



Turning over a new leaf

sharing practice sheet

no. 2

Identifying barriers and solutions to learning

This training exercise aims to use the visual image of a tree with leaves as a way of recording the issues and solutions facing communities as they access community development learning.

The exercise encourages participants to write down their own experiences. By sharing their ideas, participants will see that they can both identify the problems as well as suggest solutions. It encourages reflection and action, and can be fun! The final tree makes an interesting picture as well as providing a reference point for participants to keep returning to during the day. This exercise can be run by itself as part of a meeting or within a training course.

Materials for this exercise

A4 sheets of paper with the outline of a leaf drawn as close to the edge as possible. Have these copied onto different colours. One colour for each of the issues to be explored in discussing access and support.

Step by Step

1. Explain the idea of the exercise is to look at the barriers to learning and identify how to overcome these barriers.
2. Ask participants to divide into small groups. You will be asking each group to identify common experiences and themes around training, learning and development.
3. Hand out the leaves (template overleaf). Explain that the leaves will be used to record the issues and ideas that participants come up with. They will then be displayed on a tree and form a visual display that all participants can read.

This exercise was used as part of a practice sharing event held in Islington, London on November 1st 2002. The event was organised by the Federation for Community Development Learning and Healthy Islington. It was supported by Camden and Islington Health Action Zone. Other information sheets from this event include: What is Community Development Work? (sheet no.1)

The London event is part of a series of practice sharing events being co-ordinated by the Federation. The aim of the events is to both celebrate and share examples of good practice within community development learning.



Using the leaves

In the London event, the leaves were used to explore four areas. Each leaf had a different colour for participants to put their responses on. The questions under each leaf are meant as prompts to the facilitator to explain each leaf. They are not written on the individual leaves. Use them if they help you get the discussion under way. If you don't find these questions useful can you think of your own questions to get the discussion going? If participants have other issues to raise it is useful to have blank leaves in another colour for the ideas to be recorded. It is important to acknowledge the ideas but also to make clear the aims of the session.

Exploring access and support

The four areas covered in the London event were:

1. Access Barriers Leaf

What barriers can learners face in accessing courses or learning opportunities?

2. Access Solutions Leaf

What solutions have you used to overcome problems?

3. Maintaining the Support Leaf

How can you use what you have learnt from training in a community setting?

Think of your experiences as a learner or as a trainer/ facilitator.

How do you respond to what comes up in training?

How do you share information with others in the community/ your workplace/ other agencies?

How do you link the issues that have come up in the community back into future training?

4. Support for Workers Leaf

What learning and development do you feel you need in carrying out your community development work?

Using the technique

The leaves on a tree technique can be used in a variety of settings.

The issues or topics covered by the leaves can be changed according to the needs of the group.