

Developing a Pilot Scheme for Accrediting Community Development Work Practice



Supporting Communities
Creating Change

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Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme

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Contents

Introduction

Section 1	Explaining The Accreditation Scheme
	1.1 What is the Scheme about?
	1.2 Rationale
	1.3 The Proposal
	1.4 Key Principles – new, different and empowering
Section 2	The Structure and Process of a National Accreditation Scheme
	2.1 Overview
	2.2 The Community Development Work Accreditation Process
	2.3 Essential Elements – England-based Centre
	2.4 Role of National Bodies
	2.5 Local / Regional Delivery Centres
	2.6 Assessment Strategy
Section 3	Next Steps

Introduction

The National Empowerment Partnership funded ESB, through FCDL, to undertake a small research project with the aim of developing a formal model of accreditation which acknowledges the skills and expertise of experienced community development practitioners in England. This model is the Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme.

ESB and FCDL jointly managed and delivered the project. The research, which took place between January and March 2008, engaged nationally with Community Development Workers (CDWs), training providers (in the community and in Higher Education), existing Government publications, research and literature. Discussions were held with awarding bodies and sector skills councils.

At this stage the model has been developed for England. However colleagues in Northern Ireland and Wales provided information for this project. A longer-term aim is to explore how appropriate this template might be for the other administrations within the UK, and how it might relate to a European framework. (See the supporting papers for this project for information gathered on these possibilities).

The project has attracted substantial interest, with organisations offering to participate in pilot activities.

Summary of work undertaken

Two open workshops in York and London were organised and invitations sent to members of the England Standards Board (ESB), the members of Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL) and through the regional networks for community development work.

Research into previous accreditation schemes produced substantial amounts of relevant and useful material.

At the initial workshops ideas were generated about how a scheme could work and the issues that would need to be addressed. The workshops then determined the best way to proceed.

The people contracted worked in small teams and with peer reviewers to further research, draft and refine particular sections of the model for an alternative route to qualification for experienced community development practitioners.

This involved discussions with Awarding Bodies, and the relevant sector skills council (LLUK) to ensure that we were designing a qualification that would meet the required standards and criteria for endorsement within the Qualification Framework. We have received a favourable first impression that we are heading in the right direction.

This work was presented back to a working group in Leeds. Other people who were interested but unable to attend contributed through email and telephone discussions. A revised model was agreed and further redrafting has taken place to create this Community Development Work Accreditation Model.

Section 1

Explaining The Accreditation Scheme

1.1 What is this Scheme about?

The purpose of the research project was to develop the Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme to accredit the learning from experience of individual practitioners involved in Community Development Work.

The Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme is not a course. It is an alternative route to qualification through assessment and evaluation of workers' learning and practice. All applicants to the Scheme must have community development experience to draw on for Accreditation. It is open to experienced workers and those who are active in their communities at a range of different levels.

It aims to recognise and validate people's experiences within Community Development Work, recognising that people learn in different ways, and in particular from doing, from reflecting on their practice with others, and to enable them to gain professional recognition of their skills and knowledge.

1.2 Rationale

Community Development Work continues to move up the political agenda. It is increasingly recognised as having a central role to play in developing social cohesion and community empowerment within and across different communities as well as in key social policy areas like housing and health.

It is also being highlighted as a key method for fulfilling the ambition of government to enable citizens and communities to have a more integral role in services both provided and received, local governance and the quality of life.

The National Occupational Standards for Community Development Work¹ define the occupation by its key purpose statement:

'The key purpose of Community Development Work is to collectively bring about social change and justice by working with communities to:

- Identify their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities
- Plan, organise and take action
- Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of action

all in ways which challenge oppression and tackle inequalities.'

A community development approach has been a feature underlying successive government initiatives and policies. In the 2004 Home Office publication 'Firm Foundations: The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building' the first principle identified as a basis for action is to:

"Adopt a community development approach, accepting as a starting point the values on which community development is based" (2004: 3).

This commitment has been reinforced in the Together We Can initiative (see Together We Can website)

1 The full Community Development Work Standards are on www.lluk.org; a summary is available on www.fcdl.org.uk: 'Summary of Good Practice Standards'.

and at the same time policies such as Active Learning for Active Citizenship, now known as Take Part, which identified mentoring and support as a key learning method to be embraced in developing citizenship learning opportunities. (Woodward 2004, p18).

