



# Evaluation of the South Yorkshire Social Infrastructure Programme

## Report G: Academy for Community Leadership(AfCL)

Report submitted to:  
Yorkshire Forward

December 2009



# Report G: Academy for Community Leadership

Yorkshire Forward: South Yorkshire Social Infrastructure  
Programme

**John Trinnaman**  
**mtl Consultants**

*SYSIP Evaluation Team*

*Contact: John Trinnaman*  
*mtl contact details*

*email: [admin@mtl-consultants.com](mailto:admin@mtl-consultants.com)*

*tel: 01226 732446*



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1. Background to SYSIP .....	1
1.2. About AfCL .....	1
1.3. Scope of the Evaluation .....	2
1.4. Evaluation Research Methods .....	3
<b>2. About SYSIP and the Evaluation</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	5
2.2. Rationale for SYSIP .....	6
2.3. Undertaking the Evaluation .....	7
<b>3. Policy Contexts</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Delivery</b> .....	<b>11</b>
4.1. AfCL Provision .....	11
4.2. Who Benefits? .....	12
<b>5. Impacts</b> .....	<b>15</b>
5.1. Introduction .....	15
5.2. Findings .....	15
5.3. Course Experience .....	17
5.4. Provider Insights .....	19
<b>6. Demand for Services</b> .....	<b>23</b>
6.1. Introduction .....	23
6.2. Mexborough Community Partnership .....	24
6.3. Kiveton Park and Wales Community Development Trust .....	25
6.4. North Doncaster Development Trust .....	26
6.5. Conclusion: an Effective Model? .....	27
<b>7. Key Findings</b> .....	<b>29</b>
7.1. Outputs and Impact .....	29
7.2. Strategic Added Value .....	31
<b>8. Conclusion: Good Practice and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>33</b>
8.1. Introduction .....	33
8.2. Good Practice .....	33
8.3. Recommendations .....	33



---



## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The AfCL was a Yorkshire Forward part-funded project, contracted with Northern College, designed to provide skills and knowledge which enable people to take part in local democracy and to deliver regeneration and renewal. It is delivered through the brokerage and commissioning of a range of provision and of learning methods.

The total contracted cost of AfCL was £4m (all revenue) to which YF investment was £1m, O1 (ESF) £2m, and LSCSY £1m. 88.5 per cent of the cost was to procure delivery of learning, the balance includes staffing costs and overheads/office facilities (10 per cent), and the remainder for networking/promotion and evaluation.

Funding for AfCL has now ceased. The report therefore presents lessons which can be drawn from intervention in the AfCL for future programmes.

### Policy Context

A more specific policy context relating to AfCL positions learning and knowledge in the sector (and beyond) as a necessary prerequisite. Particularly relevant considerations are:

- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities – a LSC initiative, now ended
- Sir John Egan's report on Skills for Sustainable Communities – which gave rise to the Academy of Sustainable Communities (based in Leeds) and the Regional Centre of Excellence, Integreat Yorkshire which is a web-based resource
- the Learning Curve – the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's skills and knowledge programme, the national evaluation of which queried if engagement of individual learners necessarily resulted in partnership and organisational impacts.

### AfCL Provision

AfCL had a good basis and process for establishing training needs. These included the predecessor project which covered Training Needs Assessments extensively, consultation and workshops with the sector and providers, and the knowledge/expertise of Northern College.

Providers are third sector organisations so this represents one level of recycling of the funding. Most were South Yorkshire based and those that were not struggled to deliver targets, so leakage out of South Yorkshire was very low. Delivery invariably occurred in community premises, some 70 venues in South Yorkshire and this represents a further level of recycling of the funding within the sector and sub-region.

## Who Benefits?

Benefits were evenly spread and reached most groups (by age, ethnicity, gender and area). Generally, and where known, the learners are well qualified, that is 29 per cent at Level 4 and above; 24.6 per cent at Level 3. In this regard, the learning market served by AfCL may be shown to be differentiated from the Northern College priority focus for much of its own provision. The sample survey of learners showed that most are fairly frequent learners.

In total, 26 providers across the portfolio of courses were the prime contracted deliverers. By volume of learner numbers, the main ones were:

- WEA 436
- VAS 421
- CEDR 403
- SY Women's Development Trust 272.

By course topics the most significant uptake, indicative of needs in the sector, was in:

- Governance, Management and Leadership – operations, administration, regulations
- Active Citizenship – political understanding and community democracy
- Women into Community Leadership – gender based barriers and overcoming them
- Marketing Workshops – planning communications, publicity and promotion.

## Impact

Those who completed the 'where next' forms were asked what (if any) impacts the course had on them. 26 per cent said that attending the course they had enrolled on gave them the opportunity to learn new skills/ subjects and increase/ reinforce their knowledge.

Over a quarter (28 per cent) of people said that attending the course gave them a better and wider understanding of their job or the members of the community their organisation tries to help. This includes understanding the needs of the community and how their role facilitates them being supported. This enables those who attended the courses to fulfil their role better.

Evidence suggests that there has been a strong cohort of frequent learners and learning-appetite organisations as the bedrock. New users have been attracted by currency of the topics, novelty of the provision, accessibility and no fees. Increasingly these have been from grassroots groups newly involved in, especially, area-based forums and wanting to get up-to-speed on their understanding.

The AfCL project has, however, met and exceeded its main output targets.

**A net impact assessment, based on the above arithmetic, results in 1,747 additional learners, ie a gross to net percentage of 64 per cent.** This is equivalent to a unit cost per net learner of £2,290 which is within the normal range of value for money and probably better than most business related supported training where the quantitative additionality is lower, but the economic benefit may be higher.



## Conclusion

A requirement of the evaluation brief was to identify a **series of lessons** from the evaluation. These are to some extent redundant as the AfCL has ceased operation.

