidence base than others. It was recognised that the two pilots that were most advanced in their development (Caia Park and TDG) would provide the fullest evaluation evidence whilst the remaining three would need to concentrate more on start up and process evaluation rather than any assessment of impact.

The research approach was therefore as follows:

- Telephone discussions with some key WAG staff involved in the inception and development of the pilots (ongoing)

- Early familiarisation site visits to each pilot, including initial discussions with the manager. The visits were also used to identify possible learner respondents (where available) and other stakeholder respondents and appropriate methodology to be employed.

- A review of key documentation including delivery plans, annual reports, monitoring data (including evidence gathered during familiarisation visits)

- In-depth discussions with operational and delivery staff (face-to-face where possible, supplemented with telephone interviews);

- In-depth discussions with learners (face-to-face), including the identification of potential individual case studies.

The TDG project comprised of four housing providers working together to support learners. The table below indicates who participated in the discussions or in-depth interviews at each of the TDG projects (further details of each organisation is provided in Section 2):

TDG Organisation	Discussions
Llamau	Chief Executive Learning for Life Head of Service Learning for Life Manager Learning Champions 3 learners
Tai Hafan	New Dawn Principal Officer New Dawn Mentoring Officer (x 2) Learning Champion 3 learners
Clwwd Alun	Supported Living Manager Learning Champion (x 2) 3 learners

Trothwy Cyf	Project Manager
	Project Co-ordinator/Internal Verifier
	Internal Assessor
	Learning Champion/trainee assessor (x 3)
	3 learners

In addition to this, an in-depth interview was conducted with the Project Co-ordinator, who works on behalf of Cymorth Cymru with the Project Manager to co-ordinate the work of the four TDG organisations through regular meetings, monitoring and reporting and strategic direction (with support of the Strategy Group). Furthermore, observations were made of some group work and learning activities that were part of the Learning and Work programme, to assist the evaluator's understanding of the operation and delivery aspects.

The longitudinal element of the evaluation (as proposed in the original tender) was reconsidered in light of the subsequent requirement by DCELLS to complete the evaluation prior to March 2008 and the recognition that there was therefore insufficient time to conduct follow-up work with pilot participants.

2   Project description

The Tai, Dysgu a Gwaith Cymru (TDG) provides learning, personal growth and development opportunities to people who are homeless or in housing need, to help them to move into independent living. The TDG project's aim is to offer learning provision to its clients in recognition that the provision of housing support alone does not in the longer term alleviate the other problems that many of its clients face that prevent them from engaging, or re-engaging in learning or work activities.

The TDG pilot was in some ways different to the other LCA pilots, as it includes four different organisations (all supported housing providers) under the Cymorth Cymru[1] umbrella.

The four supported housing organisations are:

- Cymdeithas Tai Hafan
- Cymdeitham Tai Clwyd Alyn
- Llamau Ltd, and
- Trothwy Cyf.

Between the four organisations, the LCA programme was delivered in over 20 of their individual projects across Wales (in Powys, Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire, RCT, Vale and Cardiff, under the title 'Learning and Work' programme. The programme was co-ordinated by a Project Manager from Cymorth Cymru and an independent Project Co-ordinator, and was delivered within a supported housing setting in all of the projects – mostly through Foyers.

Whilst there were similarities in terms of the client groups being served (see below), and the operation and delivery of the TDG programme, there were also differences and these have been highlighted in this report. Nevertheless, all projects linked to the Welsh Assembly's priorities in terms of social inclusion, and social justice for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. For example, those that have young people within their remit worked to ensure that their project's vision fits with the government's ten entitlements for young people across Wales[2], and learners were made aware of their entitlements.

---

[1] Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for providers of housing-related support in Wales
[2] The Ten Entitlements are education/training, basic skills, volunteering opportunities, quality services, careers advice, personal support, issues advice, recreation opportunities, developing talents and civil participation.

Each organisation is described briefly below (text in italics refers to the names used in the remainder of the report).

Cymdeithas *Tai Hafan*

Tai Hafan is a charitable housing association which grew out of the work of Women's Aid. Originally providing supported housing for women escaping domestic abuse, Tai Hafan now offers a holistic approach to the provision of support for women with a wide range of often complex individual needs, including those who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological abuse; women recovering their mental health; ex-offenders; substance misusers and care leavers, all of whom will be in housing need or will have experienced issues surrounding homelessness. Tai Hafan is the only housing association in Britain to offer a person-centred approach to the provision of housing and support services to women, by women.

The structured support package enables women and their children to develop the skills and confidence needed to assist with their own recovery, and part of this includes providing access to the Learning and Work Programme (referred to in Tai Hafan as 'New Dawn;), which was designed specifically to meet the learning needs of clients, to aid personal development, improve confidence and self-esteem, and improve opportunities for further education and employment.

Cymdeithas Tai *Clwyd Alyn*

Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd Alyn has been in operation for 26 years and currently operates two projects which are rolling out the Learning and Work Programme to its participants: Wrexham Foyer[3] (including Hurst Newton a 12 bed Supported Housing service for 16 to 25 year olds) and 'Y Dyfodol' in Rhyl, providing accommodation and a range of support services, along with learning and work preparation opportunities to young single homeless people aged 16-25. Each site has a dedicated Learning Champion. The organisation provides both personal and educational support through the Learning and Work programme to enable services users to become independent and productive members of society.

***Llamau* Limited**

Llamau Limited has been providing housing related support and advice services to vulnerable and homeless people for over 20

---

[3] Foyers provide temporary accommodation for young single homeless people aged between 16 and 25, who wish to acquire the skills to live independently

years, operating a wide variety of projects and schemes across seven local authority areas in South East Wales with a Head Office in Cardiff. Projects and schemes include supported accommodation, floating support and tenancy support services, housing advice, a bond guarantee scheme, family mediation, women specific projects and young persons' advisers.

Llamau's Learning and Work programme, referred to in Llamau as 'Learning 4 Life', is a flexible pre-vocational learning programme, designed for young people and adults who are not yet ready for mainstream education, training, or work. The main aim of the Learning and Work Programme is to help improve confidence, develop positive skills and talents, and motivate learners to move their lives forward positively through work, training and education toward a more confident and independent future.