Since that time the Communities and Local Government funded report 'The Community Development Challenge' (2006) further asserted the importance of investment in community development and in building and promoting the community development occupation. The developing Empowerment Agenda now offers a unique opportunity to highlight and extend the contribution of Community Development Work. The Action Plan for Community Empowerment (2007) states 'Locally we want to make it easier for the individual who wants to participate' (Communities & Local Government, p 6) proposing a raft of actions to achieve this. The follow up White Paper (2008) Communities and control: Real people, real power states its aim is to "pass power into the hands of local communities... and give real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of active citizens.". The White Paper goes on to identify practical guidance and appropriate training in community development (CLG page 40-41).

With these policy imperatives in mind and the increase in jobs requiring community development skills, knowledge and values there is a need for more qualified staff. Creating opportunities for experienced people and those in practice to get qualified will enhance the occupation in the context of the developing the Lifelong Learning (LLUK) workforce strategy.

The Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme in itself also contributes to the government's lifelong learning strategy as it would bring some people into the formal skills development process through an alternative route to traditional course based learning.

During the research various issues had been highlighted that were seen to be impeding the uptake of courses for professional qualifications. These included:

- The patchy nature of the availability of current provision
- The lack of choice or opportunity to gain full qualification at levels below level 4 (the NVQ being the only option for full qualification and that is only available through a few centres)
- Personal learning styles – for those preferring a work based learning route the NVQ is currently the only real option but is not always the preferred learning style
- The nature of current employment where short term contracts or changing work environment make it difficult to 'sign up' to a formal long term commitment that is 'tied' to a particular location
- The transition from undertaking lots of short courses into doing a full qualification
- Where experienced workers entered the field before full time Community Development Work qualifications were available and may not have their skills and knowledge recognised.

There is strong support for the need to make community development qualifications more accessible, relevant, credible and flexible taking into account the validation of skills, knowledge and experience gained through practice. Work to develop coherent, accessible and progressive qualifications for community development work led to the 'Community Development Roots & Routes' conference in 2004.

Out of this came the Community Development Work Learning and Qualifications Framework (see FCDL web site and the supporting material folder from this research).

Within this framework the Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme is focused on a work based route for securing professional qualification in community development work. This recognises the importance of prior learning and relevant experience gained in both informal and formal community

settings and widens the recruitment base of community development workers.

The Scheme is to be widely promoted (e.g. through employing bodies, the sector skills councils, national community development organisations, the UK Workforce Hub, Community Development Work networks, careers services). The qualifications gained would be nationally recognised.

1.3 The Proposal

This proposal is designed to benefit employers, communities and individuals alike, in that it focuses on practical skills for working in communities. Participants will be encouraged and assisted to identify and build on their community development work experience. This will be complemented by a rigorous analysis of what they need to do in order to respond to the needs and interests of both employers and communities to develop social cohesion and community empowerment. The well-established National Occupational Standards (NOS) in Community Development Work will be a key reference point in this Scheme (see www.fcdl.org.uk and www.lluk.org).

This Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme being proposed is intended to meet the needs and interests of people at levels 3 – 7 initially; consideration for expanding the scheme to include other levels would be undertaken once the piloting phase was completed. Given community development's concerns with equality of opportunities and access to resources for communities, the aim is to include on the Scheme people from diverse backgrounds including people who may be from Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and marginalised communities'.

In particular the Scheme will target experienced community development practitioners with few qualifications, who want to gain recognition for what they have done, what they know and how they work. They will then be in a position to use this qualification to further their careers as Community Development Workers.

In addition, for those people with experience of working in communities and who have HE level qualifications but not directly community development related, they will want to show that their skills, knowledge and ability to think critically and learn from their experience are equivalent to that of graduates from Foundation or full undergraduate degrees in Community Development Work.

1.4 Key Principles – New, Different & Empowering

With these main groups in mind, the principles underpinning this accreditation route for community development work qualification are that it is:

- Focused on practice
- Simple, straightforward, finite and involving minimal bureaucracy
- Rigorous, through active and critical engagement with the National Occupational Standards (NOS) in Community Development Work
- Empowering, for both Participants and communities
- Portfolio-based, allowing Participants to demonstrate evidence of their experience, skills and knowledge relevant to the present policy context
- Collective, through involving mentors, peers, community members and, where appropriate, employers' perspectives
- Offered at a range of levels with progression and routes to other qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework and with the potential for trans-national linkages.