In terms of **good practice**, there are lessons to be drawn from AfCL around:

- the brokerage model for its independence, transparency and willingness to adapt through experience and provider feedback
- the reach achieved by delivery across South Yorkshire and the equitable distribution by Districts
- the credentials of the providers with the target market, making appropriate access arrangements
- the AfCL and providers readiness to experiment, innovate and to put their customers to the fore throughout.

The most apparent recommendation derived from the consideration of providing learning/skills expected to have organisational impacts is that this particular theory of change in the third sector needs to be rethought on similar lines to those under the Better Deal for Business, that is **start with the organisation's need first and then broker the appropriate supply whether core infrastructure services, leadership skills or whatever.**



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background to SYSIP

The South Yorkshire Social Infrastructure Programme (SYSIP) was supported by Yorkshire Forward, the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme and the South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council which committed investment funds of around £36.8 million (with £24.1 million from Yorkshire Forward, £11.6 million from the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme and £1 million from the Learning and Skills Council) to voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations in South Yorkshire between 2006 and 2009. This funding has now ended. A key aim of the programme was to increase the sustainability of the organisations supported. Within SYSIP, funding was allocated to the Academy for Community Leadership.

### 1.2. About AfCL

The AfCL is a YF part-funded project, contracted with Northern College, designed to provide skills and knowledge which enable people to take part in local democracy and to deliver regeneration and renewal. It is delivered through the brokerage and commissioning of a range of provision and of learning methods. The project relates to all of South Yorkshire and, for the purpose of YF funding, has had a contract period covering January 2007 to June 2008. A previous and first phase (supported by YF, O1, NRF) operated from 2003-06.

The total contracted cost of AfCL was £4m (all revenue) to which YF investment was £1m, O1 (ESF) £2m, and LSCSY £1m. 88.5 per cent of the cost was to procure delivery of learning, the balance includes staffing costs and overheads/office facilities (10 per cent), and the remainder for networking/promotion and evaluation.

The funding contributions by partners to project cost elements represented different proportions by virtue of the LSC investment being solely towards the delivery costs (termed Leadership Contracts). Details are shown below.

Expenditure Contributions £								
	YF		O1 ESF		LSC		Total	
	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%
Staffing	171447	50	171447	50	-	-	342892	100
Office & related	29616	50	29616	50	-	-	59234	100
Leadership Contracts	769335	22	1769337	50	1000000	28	3538672	100
Networking/promotion	21900	50	21900	50	-	-	-	100
Evaluation	7700	50	7700	50	-	-	15400	100
Total	1000000	25	2000000	50	1000000	25	4000000	100

The effect of significance is that YF investment towards delivery costs was a lower proportion of these costs than YF's total investment represented. Both Yorkshire Forward and Objective 1 ESF bore, in equal proportions, the other costs toward which LSC investment did not contribute.

Project targets include those which are RDA Tier 3 targets and further O1 targets relating to the ESF/LSC funding. The contract provision is shown below.

<b>Tier 3 Targets</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Single Pot Attributable</b>	<b>Single Pot %</b>
Employment support	125	31	25
Regeneration investment levered	£3m	£3m	100
Skills support	2500	625	25

The O1 targets are based on the same number (2,500) of beneficiaries and relate to quotas by gender, ethnicity and disability, and to outcomes from learning and employment support.

The match/levered funding was frontloaded during 2006/07 (circa £800,000) with a YF contribution of £50,000 in the final quarter. Approval of funding package took longer than expected which both delayed the start and truncated the period for delivery.

### 1.3. Scope of the Evaluation

In the SYSIP evaluation for Yorkshire Forward context, AfCL is being treated as a specialist and sub-regional provider of core infrastructure, providing services primarily to VCS organisations, notably relating to new public policy agendas and the roles of the third sector. The underlying theory being evaluated is that SYSIP funding enables core infrastructure organisations to play enhanced roles in supporting VCS organisations. This is a subtly different evaluation agenda than that of funders and providers of learning.

The O1 ESF, under Measure 22 (Tools for Reintegration) has the aim and objectives relating to people and groups' roles in local economic renewal and to innovative delivery, leading to labour market progression and net employment impacts.

From the Academy's perspective, an evaluation framework designed to capture evidence relating to transferable skills, personal development, curriculum development and sector development, derived from learners' experiences, has been a consistent ambition. This was commissioned by the Academy from Clearview; the work for which has coincided with the SYSIP evaluation.

The SYSIP evaluation questions relating to core infrastructure services are:

#### **Thematic**

- who benefits from infrastructure support, what are the characteristics of different groups and how do they access support? What are their needs and are these met by the services offered?
- what is the impact of support in terms of organisational development?
- where is the greatest demand for services and why?
- are some models more effective than others?

#### **Core**

- have projects met their contracted output and outcome targets?
- what impact has the project had on the development of VCS organisations:
- what is the net social and economic impact?
- how has the project met the needs of hard-to-reach groups?

- how sustainable are the activities supported?
- is there evidence of good practice?
- what recommendations for future programmes can be made?

The questions need interpretation in relation to the specific features of AfCL that distinguish the project from CVS'. In particular, due weight needs to be given to Northern College as the contractor and the host for the Academy. It is also a Beacon College.

The College is an adult education residential college, giving priority to people without formal qualifications and who are seeking to return to learning. It provides full and part-time diploma and short courses from basic skills to HE. It has strong roots in communities and trade unions. Provision includes social sciences, humanities, computing, combined studies, trade union studies, community regeneration and development at diploma and foundation degree levels. Short courses cover skills for life, humanities, self and society, ICT and sustainable communities. Diploma students usually qualify for a grant. Short course students who are benefit recipients or with low or no qualifications do not have to pay fees. Until recent changes in LSC funding, Northern College has had 5,000 student registrations per year.