Budgeting, cooking and DIY are popular options, into which key skills and basic skills are embedded, and self-expression and personal development are encouraged through arts and crafts and discussions covering world events and current affairs. Group activities, such as trips, outdoor pursuits and games take place regularly, and are aimed at improving communications, group working and raising self-esteem.

Trothwy Cyf

Trothwy Cyf works in partnership with its clients and other agencies to provide good quality housing and support services to enable clients to live independently and actively participate in their communities. Trothwy Cyf currently works in 16 Unitary Authority areas in Wales providing services, including the Learning and Work Programme, to a range of client groups including single homeless, care leavers, probation clients, those who have mental health problems, learning and physical disabilities and gay, lesbian, bi-sexual clients.

For the purpose of the pilot, Trothwy Cyf has offered a Learning and Work Programme at Foyer projects in Swansea, Neath, Llanelli, Brecon and Newtown. The aim of the work is to support young people to identify areas they wish to improve as part of their own personal development at a pace and within a timeframe that best meets their individual needs, so that when they move on they are able to sustain and/or develop further their chosen education, training, volunteering or employment path.

2.1 Project aim and objectives

The specific aim of the TDG project is to provide learning and work programmes for the homeless or those in housing need. The strategic aims of the TDG project are:

- To offer a customised Learning & Work Programme for individuals 16+, providing the underpinning skills, knowledge and support required to progress to mainstream learning and employment

- To empower those in the 'no home, no job' cycle to break down the barriers to learning, personal growth and development and lead successful independent lives

- To produce a tried and tested quality assured framework for the delivery of the Learning & Work Programme incorporating the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework in Wales

- To provide and establish long-term secure funding for supported housing providers throughout Wales to enable them to provide an integrated housing, learning & work service

The objectives were therefore:

- To establish appropriate quality standards for 'learning and work' service delivery measured against an agreed checklist of components
- To measure the outcomes of 'learning and work' service delivery in terms of distance travelled by individuals within the wider learning community.
- To identify the financial cost of learning and work service delivery at fully operational levels and to produce an appropriate means to measure costs for operational purposes, and
- To examine project management factors including project size, capacity, financial frameworks and management systems.

2.2 Community context

The TDG project is focused on a 'community of interest' – those with housing needs – rather than a geographical community. Nevertheless, because of the coverage of the four projects within the TDG, the geographical areas covered are relatively wide and dispersed covering both urban and rural areas from Cardiff and areas of the south west to parts of North east and north west Wales.

2.3 Project inception/set-up

Three of the four partner organisations were already established in providing learning to their clients, as members of TDG Cymru. It had already been recognised that there was a gap in service provision in terms of pre-vocational learning and training, and service users were 'failing' in mainstream training settings, adding to the low self esteem and exclusion of service users. As a consequence support providers set up their own learning centres to meet this need.

Providing training and learning was not permitted in the Supporting People Revenue Housing Grant and therefore separate funding, was sought. TDG was therefore developed when it was clear that there was the need to establish a funding stream for this type of service, and discussions with the Welsh Assembly and Elwa were initiated. TDG Cymru is committed to establishing long-term secure funding for supported housing organisations providing essential learning, personal growth and development opportunities to clients who are homeless, have experienced homelessness or are in housing need, to enable them to live independently, take up mainstream educational opportunities and/or find and hold down a job. The fourth (Clwyd Alun) had not delivered learning in this setting before receiving the LCA funding.

Those who were already established and delivering some learning activities for their clients reported that they found that it was relatively easy to make the transition to a more defined Learning and Work Programme.

2.4 Organisational structure

The LCA pilots sat within wider organisations. This meant that management and operational structures were already in place and in most cases premises were already secured. In two projects LCA staff were already working in the organisation delivering learning and support to clients. In the other two, external appointments were made specifically to the Learning and Work project. Staff recruited generally had a background in post 16 training (for

example, NVQ assessors) as well as expertise in working with the client group.

3   Current activities

3.1   Staffing

There was an overall pilot project manager and project co-ordinator for the TDG project, together with a Strategy Group comprising senior managers/Chief Executives of each of the four TDG organisations. The Strategy Group in turn was supported by an Operational Group of Learning Managers (comprising a mix of staff including project managers, Learning Champions and project co-ordinators).

Each Learning and Work programme had its own internal management systems, which may include standardisation meetings for benchmarking and cross-referencing learner work and for training staff in assessment and verification. Every month, Learning Managers from each project within the TDG pilot group met to discuss issues around the management, quality and delivery of the learning and work programme.

The numbers of staff 'on the ground' in each project varied, though all had Managers and Learning Champions, and some also had peripatetic Internal Verifiers. Each Learning Champion (of which there were 22 at the time of writing) covered one geographical area or Foyer. All Learning Champions were paid members of staff – none were volunteers.

Staff tended to have one of two backgrounds – either in post-16 training, education and assessment or specialist expertise in working with the client group in question. Often staff had a background in both areas. The specialist skills required for Learning Champions had in some projects resulted in some recruitment difficulties.

3.2   Learners

The latest monitoring figures (up to March 2008) show that 823 learners had signed up to the Learning and Work Programme since the beginning of the Pilot in 2005. This compares to a target of 555. However, many more clients initially referred to the Learning and Work programme were not immediately registered until the 'transitioning' phase was completed (see Section 3.4). The most recent figures for the last year of the pilot indicates that of the 627 people referred to the project in that time period, 294 have been registered on and inducted into the programme.

Each of the four projects had a different client group, so there was a broad make-up of learners with a mixture of ages and backgrounds (although all have housing support needs). What was

common, however, was the presence of multiple and enduring barriers above and beyond issues relating to homelessness or housing (see Section 3.4). Of particular note from the leaner interviews was a widespread negative school experience (and college, where attended). Few respondents had left school with any qualifications, and some had left prematurely (as young as 13 in a couple of cases). According to staff, this was fairly typical for this client group.

There were also examples of difficulties that had made learning even more challenging – including dyslexia, dyspraxia, behavioural problems and hearing and sight problems. In some cases, these had been hitherto unrecognised until attending the Learning and Work programme.