This proposal sets out to establish a qualification for people working in communities that is new, different and empowering.

It is **new** in the way it engages with practice. It is a portfolio-based approach which allows Participants to identify, review and validate their existing experience, skills and knowledge in flexible ways that are based on their strengths as practitioners and preferred learning styles. As such it will not rely just on written materials but will enable a range of creative sources and methods to be used in the gathering of evidence. Participants can then build on this through an active, critical and supported engagement with the NOS in Community Development Work.

This whole Scheme and movement towards accreditation would normally take no more than 12 months of intensive application. This follows a growing national trend towards professional recognition based on verification and analysis of practice rather than taught courses.

It is **different** in that accreditation is based on a diversity of evidence where levels of critical thinking and analysis are as important as the more functional mapping and validation of skills and knowledge. NVQ's will still exist to offer a qualification that is gained on the assessment of a practitioner's demonstrated level of competence and understanding. The Accreditation Scheme will provide an alternative and more flexible opportunity for experienced practitioners to learn from reflection on their own practice with an experienced mentor and to demonstrate their existing skills and knowledge in practice and their development of competence in new areas. They will become more critical, reflective and effective in their work as well as having their practice professionally recognised.

It is different too, in that the Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme has a collective dimension. It involves the views and experiences of peers, members of relevant participating communities and employers. This collective involvement has the advantage that it directly involves the people with whom the participant works. It also incorporates an important measure of triangulation where real life ability to communicate and work with others can be evidenced and linked to the recorded competencies and reflective insights of the Participant.

Furthermore, it is **empowering** in the way the Scheme combines validation of experience with formative development. Evidence of past experience, skills and knowledge is complemented normally by a twelve-month period of rigorous and critical engagement with the NOS in Community Development Work. This opens up opportunities for all experienced workers (paid and unpaid) to obtain qualifications. Participants have the opportunity to access the active and ongoing support of a learning support system through working with an experienced mentor. The mentor's role is to help Participants reflect on how their practice has been developed in the past, the learning points they can identify from it, the critical links they can make between Community Development Work practice and theory and the ways forward that they can identify for themselves and their work. It therefore enables Participants to keep their knowledge up to date and root it into current policy contexts. It is empowering in that it allows the participant, with their mentor's support, to have control over the evidence that they produce for assessment.

This Scheme can also be empowering for peers, communities and employers as it highlights key issues about community development practice for communities and workers alike. It can be of particular benefit for employers who are relatively new to employing community development workers, to assist them in their understanding and affirmation of the participant's 'readiness for practice' in relation to the skills, knowledge and values of community development work. Overall participation in the Scheme will help increase Participant's employability, job security and job satisfaction.

Section 2

The Structure & Process of a National Accreditation Scheme

2.1 Overview

The following operational model sets out a framework for a pilot Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme that aims to accredit community development practice fit for purpose in the context of the contemporary world.

Our proposal requires the active involvement of the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL) and the England Standards Board (ESB).

A national centre would be established, based within FCDL. The scheme would be run by a board composed of:

- A member from each organisation or partnership wishing to deliver the scheme in their area / region.
- Appropriate national bodies – for example community development organisations such as FCDL and Community Development Exchange (CDX); employer bodies such as LLUK, IDEA, Local Government Association, Joint Negotiating Committee, and Voluntary and Community Sector representatives; funders such as Learning and Skills Council and Capacitybuilders; interested and relevant bodies connected to community development work such as Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC), PCTs; awarding bodies and representatives of Higher Education.

The board would be serviced by an administrator employed by FCDL.

The role of the board would be to develop the details of the scheme and establish the documentation and processes to be used within each centre offering this route. The detailed process would be submitted to ESB for endorsement as a quality scheme. The national board would be responsible for ensuring that all its members fully implemented the agreed systems and processes.