This insight into the College helps explain the management and systems capability to support AfCL. It is also relevant in terms of AfCL brokered provision and one route for learner progression; these being considerations in assessing additionality.

#### **1.4. Evaluation Research Methods**

Because of the work commissioned by AfCL from Clearview, we have agreed with both parties that a collaborative approach is appropriate to avoid duplication and to extend the reach of the research.

The scope of the work has included:

- desk-based review of project documentation/MIS and drawing on the rapid policy review
- strategic interviews (Northern College, YF, O1)
- interviews with the AfCL team and regular liaison
- primary research with beneficiaries (learners)
- primary research with learning providers
- participation in AfCL dissemination/celebration events
- interviews with other core and specialist infrastructure bodies (as part of the wider SYSIP fieldwork) on learning needs and provision for the sector.



## 2. About SYSIP and the Evaluation

### 2.1. Introduction

The **aim of SYSIP** is to increase the sustainability of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in South Yorkshire through support to infrastructure organisations. Through helping frontline VCS organisations become more effective, this is intended to bring wider economic and social impacts. The programme consists of six elements, each with complementary aims:

1. Barnsley Community Infrastructure
2. Doncaster Social Infrastructure
3. Rotherham Social Infrastructure
4. Sheffield Community Infrastructure
5. Sheffield Community Action Plan Programme
6. Academy for Community Leadership.

The programme was **evaluated** by researchers at Sheffield Hallam University, working in partnership with consultants mtl and COGS, in order to:

- estimate the impacts of the activities over time on VCS infrastructure and the economic regeneration of South Yorkshire
- help build monitoring and evaluation capacity in South Yorkshire
- capture learning and inform future action during the course of the programme.

The evaluation ran in three phases from **March 2007 to June 2009** and involved:

- reviewing the context, development and delivery of the programme
- assessing the impacts of the programme on the development of VCS organisations in South Yorkshire
- considering whether the programme is effectively meeting the needs of VCS organisations - particularly those from 'hard to reach' groups
- identifying good practice developed by the programme and individual elements
- assessing the sustainability of activities developed by the programme
- making recommendations for the future development of social and community infrastructure building programmes.

## 2.2. Rationale for SYSIP

The core costs of the SYSIP projects were met by Yorkshire Forward, South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme, and the Learning and Skills Council. The investment in the SYSIP projects was made jointly by these organisations and funding from each (largely) runs concurrently.

The funding provided was in a range of voluntary and community sector 'infrastructure' activities and associated projects. Investment in VCS 'infrastructure' has been part of economic development programmes in the region since 1995 (as part of the EU Objective 2 programmes and linked SRB programmes of this period). Investment under the South Yorkshire Objective 1 programme extended investment, by seeking to invest funds more equitably in deprived neighbourhoods, through the support of communities of interest (e.g. organisations working with black and minority ethnic groups, and people with disabilities), as well as support to district and sub-regional level infrastructure organisations (e.g. local infrastructure organisations such as Councils for Voluntary Service - CVSs and to groups such as the AfCL and the South Yorkshire Open Forum).

Funding under SYSIP was made at a time when VCS organisations faced a reported 'funding cliff edge' with significant declines in UK and EU regional and regeneration funding going to VCS organisations. The **rationale** for SYSIP was therefore very much to provide support for a transitional period which allowed VCS infrastructure to be supported at an appropriate scale (for the funding available) and to seek sustainability without EU Structural Funds and SRB funding. Such sustainability it is suggested would be through VCS organisations attracting funding locally through new commissioning and procurement opportunities, through charging for services, and in some cases reconfiguring the scale/scope of organisations, through for example merger.

Under BERR (now BIS) evaluation guidance, RDAs may intervene for the following rationales: market failure (including provision of public goods, externalities, imperfect information and market power) and equity. The SYSIP projects can be seen to address these in different ways:

- *equity*: this is the main rationale for the SYSIP investments - namely that the RDA investment helps to reduce disparities between areas or different groups. Measures of the performance of SYSIP should therefore be derived from this
- *market failure*: investment in VCS organisations working in deprived areas and with disadvantaged groups can be seen to be seeking to address myriad market failures. Under the BERR framework, investment in VCS infrastructure does contain public good elements (e.g. advice and guidance available to all residents of a community) and externalities (e.g. neighbourhood effects from increasing employment or wellbeing)
- *investment in volunteer centres*: the interventions of the RDA have been to establish/continue support for volunteer centres. The work of the volunteer centres has primarily been in disadvantaged communities or hard to reach groups (including workless individuals). The justification for support here is therefore very much on equity grounds
- *acquisition and utilisation of assets*: this theme covers asset management and purchase physical assets (buildings). The rationale for RDA intervention includes equity arguments (e.g. for asset management), but also seeks to address perceived market barriers faced by VCS organisations (for example in bringing together a critical mass of infrastructure activities in one place), and therefore address issues of market power and imperfect information



- *core infrastructure services*: these are primarily justified on equity and public goods grounds
- *neighbourhood infrastructure*: these are primarily justified on equity grounds through increasing resources going to disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the focus on stimulating economic related activities
- *partnership*: this was seen as a cross-cutting theme and could be justified on public goods grounds.

These issues are considered further in the thematic sections and more extensively in the section on impact.

### **2.3. Undertaking the Evaluation**

The evaluation proceeded in three phases in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively. The research in 2007 focused on the development of an evaluation framework, interviewing stakeholders and an initial review of data. The research in 2008 undertook to complete the substantive research tasks around five separate themes and to run a programme of masterclasses. The research in 2009 focused on the primary fieldwork around core infrastructure services, an extensive round of stakeholder interviews, analysis of final monitoring data, and analysis of an array of other data sources (notably the NSTSO and financial account data). Judgements to inform the estimate of impact have also been made.