3.3   Learner engagement and referral

In many cases, learners were already known to the organisations through their role as a supported housing provider, and were referred internally. This referral typically came via the individual's support worker or through other project workers as well as through Learning Champions promoting the project. In the case of support worker referrals, the ability to refer clients on to a project that was part of the housing organisation that they were already familiar with (as opposed to an external provider) was said to be very important in encouraging the learner to have the confidence to participate. According to the TDG project workers it meant that the support workers were able to make a more seamless referral to help their clients and to enable them to build on the independent living skills that the support workers have begun to develop with their clients.

Among the learner respondents, almost all had been told about the Learning and Work project by their support worker and often the support worker had accompanied them on their first introduction or visit to the project. There was some initial scepticism – particularly from those who had experience of other programmes or who had tried unsuccessfully to do a college based course. Others had heard positive things about the project from other residents, or felt that they needed to return to learning to help them to progress. In some cases, knowing that they could work at their own pace and on a one-to-one basis was a particular advantage.
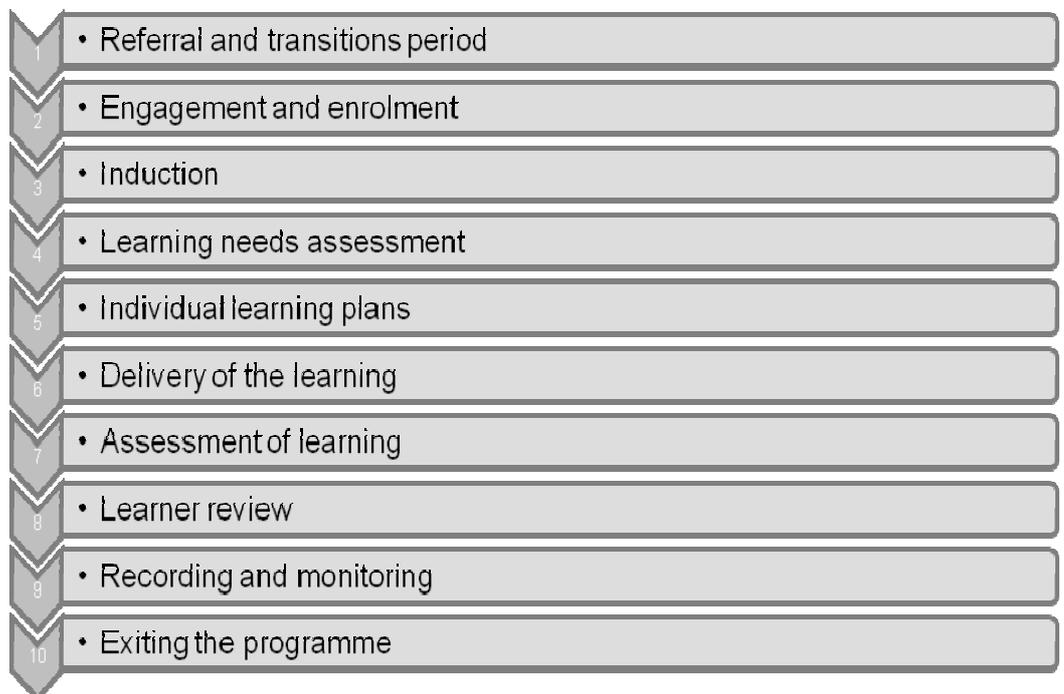
Other referrals had come via statutory services (for example Youth Offending Team, Careers Wales etc) as well as via the networks built up in the local communities (for example from a college). The projects all had information leaflets and posters about their Learning and Work project – these were distributed locally to other agencies and to community settings such as community centres and libraries.

Not all learners were registered on the Learning and Work programme immediately (see Section 3.4). Often this may have been because they did not feel ready themselves – according to the staff learners sometimes displayed a very negative attitude towards 'learning' and it was only once they realised that the Learning and Work programme was different to previous learning styles (for example, as experienced in school) that they were prepared to '*give it a go'.* In other cases, the Learning Champions recognised that more one to one work needed to be done with the learner (for example, in developing soft skills, dealing with aggression etc) before they could fully benefit from participation in the Learning and Work programme).

In some of the TDG projects there was a waiting list to enrol on the Learning and Work programme. Furthermore, where organisations run housing projects in other parts of the country which did not receive LCA funding, there was pressure from both their staff and their clients to be able to access LCA provision due to the observed success of the project.

3.4 Learning activities

In recognition of the negative learning experiences that many of the programme's clients have had previously, the TDG introduced a 'transitioning' stage to introduce learners to the programme and to help them to subsequently engage in the Learning and Work programme when they were ready. This also ensured that only clients who were ready to, and committed to, learning and progressing participated in the programme. This transitioning period can be up to six months in some cases. This forms the first part of 10 key stages identified by the TDG (see below). This approach also helped the four organisations work together to identify ways to work with clients at different stages.

1	• Referral and transitions period
2	• Engagement and enrolment
3	• Induction
4	• Learning needs assessment
5	• Individual learning plans
6	• Delivery of the learning
7	• Assessment of learning
8	• Learner review
9	• Recording and monitoring
10	• Exiting the programme

All of these stages were therefore common across the TDG pilots, although some are more easily identifiable than others. Two of the stages – the learning needs assessment and the individual learning plans – were critical in identifying with the learner what their needs were and what their intended outcomes are. Standard forms were used across the partnership to record aspects such as actions, how aims will be achieved and additional help required – all of which are regularly reviewed between the learner and the Learning Champion. Some learners required more support than others in identifying their needs, and likewise some found it initially very difficult to identify what they want from the programme. However, this was an important part of the approach, as it encouraged individual ownership of their plan, and ensured that they took an active part in planning their learning activities. For many learners, this was the first time they had been asked to take a leading role in their learning so it could often require considerable adjustment and motivation as well as the confidence to identify their desired outcomes and support needs.

Learners could also go through a basic skills assessment (although it is noteworthy that many learners will have already undertaken a number of basic skills assessments through their interactions with other agencies, such as Careers Wales). The TDG partnership was keen to move towards delivering their own basic skills training as much of the external provision was perceived to be inaccessible to these client groups because of where it was offered (too far

away, poor transport access etc) or because it was run in large groups (which many learners initially could find difficult to cope with).   The latest figures indicate that 647 clients had undertaken some form of initial basic skills screening, and 566 had been formally assessed for either literacy or numeracy (or both) using some form of recognised assessment tool (for example, from the Basic Skills Agency).   Just under a third of these were subsequently referred on to other basic skills providers for specific basic skills support. This suggests that a significant proportion of learners had some basic skills difficulties – this is supported by qualitative evidence from both the staff and from the learners themselves.