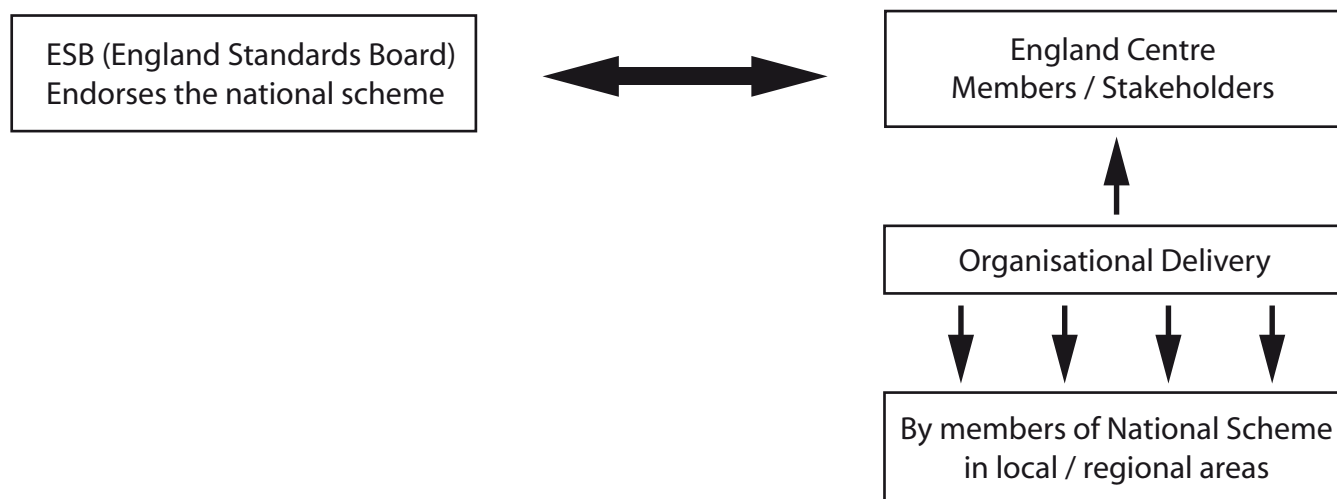
The board would set the standards and approve the training for:

- Staff and managers involved in the scheme
- Trainers
- Assessors and assessment panels
- Mentors

The board would:

- Design and award the National Certificate and maintain a register of all those who gained the award
- Develop and maintain a national 'bank' of mentors, assessors, and trainers.
- Handle all appeals

2.2 The Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme Process



The following presents the Community Development Work accreditation process diagrammatically and the essential elements are highlighted in the sub-section 2.3 below:

<p>Support from Employers (All sectors)</p> <p>and Colleagues</p> <p>and Communities</p>	<p>FINDING OUT ABOUT THE ACCREDITATION SCHEME</p>
	<p>Application for Entry Apply for Application Pack and talk to Centre Scheme Co-ordinator about the Scheme.</p> <p>Attend Open Days To enable Applicants to learn more about Accreditation, meet mentors and assessors and discuss needs in relation to criteria and own learning needs.</p>
	<p>SELF – ASSESSMENT - LEARNING + EXPERIENCE</p> <p>All Applicants are encouraged to consider their own learning, skills, knowledge and experience in relation to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and to think about which Level they think they are at (and possible APEL/APCL).</p>
	<p>INTERVIEW with an INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE ADVISER</p> <p>Interview to determine - Where now/Levels/gaps? - Factors affecting options?</p>
<p>EXIT or APPEAL</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> DECISION & REPORT TO ACCREDITATION CENTRE Decision – IAG Adviser & Applicant agree: - ready to proceed (Applicant is invited to discuss way forward) - need further experience/learning (Applicant given advice where/how) - other route if more appropriate (Applicant given details of other routes) Report to Centre (copy given to Applicant) </p> <p>← If disagreement, Appeals Procedures at all stages available</p>

START SCHEME

1. Individual support from mentor (12 hours over the year) to link assessment to National Occupational Standards (NOS) to produce PORTFOLIO & EVIDENCE of experience, skills and knowledge in community development work
2. Support and guidance provided through Action Learning Sets, workshops, short courses provided by the centre

At the end of the year the participants can:

- Submit their portfolio
- Exit the scheme
- Apply for an extension under extenuating circumstances