### 3. Policy Contexts

The strategic national policy context relating to the role and contribution of the third sector and its development and support needs is covered in a separately Report B: *Changing Policy Agendas for the Third Sector in South Yorkshire*.

A more specific policy context relating to AfCL positions learning and knowledge in the sector (and beyond) as a necessary prerequisite. Particularly relevant considerations are:

- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities - a LSC initiative, now ended
- Sir John Egan's report on Skills for Sustainable Communities - which gave rise to the Academy of Sustainable Communities (based in Leeds) and the Regional Centre of Excellence, Integreat Yorkshire which is a web-based resource
- the Learning Curve - the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's skills and knowledge programme, the national evaluation of which queried if engagement of individual learners necessarily resulted in partnership and organisational impacts.

As noted above, the South Yorkshire O1 Programme made provision (under Measure 22) for learning and development for individuals and groups, emphasising innovative approaches. The O1 Executive and Northern College developed the AfCL concept and model. A separate and previous initiative, Regen School, which operated in Sheffield was coming to an end and no longer exists. Other relevant community-based provision and brokerage services have also been supported in South Yorkshire, eg Barnsley Neighbourhood Learning Net.

An important policy consideration is the commitment of YF to ensure the successful delivery of the O1 Programme. The implication has been that YF has been seen as a source of match funding to make full use of Structural and other funds. As shown in the financial analysis in section 1, without the YF investment, AfCL funding could (at best) comprise £2m (matched ESF and LSC).

The current RES (2006-15) objectives relating to 'Skilled People Benefiting Business' and to 'Connecting People to Good Jobs' included hooks onto which the AfCL proposition could be hung as instrumental in helping to deliver actions. Notably these are framed through the lens of the third sector, learners, areas of disadvantage, capability to take part and deliver, and transferability of skills and knowledge.

The investment planning approach in the sub-regions includes, for South Yorkshire, a theme relating to economic inclusion and potential of communities, providing the route of entry for AfCL as part of the South Yorkshire infrastructure.

As noted above in relation to Northern College and the LSC, the policy and funding frameworks for non-vocational adult informal education are changing. Government launched a consultation process on this in 2008.

Detectable in the policy context is a continued commitment to the third sector across a range of policy and programme activities and, at the same time, a stiffening of the funding frameworks towards more directly economic routes to inclusion capable of greater and quicker impacts than some previous and more developmental initiatives.

## 4. Delivery

### 4.1. AfCL Provision

This section describes the AfCL offer so as to provide the background for the thematic and core evaluation questions. It also enables a considered judgement on the counterfactual case, on 2 levels:

- without YF investment, what could have been achieved?
- if AfCL and its funded provision had not existed, what (if anything) similar and relevant could have been available?

AfCL had a good basis and process for establishing training needs. These included the predecessor project which covered Training Needs Assessments extensively, consultation and workshops with the sector and providers, and the knowledge/expertise of Northern College. Provision has been procured through 3 rounds via a prospectus. Providers are involved by AfCL in ongoing evaluation, coordination and shaping each round. A project steering group oversees directions. The 3 contracting rounds have, progressively involved smaller contract lots, new providers and experimentation.

A flavour of the courses and providers is as follows:

<b>Governance, Leadership &amp; Management</b>	<b>Hatfield, CEDR, VAS</b>
Community Leadership & the Creative Arts	Community Media Solutions, Swamp Circus
Community Leadership & the Environment	U-scape
Community Partnership Programme	Northern College
Active Citizenship	WEA
Sustainable Communities	Social Enterprise Europe
Women into Community Leadership	SY Women's Development Trust
Housing & Physical Regeneration	Ad Ed Knowledge
Double Devolution	Northern College
Traveller Site Management	Ad Ed Knowledge
Leadership for Disabled People	Westwood Training
Steps to Excellence	Manor & Castle Development Trust
Creative Leadership	Harmony Training

Several more short courses were procured, a grants scheme was introduced for groups' bespoke training projects and AfCL itself administered a bursary programme (Learning Champions, Learners to Leaders) which supported learner progression to higher level qualifications. AfCL also organised a wide range of events showcasing learners and with external speakers.

Providers are third sector organisations so this represents one level of recycling of the funding. Most were South Yorkshire based and those that were not struggled to deliver targets, so leakage out of South Yorkshire was very low. Delivery invariably occurred in community premises, some 70 venues in South Yorkshire and this represents a further level of recycling of the funding within the sector and sub-region.

Apart from electronic database records, AfCL developed further systems to capture learner aspirations and feedback, tutor feedback, impact on learners and their future intentions. This provides a rich resource we have drawn upon and used to draw samples for further primary research.

The forms of learning provision in terms of outreach locations, modes of learning and their, primarily, policy knowledge content are distinct from most FE and adult education. Core infrastructure bodies' training provision tends towards operational and administrative courses. Some of Northern College's short course residential provision overlaps with AfCL courses in subject matter but the commissioning process kept a proper separation of provision. Under SRB and some other programmes, various community-based learning projects were supported but, by 2006, most had ceased or were approaching the end of their funding. Other comparable forms of structured learning outwith the formal education sector (eg Common Purpose programmes) have much smaller learner numbers and do not reach so well into grassroots groups.

The AfCL provision is, therefore, substantially additional in terms of volume and almost wholly so in terms of scope and mode of learning. There are, however, significant learner numbers in Governance, Leadership and Management courses (over a third of AfCL learners) and, to a large degree, these courses are also separately provided by core infrastructure bodies in the sub-region. In terms of the 'policy-off' counterfactual case, in the absence of the AfCL provision, some alternative provision, around 30 per cent, would have been provided. In the absence of the YF investment, available resources would have been at least halved and, as shown above, the LSC match was only for delivery. The project management and development resources would have had to be drastically curtailed and the efficacy and scale of delivery would have reduced by more than half because of these factors. But a scaled-down version could have operated, albeit foregoing the full utilisation of the ESF allocated to Measure 22.