Learner portfolios

Each learner who participated in the Learning and Work programme had a learner portfolio, which contained the learner's individual learning plans, learner assessments and the collection of the individual's work.

In all four organisations, the aim was to link learner's achievements to accredited outcomes (see Section 3.6 below). The folders also provided evidence to the Verifier when assessing for accreditation.

Overcoming barriers to learning

For this client group, staff reported there were a number of significant barriers to learning (many of which were also identified by the learners themselves during the qualitative interviews). These included:

- Negative experiences at school, such as poor achievement, fragmented attendance (including exclusions and non-participation), bullying

- Chaotic lifestyles, such as regular spells of homelessness and 'sofa surfing'[4], family breakdown, abuse/domestic violence

- Lack of confidence, low self esteem and low self-belief

- Difficulties in engaging with others, evidenced by poor communication skills, aggression etc

- Negative views about general learning environments (for example, a dislike of being in a classroom setting or any environment that is perceived as 'formal').

---

[4] 'Sofa surfing' generally refers to being homeless but relying on friends or families to provide a temporary place to sleep – often on a sofa. Those who are 'sofa surfers' typically are not recorded in official homelessness statistics.

- Repeated failure at other learning activities (for example, school, college, work placements)

- Learning difficulties (for example, low levels of literacy and numeracy, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD)

- Complex and interwoven personal needs (for example, drug/alcohol issues, self-harm, depression, suicidal thoughts, panic attacks, poor social skills) many of which are enduring, and

- Ex-offenders, offending behaviour or at risk of offending.

It was evident from both the staff and learner interviews that these kinds of barriers were tackled by the Learning and Work programme in a number of ways including:

- Creating an informal learning environment, with tea and coffee making facilities, sofas etc

- Ensuring that the learner understands that they are able to progress at their own rate without risk of being penalised or excluded

- Ensuring that the learner understands that they will not be penalised or excluded in any way for non-attendance

- Offering creative learning opportunities, tailored as far as possible to their individual needs

- Working with learners on a one to one basis until they felt able and ready to participate in activities with others

- Accessing bespoke or specialist support such as anger management, debt advice or counselling, and

- Rewarding, awarding and praising achievement, no matter how small it may have seemed.

From the learner perspective, one of the most commonly cited barriers was low confidence and self-esteem. In such cases, learners recognised the value of being able to work on a one-to-one basis with the Learning Champion in helping them to become more confident in their abilities, and in developing the confidence to work with others.

3.5 Delivery

Across all partners, delivery of learning was a mixture of one to one support and small group sessions. For most learners, activities began on a one to one basis. This enabled the learner to get to know their Learning Champion as well as create an environment where they felt confident to discuss with their Learning Champion personal issues that may affect their learning. Furthermore, it

enabled the Learning Champion to explore issues such as basic skills and communication styles. It was often at this stage that the Learning Champion could recognise that more support was needed before the learner was able to progress in the Learning and Work programme.

Given the general reluctance of many within this client group to be associated with what was perceived as 'formal' learning, innovative approaches were required to engage learners in learning activities. The most successful way in which this was done was through applied 'real life' learning. For example, one of the Open College Networks units is around maintaining a tenancy, and the role of the landlord and tenant, embedded within which is reading, writing and numeracy. In another example, learners worked together in a community activity to draw and paint a mural in a residential home, which was then linked to an OCN in community project work. Learners were also encouraged to produced work that allowed them to reflect on their own experiences, positive and negative aspects of their life and strengths that they had. Evidence from the learner interviews revealed that they had not learnt in this way before and found it to be very positive and motivating.

The planning and delivery of learning activities, whilst often seen as informal by learners, was underpinned by careful and detailed written session planning from the Learning Champions (including for unaccredited learning). Each session had aims and learning outcomes and a session could be broken down to short blocks of time, each with its own activity predetermined by the Learning Champion. This ensured that the learner is engaged in the process, that tasks are achieved and skills are developed.

Community outreach services were also provided to learners. This proved to be particularly important in areas where access to transport was limited (and costly). However, this was also important to some learners who lacked the confidence to travel far, to use public transport or to go to unfamiliar territory. Examples here include young people who had experienced mental health problems and women who had experienced domestic abuse. Rooms in community venues were also used, such as local leisure centres and community halls.

The administrative activities required to enable successful delivery were not insignificant, and all staff respondents commented on the volume of such activity. Nevertheless, most had considerable experience of monitoring and administrative systems and so did not find the process difficult. However, all noted the time it took to complete the necessary paperwork, and none of them had access to administrative support to aid this.

3.6   Accredited learning

All four partners within TDG offered accredited learning.   This included:

Open College Network

The *Open College Network* (OCN) supports learning and widens opportunity by recognising achievement through credit based courses and qualifications. Providers are able to use the existing OCN units, or develop their own with support from the OCN. Organisations are also able to apply for approval to become a recognised centre to deliver and assess OCN units and qualifications (and this had been done in most of the organisations).

Learners could achieve OCN credits in a variety of areas such as budgeting, personal development, independent living skills, planning for the future, preparing for work, managing relationships, anger & stress management, DIY & home maintenance, citizenship and much more. Many of these were developed by the TDG staff themselves.

Getting Connected

The *Getting Connected* programme, is a curriculum framework of 9 units developed by the Young Adults Learning Partnership (YALP) the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) and the National Youth Agency of Wales. The units are aimed at helping learners to achieve 'soft outcomes' such as managing time, improving relationships, independent living skills and so on. Optional accreditation is through the OCR examination board. The Getting Connected programme had become an integral part of the Learning and Work programme for both staff and learners.

Profile of Achievement

One of the organisations is also a City and Guilds approved Centre for the delivery of the City & Guild *Profile of Achievement* Award.