ASSESSMENT

PANEL of ASSESSORS = 3 – to include local/ regional or national members:
 2 Assessors (1 writes Summative Report and 1 Presents Report to Accreditation Centre)
 Participant’s Mentor (as link between Participant and Panel and as advocate only)

Panel members work for an agreed set fee, and undertake the following tasks:

1. To read, view, listen to evidence presented in Portfolio prior to Panel meeting.
2. Meet/discuss range, length, depth of evidence produced in Portfolio related to specific Level.
3. Interview key people working with Participant .
4. Interview Participant to confirm evidence in Portfolio and from key witnesses.
5. Meet up to review all evidence and agree findings.
6. Produce a Report of all evidence, findings and decision to accredit or refuse.
7. Present Report to Accreditation Centre.

NOT TO ACCREDIT



DECISION



TO ACCREDIT

DEFER



EXIT OR APPEAL

AWARD ISSUED



APPEAL PROCEDURES – at all Stages of The Accreditation Scheme

2.3 The Essential Elements – England-based System

From the diagrammatic representation of the process the key elements are:

- To establish a national organisational centre composed of locally based providers, relevant stakeholders and interested bodies which would form a strong administrative centre to establish the England scheme. The centre would maintain and develop links with other nations within the UK and link with relevant European bodies and systems which could relate to Community Development Work accreditation for workers (paid and unpaid) to gain credit at different levels for their experience and learning.
- The national centre will establish with ESB the Standards and Quality Assurance for the delivery of the Accreditation Scheme, through relevant national guidelines linked to the National Occupational Standards for Community Development Work.

These national guidelines are designed to:

- Ensure a uniformity of basic structures and principles.
- Maintain the rigour of the Scheme while allowing for appropriate regional and local flexibility.
- Provide a range of relevant documentation for members of the national and local Schemes (to include Participants, employers, information/advice & guidance advisers (IAG) and assessor panels, mentors, scheme managers, moderators and trainers).
- The national centre would create a national 'bank' of experienced and trained people to call upon during each stage of the Scheme who are experienced community development practitioners and will include representatives and stakeholders from national, regional and local organisations e.g. employers, unions, faith and community groups etc. It would seek people from different backgrounds and cultures to ensure the diversity of its members. They will be responsible for setting the requirements of the Scheme which delivery agencies would follow.
- The scheme would be based on the principles outlined on page 6 to meet the needs of Participants as explained in 1.3.
- Normally Participants would complete the accreditation process over a 12 month period with mentors available to support them for up to 12 hours direct contact time.
- Anti-discriminatory practice and the celebration of diversity will be key elements in the whole Scheme from entry to content, staffing, the assessment scheme, achievement and management and development of the Accreditation project.
- Levels will be determined by key roles in National Occupational Standards (NOS) and thus it is crucial that when an Applicant is applying to Accreditation, they are aware of the criteria and standards at all levels so as to be able to make an initial self-assessment against their own experience. It will be with the support and advice of the IAG Adviser that they will identify and 'match' this experience to the appropriate level during the initial interview. It is recognised that many community development practitioners undertake a variety of roles at different levels e.g. locally based community workers will be frequently working at different levels and performing some roles at a higher level. However the participant must evidence their experience at the appropriate agreed level so as to obtain the relevant award. Participants may change levels during the accreditation process with support from their mentor.

- All Participants who successfully complete the Community Development Work accreditation process would receive a nationally recognised award of their experience, skills and knowledge (at the agreed level of competence) verified by the England Accreditation Centre and endorsed by the England Standards Board. The centre would maintain a national register of Participants that have reached a recognised level of competence, skills and standards through the Accreditation Scheme.
- Transferability of the award across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland (and eventually the EU) is important and work could be undertaken as part of the revision of NOS in 2008 to initiate or continue these discussions to explore transferability and adaptability for use across the 4 nations.
- The award will enable Participants to demonstrate that they have a wide variety of skills, knowledge and experience that they can use and adapt in different community groups and settings.
- Appeals procedures will be available at all stages of the Scheme.

2.4 The Role Of Key National Bodies

The Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme is supported by the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL) a national membership organisation that plays a unique role in developing a coherent, inclusive and supportive infrastructure for community development learning. They will support the development of the Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme, the National Centre and Local and Regional Centres around England, and assist with making links within the UK and internationally.