## 4.2. Who Benefits?

This sub-section draws on the AfCL learner database comprising 2,730 records on learners between 18/11/06 to 11/04/08. The scope of the database in terms of fields covered is comprehensive. Not all data fields have entries for every learner and, in some cases, the entries are subject to the interpretation made by the learner, eg in relation to their status.

The demographics of the learners show that women outnumber men at 70.2 per cent of learners. By age, 74.9 per cent are aged 25-60; the balance comprising 9.5 per cent under 25 and 13.2 per cent over 60 (and 2.3 per cent inaccurately or not recorded). By ethnicity, the main groupings are:

- Asian 12 per cent
- Black 6.8 per cent
- Chinese 1.2 per cent
- Mixed & other 5.3 per cent
- White 73.4 per cent
- Not disclosed 1.3 per cent.

Self-declared disability or long term health problems applied to 12.1 per cent. Lone parents comprised 12.8 per cent of learners and 4 per cent of learners required childcare facilities to enable them to attend.

On these indicators, AfCL provision has engaged with a suitably diverse population and secured proportionately greater BME learners than their composition in the total population.

By economic status, 55.6 per cent of learners were employed (full-time, part-time and self-employed). The self-declared unemployed (14.7 per cent) and economically inactive (24.5 per cent) may represent respondents' interpretation of their technical status. This is also suggested by the length of unemployment amongst the 14.7 per cent where more than 4 in 10 had been out of work for more than 36 months. Small proportions were in education or where there is no record.

Amongst the employed, 265 (18.5 per cent of the sub-total) considered their job to be at threat, this question being designed to assess the extent to which, mostly third sector workers, jobs are dependent on external and time-limited funding. Half of the employed learners work for small or medium sized private or VCS organisations; 31.3 per cent work for public sector bodies. By industrial sector, unclassified responses account for 29 per cent and health, education and public administration account for 37.5 per cent. The other services SIC (which includes most sub-groups relating to VCO activities) accounted for 9.8 per cent of the employed learners.

The public sector employed learners may be present in one and/or 2 guises, as an employee receiving work-related training and/or as a volunteer in the third sector, quite possibly unrelated to their work. Public sector employees as a target market for AfCL are a deliberate design feature of the project in terms of their own knowledge development relating to their jobs and in terms of sensitising the statutory sector to needs and potential within the VCS.

39.9 per cent of learners are recorded representing or involved with a VCO, including as volunteers. Interpretation of this aspect of the individual learner record form is open to some subjectivity by the learner. The number of VCOs with whom these learners are associated is 606. Based on the 'Part of the Picture' research into the sector across South Yorkshire which identified over 6,000 organisations, this is a 'market penetration rate' of 10 per cent.

As noted above (section 3), delivery of learning was largely in community venues across South Yorkshire and this is borne out by the distribution of learners' place of residence in the sub-region, as shown below:

- Barnsley 16 per cent
- Doncaster 16 per cent
- Rotherham 20 per cent
- Sheffield 45 per cent.

This is broadly comparable with the population distribution by District so provision, on this score, has been equitable.

Learner records on their highest qualifications provide a partial indication of learning needs. Details for 23 per cent are not recorded. Generally and where known, the learners are well qualified, ie 29 per cent at Level 4 and above; 24.6 per cent at Level 3. In this regard, the learning market served by AfCL may be shown to be

differentiated from the Northern College priority focus for much of its own provision. The sample survey of learners showed that most are fairly frequent learners.

The total number of courses attended (within the programmes illustrated in section 3) was 211 and 13.5 per cent of learners were on accredited courses. For those where the level is known, 44 per cent studied at Level 2, 18 per cent at Level 3 and 13 per cent at Level 4 and above. Upon completion, learners were asked to indicate future learning intentions - 11 per cent said they would progress to further courses.

In total, 26 providers across the portfolio of courses were the prime contracted deliverers. By volume of learner numbers, the main ones were:

- WEA 436
- VAS 421
- CEDR 403
- SY Women's Development Trust 272.

13 providers each catered for up to 50 learners. As noted above (section 3), experience and necessity resulted in AfCL contracting for a greater variety of provision in smaller numbers. By course topics the most significant uptake, indicative of needs in the sector, was in:

- Governance, Management and Leadership – operations, administration, regulations
- Active Citizenship – political understanding and community democracy
- Women into Community Leadership – gender based barriers and overcoming them
- Marketing Workshops – planning communications, publicity and promotion.



## 5. Impacts

### 5.1. Introduction

There are several sources drawn upon for evidence of impacts, namely:

- learners' Where Next? forms
- sample survey of learners who completed Where Next? forms and indicated a willingness to take part in further evaluation
- case studies - AfCL and through this evaluation (forthcoming)
- providers, both in terms of their perspectives on beneficiaries and of impacts for them.

It is appropriate to note that the prevailing viewpoint is that, beyond the intrinsic merits of education and learning, the expectation is that their provision develops knowledge, convertible into qualifications and into skills and applicable in life and work.

This way, skills are regarded as a driver of productivity including through enabling economic and social progression in the labour force. Direct empirical proof of this hypothesis, particularly in terms of magnitude of effects and of linear causality are, however, the subjects of a contested discourse. There is a strong theme in this discourse over the distinctive differential explanations attributable to leadership (as opposed to management) and to the role of the resilient, self-enabling learner/worker. The Academy's orientation towards leadership may therefore be instrumentally important for impacts.