Being able to provide accreditation to learners was viewed by staff as a central part of learners' development and progression. During discussions with the learners, the importance of achieving, or working towards, accredited outcomes such as OCNs or Profile of Achievement was frequently raised by respondents and it was evident that this was seen as an important part of their progression.

Although learners were encouraged to pursue accredited learning outcomes, not all chose to do so (or may choose to do so at a later date). Where this was the case, learners were encouraged to work towards achieving internal awards and certificates, developed by

the organisation. These may be related to regular attendance, contributing in a group setting or contributing to organisational activities (for example, preparing a display stand or speaking at an Assembly event, award ceremony or other event). Regular internal events were organised at which awards and certificates were presented to the learners. This has proved to be very successful – far more so than anticipated by staff. For learners, being presented with an award or certificate by staff gave them a feeling of pride – some reported that it was the first time they had ever received anything of this kind.

4   Partnerships with other organisations

Some delivery partnerships were evident as a result of the Learning and Work project.   For example, projects were able to provide some basic skills training to young people on behalf of Youth Offending Teams, where mainstream providers had been unable to engage successfully with this group. In another example, the Learning and Work project was able to take a learner from a mainstream training provider for a day to help with some intensive support needs. Such relationships tended to be reciprocal where possible.

Arrangements were also established via The Prince's Trust, through learners undertaking Prince's Trust organised activities.

Partnerships had also been established with Communities First, for example to run Learn Direct IT courses.

Informal links were reported to be central to the delivery of the Learning and Work programme and all projects agreed that they had developed a range of links and informal partnerships during the pilot (and continued to do so).   Running community based activities (for example via hiring facilities in community venues) had enabled links to be developed with other groups and users. Examples include community safety partnerships and local health boards, local music workshops

Other links and informal relationships were with organisations such as Youth Gateway, Careers Wales, social services, local training providers and colleges and Business in the Community, local Community Consortium for Education and Training groups, Jobcentre Plus and Working Links.

5 Quality standards

Continuing to raise the quality standards of the learning undertaken has been a key priority of the TDG. The project scheme adhered to a set of national guidelines laid down in the *Guide to the Delivery of Learning & Work in Homelessness Organisations*, which was published by TDG prior to the start of the pilot, as one of the outcomes of an earlier study. The guide continues to be developed and at the time of writing an updated version is being produced and printed by TDG (to be shared with other LCA pilots) which includes the good practice developed through the LCA pilot. It is understood that this guide will subsequently be available via Cymorth Cymru's website for those who sign up to the relevant standards and principles. The guide contains detailed information on quality standards and quality control, which outlines the roles of staff, clients and awarding bodies in maintaining high quality standards within the Learning and Work programme, as follows:

- Learner feedback is sought as an indicator of quality (through self-completion evaluation forms for each activity undertaken – these can be seen in learner's folders)

- Learning Champions review and assess the work of learners against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the award or qualification and monitor the progress of learners. This information is fed back to the internal moderator/verifier ready for external moderation/verification for accreditation

- The Internal Moderator/Internal Verifier checks the work of the tutors/assessors/facilitators and provides feedback to them as well as external moderators/verifiers and the Learning and Work programme co-ordinator.

- The Programme Co-ordinator or Manager ensures that any quality issues are addressed and that the programme runs efficiently and effectively.

- External Moderators/Verifiers (who represent the awarding body) check the work of the internal moderator/verifier and tutors/assessors/facilitators, and feed back essential information about the running of the programme to the awarding body as well as the providing organisation. They also visit the project to offer guidance, and may review a sample of learners' work and internal verifiers' reports

- The Awarding Bodies such as City & Guilds and The Open College Network have to comply with their own industry

standards to ensure that the qualifications they accredit are being delivered and assessed appropriately.

The development of individual learning plans for each learner has also ensured that there is a detailed record of each learner's plan, activities and progress. For the staff, this meant that any one of them can review learner's progress and record any intervention that they may have had with the learner.

The primary way of ensuring consistency and quality of assessment in the TDG pilot has been via the internal moderator/verifier function. Their role is to check learner portfolios to verify that tutors' assessment decisions do demonstrate that the learners are achieving against the learning outcomes set. Where learning is accredited (as much of it was within the TDG pilot), the role of the internal verifier or modifier is even more important, to ensure that the system is operating within the awarding body guidelines. The standard of internal verification was clearly high in the TDG, evidenced by the fact that many external verification visits (from awarding body assessors such as OCN Wales) have been reduced to annual visits.

Some partners had achieved, or are working towards building a portfolio of evidence for the Quality Mark Framework for signposting and supporting basic skills.

As part of the TDG's quality assurance processes tutors also assessed the work of learners, and monitored the progress of their learners through regular reviews, and learners were encouraged to provide feedback at the end of sessions they attend via an evaluation form.

The monthly network group meetings, at which all projects met to discuss operational issues, also provided an opportunity to consider and share good practice on quality issues. The meetings were facilitated by the project co-ordinator and chaired by the project manager from Cymorth Cymru. These meetings were well attended by all of the TDG organisations.

6 Identifying outcomes

6.1 'Hard' outcomes

In terms of learning, the main 'hard' outcomes that were achieved by learners in the pilot was through achieving accredited learning activities. It should be noted that this was <u>not</u> a specific requirement from DCELLS as part of the pilot funding, but had been successfully developed as a way of formalising and accrediting some of the soft skills progress and distance travelled by learners. In TDG, these awards were made mainly through three awarding bodies:

- City and Guilds – through the 'Profile of Achievement' award
- Open College Network – through 'bite sized' credits, progressing through different levels
- OCR, for 'Getting Connected'.

By March 2008 535 learners had received a recognised award, qualification, credit or unit, representing over three quarters (77%) of those who had completed an Individual Learning Plan, and over two thirds (67%) of those who had been inducted into the Learning and Work programme. These have mostly been Open College Network credits (547 OCN credits awarded as at September 2007), with many more working towards achievement. These have contributed to learners being able to move on to other activities, both from the confidence they have gained and the evidence they have to support their development and achievements. All learners spoken to as part of the evaluation saw the achievement of awards and certificates as a pivotal stepping stone to help them to achieve their goal of moving on to FE college or to finding a job, or even just proving to themselves or others that they could achieve something.