The England Standards Board for Community Development Work Training and Qualifications is the national body that provides endorsement for training and qualifications in Community Development Work in England. The ESB has a close working and management relationship with FCDL. ESB will determine the standards required for endorsement of the scheme and will use its usual processes to confer endorsement on the proposed scheme.

The role of awarding bodies has been examined and details can be found in the supporting research material. Awarding bodies are keen to continue discussions which follow from this preliminary consultation with them, particularly as the national qualifications framework becomes clearer and more developed through its work and review. There are certainly opportunities to develop and promote new approaches to learning and qualifications.

2.5 The Local / Regional Delivery Centre

In order to ensure easy access to the scheme it is planned that delivery would take place at a local or regional level. It is expected that existing providers or centres would add this route to their existing portfolio, and that new centres may be developed through partnerships between different providers working at different levels where the current patchy provision makes this a viable option. As one of the key elements identified for this accreditation route is the integration of theory and practice so this issue would need to be addressed in the structure of delivery.

Each regional / local Centre may offer the Community Development Work Accreditation Scheme only when they have registered their interest with the National Centre and can show that they have the capacity and resources to do this successfully, to meet the requirements of the England Standards Board. These could be existing providers, sub regional groups or partnerships 'clustered' around a centre.

The regional/ local centre will:

- Publicise the scheme and run open days to attract applicants; provide relevant documentation to all members interested in finding out about the Scheme, including all policies and procedures
- Select Participants to the Accreditation Scheme through an initial interview; develop appropriate systems for AP(E)L and AP(C)L to enable 'fast tracking' where appropriate
- Recruit and train people to offer advice about the award and levels
- Establish the mentoring process; recruiting and training mentors; agreeing process for matching mentors to Participants
- Establish assessment process; recruit and train assessors; agree process for receiving portfolios and assessor reports; agree process for assessors to visit Participants' workplace; organise, administer and convene accreditation panels; implement decision-making process
- Organise learning workshops and action learning sets to support the integration of theory and practice
- Liaise with work bases and employers to ensure support for Participants
- Identify and secure relevant resources to enable the Accreditation Scheme to be delivered locally or regionally as agreed
- Meet on a regular basis to provide/receive updates of progress about the Scheme and provide an annual report to the national centre each year on progress and developments for the year
- Ensure a moderation system will be in place throughout the year to check that standards are being met. At least 2 people with a wide range of experience, skills and knowledge in Community Development Work will be recruited to monitor and evaluate all systems in the accreditation process
- Ensure that appeals procedures against the assessment decisions of the Scheme are available at all stages of the Accreditation Scheme. This will be in all information packs.

2.6 Community Development Work Accreditation Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategy will ensure that Participants achieve a level of competence, knowledge and critical understanding that is equivalent to existing awards in community development work and an appropriate baseline for following existing progression routes to community development and other qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework.

Further details of the assessment strategy are in the supporting materials but the key elements have been extracted and reproduced below

a) What to assess. Assessment focuses on the following key elements:

- The Participant's range of experience, what they have learned from it and how they will develop it
- The relationship between the Participant and groups worked with
- Practical skills in relation to NOS
- Transferable skills in relation to NOS and, where appropriate, key Higher Education-related skills
- Knowledge and understanding of community development theory/key principles related to NOS

- Knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities/anti-oppressive practice
- Ability to relate practice to theory in a critical, reflective way
- Wider societal awareness and understanding

b) Key Principles

Starting with practice.

This assessment strategy takes account of the starting point of applicants and focuses on their past and developing community development practice. It then needs to assess (and give credit to) their experience of working in communities and the skills, knowledge and understanding they have developed from their work and life experience.

Relationship to the National Occupational Standards in Community Development Work.

The NOS consist of key values, practice principles and identified roles and skills for community development practice. Thus they form a central reference point for the assessment strategy. This requires an active and critical engagement of Participants with the NOS as learning outcomes will be assessed against the NOS and a key part of critical review and analysis will be an assessment of an informed, critical and supported dialogue between the participant and the mentor in relation to the Standards.