### 5.2. Findings

In total 414 'where next?' forms were completed from people who studied on a vast variety of different courses.

Beneficiaries were firstly asked what their intentions were over the next 12 months from filling in the form. A significant proportion of the respondents did not answer this question.

- do a Further Education (FE) course - 110 (27 per cent)
- gain full time employment - 17 (four per cent)
- gain part time employment - 17 (four per cent)
- become self-employed - 19 (five per cent)
- change jobs to work in the voluntary sector - 13 (three per cent)
- volunteer - 70 (17 per cent)
- other positive next step - 36 (9 per cent).

Amongst the nine per cent who said that they intended to make another positive next step of some sort in the next 12 months, the most common intentions were:

- taking on more responsibility in their job
- changing their job within the private sector (including promotion within their current organisation)
- starting another course (not FE)
- planning to recruit more volunteers to their organisation
- continue personal development
- planning to deliver their own course.

Two respondents said that they planned to stand to be a local councillor in the next 12 months.

Those who completed the 'where next' forms were asked what (if any) impacts the course had on them. 26 per cent said that attending the course they had enrolled on gave them the opportunity to learn new skills/ subjects and increase/reinforce their knowledge.

Over a quarter (28 per cent) of people said that attending the course gave them a better and wider understanding of their job or the members of the community their organisation tries to help. This includes understanding the needs of the community and how their role facilitates them being supported. This enables those who attended the courses to fulfil their role better.

21 per cent said that they increased their confidence either to further their learning or to carry out their job/ role as a volunteer. Three per cent said that the course they attended was a good opportunity to meet new people whilst three respondents said it had enabled them to apply for more funding. A small number (seven) said that it made them want to study further.

Seven per cent said that they were unhappy and disappointed with the course they attended for a variety of reasons and did not learn anything new. The vast majority of people however, that that they enjoyed the course and found it useful.

People were asked how attending the AfCL funded course enabled them to do something that they could not previously do. A selection of responses include:

- enabled to deal with awkward situations that arise in meetings
- improved public speaking and lead group discussion
- given the skills required to set up a social enterprise
- understand processes and bodies involved in decision making
- better understanding of funding bodies and criteria
- set up a performance management system
- reinforce and increase awareness of best practice in the sector
- understand legal structures better than before.

Those who completed 'where next' forms were asked whether they had taken part in any community activity of some form or had taken on a more active role in a Community group since completing the AfCL funded course.

Just over a third (34 per cent) said that they had taken part in some form of community activity since completing the course. 21 per cent said that were already involved within the community and remained as active before. 12 per cent of the total said that they were already involved in the community but had increased their community participation since the course. This includes becoming more active, increasing/ widening activity and taking on more responsibility and different roles.

34 per cent of the total said that they had not taken part in any community activity or become more active in their community group.

### 5.3. Course Experience

People were asked if they would recommend the course they attended and 63 per cent said they would either do so or have in fact done so already. Those who said they would recommend the course and encourage others did so to a variety of different people including:

- other VCS groups
- work colleagues
- fellow volunteers
- people thinking about becoming involved in VCS or becoming active in the community
- organisations seeking team building opportunities
- people who need to increase their self-confidence and public speaking.

Seven per cent explicitly said that they would not recommend the course that they attended to others, this was mainly by people who said that they did not find the course useful or enjoyable. A small proportion (one per cent) said that they would possibly recommend the course in the future.

Overall, the evidence from this segment of AfCL learners shows distance travelled in terms of knowledge and personal development, some enhanced effectiveness in community settings but, largely, an already active involvement in the VCS.

Primary sample survey-based research of learners shows that a third of respondents were made aware of the AfCL course through the VCO for which they worked or volunteered. This indicates an organisational self-diagnosed need and reflects appropriateness of provision and effectiveness of provider and AfCL target marketing.

The majority of respondents are fairly frequent and recent course attenders, mostly on the types of courses provided by the established core infrastructure bodies, e.g. employment law and practices, governance. 78 per cent individually took the decision to enrol and 12 per cent were encouraged to do so by their employer and/or the VCO with which they are involved. This is indicative of individual commitment and therefore moderates the possible significance to attach to sources of awareness through VCOs.

A minority were aware of or recalled the role of AfCL and the funding (although the Where Next? and other forms they complete and sign are unmistakably clear on this).

93 per cent considered the course, in relation to their job or role as a volunteer, was fairly (16 per cent) or very (77 per cent) useful. The length of the course was considered 'just right' by 78 per cent of respondents. Six in ten respondents have subsequently stayed in touch with other learners – an indication of social capital facilitated through attendance.

88 per cent had been able to apply their learning to their job or voluntary role and 90 per cent considered they had a better understanding of the needs of people their organisation/VCO serves. In knowledge and behavioural terms, 74 per cent felt equipped by the course to be able to challenge approaches in their job/VCO role; in similar terms 80 per cent had been able to share their new knowledge and understanding with colleagues.

As a result of attending the course, 62 per cent had increased their involvement in community affairs through their job or as a volunteer; many of those who had not were already actively involved. Just under half have taken on a new role or responsibility in their work or VCO since their course. 54 per cent have recommended AfCL courses to work colleagues, other volunteers and friends. Learning participation and progression after completing the AfCL course was reported by 48 per cent of respondents.

Organisational impacts from the acquired knowledge were perceived by 48 per cent of respondents; these being in the nature of extended reach and engagement, new policies and procedures, improved decision making and better informed business planning. 61 per cent of respondents consider the organisation for which they work and/or volunteer to be open to new ideas and ways of working, a further 24 per cent feel this is the case to some extent.