Other examples of 'hard' outcomes include completion of a First Aid certificate (accredited through the HSE), the completion of the Duke of Edinburgh award as well as moving into independent living.

The projects have also developed their own awards for those not yet in a position to achieve accredited awards, or to be awarded alongside other more formal awards. These could be given for regular attendance, use of good communication skills, contribution to the organisation and so forth, and are awarded at a ceremony attended by staff and other clients. This has proved to be a great success and learners have spoken candidly about how proud they

were at receiving this recognition – for many it was the first time that they had received any positive recognition.

Table 1 indicates the outcomes for the TDG pilot since it began, up to March 2008 (extracted from the monitoring data reported to DCELLS).

Table 1   TDG activities and outcomes data (April 05 to March 2008)

TDG Activity	Number of clients
Number of clients referred to the Learning and Work programme	1477
Number of clients inducted into the Learning and Work programme	823
Number of Learning Needs Assessments undertaken	751
Number of Individual Learning Plans drawn up	690
Total number of clients undertaking initial basic skills screening	647
Number of clients formally assessed for basic skills	566
Total number of clients signposted to specialist basic skills provider	159
Total number of clients receiving a recognised award, qualification, unit or credit	535

6.2   'Soft' outcomes

TDG has put considerable effort into the set up of a flexible, robust user-friendly system for monitoring and recording 'Soft Outcomes', based on developing their own systems as well as incorporating information and assessment guidance from SPRG[5] and Estyn. The system enables the systemic collection of soft outcomes but

---

[5] Supporting People Revenue Grant, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government

with the flexibility for individual projects to adapt the tool to suit the client group in question. The main proforma contains a series of statements such as:

- I feel confident in myself
- I am good at listening
- I work well with others
- I am good at being on time
- I finish activities I have started

Learners record the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements. The form was used during the initial stages of contact with the learner, and then repeated at different frequencies to map change over time. Paper copies were kept in the individual's file to enable comparisons over time. Developing an appropriate tool to capture and measure change over time in soft skills was still under development in some of the TDG projects. One of the difficulties raised by staff is recognising that the soft outcomes recorded are often a reflection of how the individual is feeling on that particular day rather than a measure of a general change since the last soft outcome assessment. As soft outcome data is built up over a longer time period a more accurate trend should be apparent. Nevertheless, a review of a small sample of forms indicates that there was an upward trend in the development of soft skills over time as learners progressed in the project.

Other soft skills tools used by projects included the Record of Progress which enables both the learner and the Learning Champion to score the learner on issues such as managing relationships, social skills, involvement, motivation, values and beliefs and life skills. This was then be repeated at three month intervals so providing evidence of change over time as well as comparisons between the learner perceptions and the Learning Champion perceptions. Another example is the Wheel of Progress, which worked in a similar way (although some learners did find this difficult to complete).

Evidence from the learners themselves has highlighted a range of soft outcomes, although the ones most commonly raised by respondents were relating to confidence and self-belief. For example, one learner spoke of not believing that she would be able to learn because of her learning disability – this view was echoed by others with similar learning difficulties who had always felt, or been made to feel, that they would not achieve anything.

In one TDG project, learners had requested that they be referred to as '*students*', which reflects their recognition that they now feel that

they are on a progressive learning and development path that leads to a recognised outcome.

When asked what they might be doing if they had not participated in the Learning and Work project, most learners thought that they would be sitting at home (if they had one), feeling *'depressed´* and *'doing nothing'*. Some felt that the project had completely turned their life around – *'it's stopped me from self-harming, it's given me confidence, it's given me a reason to live and shown me that I can actually go out there, you know'*.

6.3   Capturing progress/'distance travelled'

The learner's profile provided a clear record of the progress that learners make, from their initial learning needs assessment to their current activities. Every activity was recorded, copies of work done by the learner are included, and reflections (from both the learner and the Learning Champion) were captured on completion of each activity with regard to what has been learnt.

Several learners have successfully represented themselves and promoted the work of TDG at various local and national events including the Welsh Assembly Government Education Steering Group and the Cymorth Conference. For these learners, this was an activity that they would not have been able to achieve at the start of their learning journey and without the support of the Learning and Work.

Other outcomes which demonstrated the progress that learners have achieved through the Learning and Work programme included the production of short films illustrating the life of a young homeless person, a book of poetry written by learners and a wall hanging.

6.4   Exits/referrals elsewhere

Stage 10 of the Learning and Work project stages outlines the requirement for an exit review. However, in practice this was difficult to deliver in many cases because of difficulties following up learners once they had left the project – particularly as this could co-incide with a move out of the organisation's supported housing.

By the end of 2007 (in the penultimate quarter of the programme), around a third of those who had been inducted onto the Learning and Work Programme since it began in 2005 had achieved their goals set out in their individual learning plans and had left the programme in a planned way to go on to other activities. In terms of destinations, data are only available for the previous year and three quarters (ie, from April 06) – relating to 195 learners (Figure 1).   However, this shows that around a quarter moved to mainstream training or work placement, a further quarter moved

into work and around a fifth moved into mainstream education. Around a tenth moved on to voluntary work, with the remainder into unspecified activities.

Figure 1   Known Destinations of Planned Exits (December 2007)

n=160
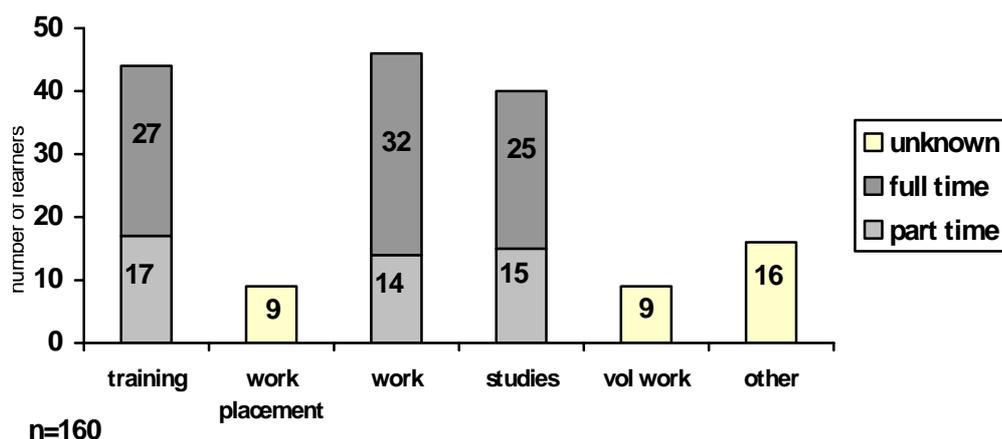
Where details of destinations are known, these include activities such as

- Attending full time college (eg, catering, hairdressing, childcare)
- Enrolment in an e-village (for IT training)
- Studying on an Access to Higher Education course
- Undertaking voluntary work.