Assessment will not only consist of judging the mapping of experience, skills and knowledge against the Standards, it will also allow Participants to identify and review their own practice, guiding values and principles and skills in relation to the Standards. The Participant will be expected to show evidence that they have engaged actively and critically with the Standards' values and practice principles and, depending on level, can demonstrate experience of the relevant roles identified at that level. Engagement with new or unfamiliar roles or skills in the Standards will be part of a formative assessment process.

Empowerment: relating practice and theory in a formative way.

The assessment strategy will embody a formative dimension (involving mentor support) which will pay particular attention to how that practice has been developed, the learning points that Participants can identify from it, the critical links they have made and can make between practice and theory and the ways forward that they can identify for themselves and their work. This formative assessment will be translated into more formal summative assessment within the final portfolio and will be examined in the final interview.

The portfolio and the nature of evidence.

The main evidence will take the form of a portfolio of work, which may contain elements of conventional written work, scrapbooks, taped evidence, videos, reflective diaries / blogs. The Scheme is meant to have a collective dimension, therefore the views and experiences of peers and members of relevant participating communities will be also taken into account. This will include observation of Participants' work practice and a final assessment interview based on the submitted Portfolio.

Quality and quantity in assessment.

An element of functional analysis will be a necessary part of the assessment strategy, particularly in assessing the documentation and mapping of Participants' skills to the identified roles and skills in the NOS. However the assessment strategy needs to ensure this does not become an over-bureaucratic, unduly time-consuming Scheme for Participants, mentors and assessors alike.

Because of the Scheme's commitment to an empowering assessment process, the assessment strategy

will focus on the qualitative approach i.e. rigour, quality and critical analysis and a balance of the more quantitative approach i.e. evidence gathered in the portfolio and interviews.

Equivalence and Progression

The Assessment Strategy will ensure that Participants achieve a level of competence, knowledge and critical understanding that is equivalent to existing awards in community development work and an appropriate baseline for following existing progression routes to community development and other qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework.

c) Assessment at different levels: ensuring reflection and reflexivity

The assessment strategy will cover assessment at levels 3-7. It will follow established ESB guidelines on assessment². An appropriate coverage of key skills at all levels will be expected and tested: (communication, application of number, information technology, working with others, improving own learning performance, problem solving). Criteria will vary according to level. Thus, for example:

- For level 3 assessment, the main emphasis will be on identifying and assessing skills and links to NOS, assessing relationships with participating communities and the development of reflective practice. At this level 'theory' will be seen to be embodied primarily in the NOS. Also, there will be an emphasis on the verification of skills and critical practice and a more intensive approach to reflective practice. Here 'theory' will embody the Standards and relevant selective community development literature
- For levels 4 and 5, in addition to the above, a greater emphasis on the identification of transferable skills in line with NOS and the six key skills identified for Foundation Degrees. In addition, a stronger focus on Participants' critical praxis and how this engages with the NOS values, practice principles, reflective practice, roles and skills. Here theory will embody a wider range of critical literature with level 5 involving further knowledge and understanding of international literature. At both levels a critical understanding of the relevance of particular theoretical models will be required.
- For level 6 and 7, a stronger focus on critical analysis and reflexivity (a critical self assessment of the Participant's prior values, practice principles and work history and their future development in relation to NOS). This will include a wider engagement with critical literature as evidenced in a sustained research-based study linking theory to practice at a level equivalent to that of a full degree.

² Briefing paper 1 on ESB guidance on its requirements in respect of practice and its assessment

Section 3

Next Steps

This research has produced a viable and robust model for accrediting people's community development work practice. It responds to the needs that have been expressed in the research undertaken for the Routes and Roots conference and report in 2004. Research since then into the training needs of Community Development Work practitioners – for example in London (2006,2008) and in Yorkshire and Humber (2006) – has consistently confirmed that there is demand for the recognition of experience through an accreditation route.

The model presented above is complementary to existing schemes whilst offering a different learning experience. The model combines some of the excellent practice of NVQs and academic routes to qualifications whilst accommodating individual preferences, creativity and flexibility that other routes cannot offer.

FCDL and ESB will now enter into discussion with potential funders for resources to establish the national centre and to bring together those providers who wish to add this route to their existing portfolio of community development awards. We believe it offers a route to accreditation for community development practitioners which is new, different, empowering and fit for purpose in the current societal and policy context.



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