Some volunteered open comments from learners responding to the survey provide a flavour of perceived individual and organisational impacts:

- it's been nice to at last be able to get some accredited training under my belt to back up nearly 20 years of voluntary sector work experience. It has also helped to clarify things where I wasn't sure, and let me know when I have got things right. I now feel that what I do for a living has been put onto a more professional footing. ***(Practice in Managing Volunteers participant)***
- it has given me more confidence in my work, and when applying for other posts (something which in this sector we have to do a lot when funding comes and goes). I feel more secure in the knowledge that I have recognised qualifications as well as experience to take to new employers
- I also have more confidence to take on more advanced training (CIPD certificate and elective training) and hope to apply for a more senior post in 2010 when my training is finished. Finally, I hope that some of the more advanced training I have done will help me complete my degree (which I had to abandon in 1996 due to caring for elderly parents) under the Accreditation for Prior Learning scheme. ***(Practice in Managing Volunteers)***
- only that it seemed to take an eternity for my work to be moderated and passed. We attended the course on Thursday 30 August 2007 and I only received my attendance certificate (after much chasing) a week or so ago. ***(Media and the community)***
- for me as an Asian woman I found the course empowering, there are very little higher level courses for BME women in the community. I am hoping to do a higher level management course ***(Chartered Management Institute Introductory)***

- I cannot stress sufficiently the value of having free high quality training on offer to VCFS organisations. We are usually strapped for cash and yet managing HR well is vital to the smooth running of any organisation. Many VCFS managers have not had specialist training in this area and yet some of the greatest challenges we face are in managing HR. (**Management Performance and Conduct**)
- it was a very enjoyable course, but having it weekly for 5 consecutive weeks was very hard, perhaps it could be run over 6 weeks, and those being alternate, so that there is time in between to take on board what was taught in the previous week, especially for those of us who have very busy hectic full time jobs. (**ILM Level 4 Management**)
- I think they are brilliant. The people you meet. The way it's delivered. You meet a variety of people. There's a lot of variety on the course. It's not just sitting down listening to people. (**Understanding Financial Accounts for Charities**)

This sample survey (by telephone and email) involved less than 100 respondents and from learners who had indicated, from the 'Where Next' forms, a readiness to take part in surveys. It therefore represents a self-selected sample frame, so is not wholly representative, but the feedback is notably positive.

#### 5.4. Provider Insights

From a sample of AfCL providers, insights on learners and their organisations confirm the pattern of popularity of courses (helped by the scope to be innovative) and particularly of courses leading to Chartered Management Institute qualifications. The drop-out rates were low (the learner database shows only 63 non-completers, ie 2.3 per cent), provision chimed with learners' and organisations' interests and its delivery was coordinated through AfCL's regular provider meetings. The providers generally marketed their courses through established networks. They know the territory so this will be an effective approach but one with the risk of enlisting regular/frequent beneficiaries.

The majority opinion was that the AfCL commissioning and contracting process was well-managed although, especially for the smaller providers where AfCL income was a significant proportion of their revenue, the administrative aspects were significant. AfCL are generally praised for being responsive, helpful and flexible.

Most providers consider that, without AfCL, many courses would not have been provided or would have been scaled down, particularly at the expense of some of the lateral and innovative modes of delivery. The larger providers who were basically laying on their standard products but increasing the volumes and the outreach feel they can access alternative, contract-based funding, apply differential charging tariffs to keep costs low or free for community groups, adapt to output funding requirements (eg Level 2 and 3 qualifications) and cut-out the longer courses. They do not feel that fee-based provision for short courses would drastically cut participation but it would lead to lower effective demand. Several of the larger providers felt that involvement with AfCL had enabled them to further develop their standard products in useful and participative ways.

Providers, as third sector organisations, recognised the significance of venue hire income for community-based organisations and, as a matter of practice, seek to recycle funding locally in this way.

All of the providers interviewed recognise the contracted income as worth having while it has lasted, although it is mostly negated by expenditure. Most are sanguine about the outlook for funded provision and will adapt in various ways. The smaller providers working through different types of experiential learning consider AfCL contracts have enabled them to develop their products and their market profile and will be innovative in their marketing to clients.

Telephone interviews have been completed with the following AfCL small grant recipients or providers:

- Heeley City Farm - £15,252
- Bridge Employment - £2,295
- BME Elders Forum - £unspecified
- SpatC - £8,959
- AdEd Knowledge - £12,500 (Interviewed as a provider and did not cover the SG)
- SWAMP Circus - £5,000 (Interviewed as a provider and did not cover the SG)
- SCEDU - £4,000.

The small grant from AfCL allowed the above organisations to deliver courses/ learning provision to their beneficiaries rather than their own staff or their volunteers.

Heeley City Farm used the small grant to help them engage with more BMEs who have previously been hard to reach. Part of the grant was also used to deliver a course at the farm for those with learning difficulties whilst they also delivered a horticulture course with the grant money. They heard about the small grants available from AfCL whilst attending a Sheffield Partnership Conference.

Bridge Employment is a supported employment agency for people with disabilities and mental health problems in Sheffield. They had already dealt with the AfCL and Northern College previously and heard about the grants available through advertising. The grant had three main elements:

- enable them to engage with their user group to help them respond to consultation regarding a DWP document
- developing easy to read leaflets for their user group and speech therapy
- mentoring of the user group to increase confidence and self-esteem.

The BME elders forum is a group that meets weekly and involves older people from the BME community getting together for a chat and partaking in numerous social activities. They used the grant to fund a trip that had been planned for a while but they were struggling to pay for. The trip involved visiting the Peak District and some allotments. This trip was organised to promote eco-friendly products, eating healthily, exercise and getting out in the fresh air. They had heard about the grant through word of mouth from a contact but unfortunately they found out about it quite late so their application was quite rushed.