In such cases, the view from staff was that the learners would not have been able to sustain such activities prior to their involvement in the Learning and Work programme – indeed some of the learners had previously attempted mainstream education but had left before completing. Reasons given by some of the learner respondents for leaving college prematurely included not being able to cope with working in large groups at college, being bullied or 'picked on' at college, getting pregnant, missing lessons so being asked to leave, being made homeless or not having enough one to one support or understanding from their college with respect to their particular needs.

Some projects were able to conduct exit reviews with planned leavers (although this was a relatively recent development). From a sample of 10 exit review questionnaires from one provider, positive outcomes were reported in all cases relating to feeling as

though they had achieved, feeling confident about their future and being able to manage their time.

Drop-out from the Learning and Work programme was generally low (well under a fifth of all registrants) although it was reported by staff that a proportion of these learners do return to the project at a later date. Examples here included someone who left the project due to a custodial sentence but returned on release, and another who returned after the birth of her baby. The willingness and ability of the Learning and Work project to enable learners to return to the project without difficulty or judgement, and to pick up from where they left, has no doubt contributed to this.

Tracking the progress of leavers remains a challenge to the projects. Whilst considerable efforts are made to establish follow-on activities, staff found it difficult to remain in touch with learners once they have left the project – often because the learners themselves move on elsewhere or to other activities. Since April 06, 259 clients left the Learning and Work programme in an 'unplanned way' (ie, without completing an exit review with a member of staff). However, further analysis conducted by the project staff of leavers between April and November 07, indicates that of the 73 unplanned leavers, 63 had completed at least one Individual Learning Plan and had achieved the relevant goals set out within that plan. This suggests, therefore, that in terms of distance travelled, there has been some progress and achievement with these clients.

7 Project funding issues

7.1 How was the funding used?

The LCA funding could not be used for capital expenditure or direct salary costs, but Learning Champions' time could be funded. Project funding also contributed to the cost of training staff to enhance their ability to deliver, and assess, accredited learning (for example, NVQs or training to become a verifier for an awarding body).

7.2 Cost per learner

The Welsh Assembly Government contribution per learner for the TDG pilot is £997.

Overall, it is estimated that the LCA funding contributed around an average of 40% of the total cost for the delivery of the service, with the remainder of the cost being met internally from within each of the four organisations (initially TDG matched the grant and have increased their contribution over the 3 years). This was done in recognition of the contribution the project makes to the organisations' clients in terms of enhancing their skills and enabling them to progress, although it was also recognised as financially unsustainable over the longer term.

Each organisation delivering the LCA pilot reported doing so at a deficit. This was in part related to the number of learners now registered on the Learning and Work Programme (about a third higher than anticipated, and budgeted for) as well as the intensity of support many learners needed over a relatively long time period. In some cases, this was far greater than was originally anticipated. At the start of the LCA pilot, in some cases projects signed up people to the Learning and Work pilot before they were ready because of a focus on registration. However, it transpired that this could mean that learners were registered before they were actually ready to undertake learning activities through the project and as a consequence took much longer to progress or dropped out of the project. It was because of this that the transitioning phase was introduced (which is not funded by the LCA pilot but by the wider organisation).

Organisations recognised that it was extremely difficult to apportion costs per learner. 'Time and motion' studies had been undertaken to break down and record activities on a quarter of an hour basis to try to calculate time spent on learning activities but this proved unsuccessful because of the difficulty in disentangling direct delivery with other activities related to developing learning.

7.3   Additional funding sources

European Social Fund funding was also in place in some organisations to enable them to deliver the same projects in other geographical areas across the country. An example here is the Tai Hafan 'New Dawn' project, which has ESF funding to help people to improve their skills and job prospects through a similar model.

Other funding has been accessed by some of the Learning and Work projects to support its delivery. For example, small amounts of funding were been secured to purchase additional computers and other IT equipment (for example from a Young People's Partnership).   Funding was secured in the form of a Tenant Empowerment Grant which has enabled learners to take part in desk top publishing workshops so that they were able to produce their own newsletter. Funding has also been secured to purchase computers and IT equipment and to purchase film making equipment.

There was a clear view from the project managers that without the financial support of the wider organisation and its trustees, the project would not have been able to continue at its current capacity. Such support was given because of the recognition of the core role that the Learning and Work project played in enabling clients to develop and progress, and of its natural 'fit' with the provision of supported housing.

8 Added Value of Learning Community Accounts activities

This section considers the extent to which the LCA pilots provided additionality to what was already in existence for target client group.

8.1 Adding value and avoiding duplication

None of the partner organisations felt that what they were providing duplicated what was already in existence, because many of the learners had already tried – and failed at- existing 'mainstream' provision. For learners within the TDG, they reported that it was often a last port of call for those wanting to undertake some form of learning. In order to ensure that they were aware of what other support learners had accessed, part of the learning needs assessment includes a section on what agencies or services that the client was already engaged with, the nature of the engagement and a contact name. This might include, for example, Youth Gateway, YOT, CAHMS, Prince's Trust or a voluntary sector body. This then enables the Learning Champion and learner to link up with others rather than duplicating effort.

The pilot work has also facilitated the updating of the TDG's Guide to the Delivery of Learning and Work in Homelessness Organisations (mentioned earlier), which covers delivery, assessment, monitoring and quality standards as well as templates for administrative, monitoring and evaluation purposes. The guide has been updated to map to Estyn's Common Inspection Framework as well as the requirements of the awarding bodies which the TDG Learning and Work programme adheres to for the accredited outcomes (for example, City & Guilds, OCR and the National Open College Network). The first revised draft was circulated to other LCA pilots in September 2007 and anecdotally positive feedback has been received from the other pilots (although many would have benefited from sight of the guidance at a much earlier stage in their set-up). A final version is being produced for early 2008.

8.2 Building organisational and staff capacity

It was evident from the staff and manager interviews that the TDG Learning and Work project had also made a significant contribution to the organisational capacity. Although there had been some initial doubts from some as to how the project would work and what

it could offer, it was clear from the staff interviews that there was now generally widespread support and recognition of the value of the project. Indeed it was commented that although the LCA pilot was initially seen as the '*icing on the cake'* for supporting clients, the project was now seen as integral to the ethos of the organisation (and this was one of the reasons why financial support from the wider organisation has continued, despite the project running at a deficit) and to meeting the needs of its clients. It was reported that staff skills and expertise had been developed, housing support workers were now able to offer to and refer on their clients on to more formal learning activities but within the safe confines of the same organisation, and the organisation was now able to offer a fuller portfolio of support to clients to enable them to progress. Some staff continued to develop their skills through the NVQ route, for example, by working towards achieving an NVQ in Learning and Development or Information, Advice and Guidance.

The success of the Learning and Work programme was also recognised externally. This was evidenced by staff reporting increased referrals occurring from other agencies that had been unable to find any other provision to meet the often complex needs their clients have to enable them to progress (an example here is the Youth Offending Teams). An example of this recognition is an award to Llamau from Careers Wales in recognition of the project's support for young people not in education, employment or training.

9   Case study

This section contains a case study of a TDG learner. The case study (which is anonymised) incorporates evidence from the learner and staff interviews as well as some additional data taken from the learner's work folders. The case study has been selected as it demonstrates some of the barriers that many learners with the TDG have had to overcome, and the progress that they have made.

Georgia

Georgia came to the project via her support worker. Georgia was new to the area having moved to get away from an abusive and violent partner and difficult relationships with other family members. Georgia has a history of drug and alcohol dependency, which has left some long term health problems. She now lives in supported housing and has enrolled on the Learning and Work programme to help her to progress to live independently, to gain some qualifications and ultimately move into work. Georgia has never lived independently or alone before, has never had control of her own money (which was kept by her ex partner) and has had little formal education having been an irregular attendee at school since the age of about 10. According to staff, when Georgia first came to the LCA project she was fairly non-communicative towards others and could demonstrate aggressiveness.

Participating in the project has been a significant positive event in Georgia's life. Since joining the project, Georgia has studied English and maths and learnt about healthy eating and healthy living, money matters and budgeting, and has built up her confidence through both one-to-one support and group work, as well as the achievement of OCNs.

> *'I'm coming out of the house more often, I wouldn't come out, I wouldn't mix with anyone but since I've been on the group I've had more confidence to do things … when they say you can get a certificate it shows you then that you can do it.*

The 'wheel of progress' has been used with Georgia. This is a tool developed to measure areas of soft skill development – the learner

scores themselves from one (low) to seven (high) on a number of issues relating to personal skills and attitudes. At the start, it is clear that Georgia had difficulty on all aspects, particularly motivation, life skills and general involvement. As she developed through the Learning and Work project there is a clear indication of an overall improvement (see Figure 2). Nevertheless, there are dips in some categories. According to the staff, there may often be slight decreases if the individual is having a 'bad day' on the day they complete the soft skills tool, so each score should be reviewed alongside the overall trend.

Figure 2   Wheel of Progress (Georgia)
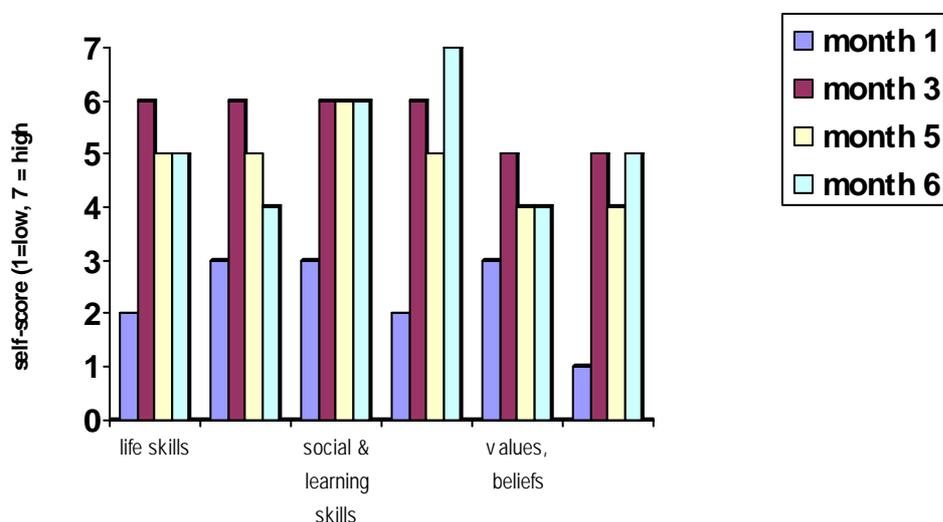
In terms of identifying soft outcomes and distance travelled, a review of the measuring tool used by the project (at the initial enrolment and again five months later) indicates that Georgia's outcomes have improved on all measures. Figure 3 below indicates the areas of change for personal and social skills. On all measures there has been significant improvement. From the learner interview, Georgia felt strongly that the improvements gained are as a direct result of the LCA pilot project.

Figure 3   Georgia's Progress in soft outcomes and distance travelled (0 is lowest, 6 is highest) – self-recorded

Outcome	Stage 1	Stage 2
I feel confident in myself	2	5
I feel good about myself	1	4
I am good at listening	4	6
I am confident at speaking one to one	0	4
I get on well with people my own age	2	5
I get on well with most people	3	5
I work well with others	2	6
I can talk about my successes and failures	1	6
I am good at helping others	1	6
I am in control of my feelings	0	5

Georgia has already undertaken some work experience, arranged by the provider, which she thoroughly enjoyed. Now that Georgia is becoming more self-sufficient, her goal is to *'go out and get a job and a car'* to prove that she can succeed and show to those who have judged her in the past that *'I'm not a dosser, I can turn round and say "I've done it"'.*