SpatC is a Sheffield based training and economic development agency and training consortium. They were alerted to the grant through an advertisement and used the money from AfCL to sponsor three courses:

- Creative Writing: this was a course for mainly refugees from war torn countries. It enabled them to write down their thoughts and experiences in their own book
- Caring for the Environment: this taught people about how looking after their own local environment had a wider impact on whole world environment and not only their own. The course increased awareness about the effects of deforestation, climate change, reducing carbon footprints etc
- Word Cinema: this was a course focusing on creative terminologies.

The objectives for the learning provision outlined above by the four grant recipients were primarily to widen participation and engage with members of the community which they have not previously. The aims of the courses were quite modest with impacts concentrated on improving confidence, self-esteem and being the first step on the ladder to further learning. In all cases, this was perceived to have been achieved with many positive reports and feedback from beneficiaries to those that delivered the activities.

The Sheffield Community Enterprise Development Unit (SCEDU) supports the development of sustainable community and social enterprise. In conjunction with AfCL and Social Enterprise Europe (SEE), they ran a Social Enterprise Event in Sheffield. The event was a dissemination conference which lasted a full day. It was an EQUAL project so the funding from AfCL was vital and the event would probably not have gone ahead without the grant. The conference focused upon social enterprise, capacity building within the VCS and workforce development. The event not only helped SCEDU but was beneficial for the AfCL as they could publicise what they were about and trying to achieve.

All the interviewees said that the grant from AfCL was vital in being able to provide the learning activities and they probably would not have happened without it. On the whole, interviewees found the AfCL very helpful and supportive and they appreciated that the AfCL had a very good knowledge of their circumstances, the VCS and what they were trying to achieve.

All but two of the interviewees found the form-filling quite onerous and over the top. One interviewee said that they had set aside a certain amount of time each week for administration (anticipated to be around 3-4 hours), but in fact the actual length of time spent on the bureaucracy ran into days rather than hours. Another commented that for such a relatively small amount of money, the form-filling was very excessive.





## 6. Demand for Services

### 6.1. Introduction

Remembering that AfCL provision was free to users, including public sector organisations and some private sector businesses, patterns of participation are not wholly indicative of effective economic demand.

Evidence suggests that there has been a strong cohort of frequent learners and learning-appetite organisations as the bedrock. New users have been attracted by currency of the topics, novelty of the provision, accessibility and no fees. Increasingly these have been from grassroots groups newly involved in, especially, area-based forums and wanting to get up-to-speed on their understanding.

There are strong underlying motives from learners, based on concerns about issues and different types of communities. That tends to be why they are involved in the sector and interested in acquiring knowledge. Although the weight appears to be towards those involved in regeneration and renewal (where, a priori, deprivation/disadvantage is a feature), local residents' groups in what may be comfortably-off areas are as interested in sustaining their communities and in finding out how to operate in order to do so.

While the geographic spread across South Yorkshire of learners and of delivery points to pervasive demand, development work targeted on areas and communities experiencing deprivation has grown a local grassroots infrastructure from which demand originates.

AfCL provision has engaged with the statutory sector and enlisted learners. This is quite proper as the intention was to expose public servants to the issues from a community's perspective. However, statutory sector organisations should have workforce development policies and budgets and many of their staff have an individual responsibility for their continuing professional development by virtue of their job. There will, therefore, be a degree of substitution here in relation to additionality where the statutory sector avails itself of free provision and where it has a responsibility and budgets to secure and pay for provision.

An element of demand (or need) has been catered for by a bursaries programme for VCO workers and volunteers wanting to pursue learning outside of the AfCL portfolio. 68 bursaries were awarded (to 66 individuals) at an average award of £1,071. There were 41 separate organisations that benefited and two thirds of the learners studied at Level 3 or above.

Testimonies from beneficiaries are positive about the support and the process, although where course durations extended beyond the one year of bursary support, this prevented full completion of attainment of a qualification, but some paid for themselves to do so. A disproportionate majority of bursary students were Sheffield residents, three quarters were employees rather than volunteers, and around half said they would have done the course without the bursary. There is therefore an element of deadweight here.

A significant developmental aspect of AfCL was the Community Partnership Programme – a bespoke mentoring and training programme in which 16 area-based community partnerships (in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham) took part. Other Community Partnerships (including in Sheffield) took part in the Academy's main programme as did several of the 16.

As with responses to the main programme provision, participants in the Community Partnerships Programme valued the experience and the extended enlistment of local residents into their work through learning. Some of the results attributed to the programme by beneficiary partnerships are also (at least in part) attributable to previous SRB, NRF, O1 and some SYSIP core infrastructure support (including the formation in Rotherham of a consortium of third sector organisations able to deliver public services for children and young people). The production by AfCL of DVDs represents a valuable archive, recording what are often very local actions to 'local issues', e.g. Armthorpe's local jobs advertising service or use of a community resource centre for projects wanted by teenagers.

A feature, however, from enlisting case study organisations who had been frequent users of AfCL's provision is that quite a few had retreated to and consolidated around self-help through volunteers once regeneration and European Structural Funds had receded. Although they had lost core funding and paid workers, they still felt that unmet needs persisted. There is evidence of some decay in local neighbourhood infrastructures and in their newer (as opposed to core) infrastructure bodies. This has, however, also prompted new structures as in Doncaster where Community Development Trusts have become 'intermediate' level organisations and the Doncaster Community and Social Enterprise Partnership (a CIC) is a Borough-wide membership organisation promoting social enterprise and the social economy. The Trusts and DCSEP are delivery agents in the Doncaster component of SYSIP.

Consequently, the learning provision by AfCL cannot be said to have supported the enduring survival of all groups who have taken part in its courses. Nor, by the same token, is it right to attribute developments (as in Doncaster) only to AfCL. Three examples illustrate this and portray how the learning and development has been used by the organisations to benefit themselves and their neighbourhoods.

## **6.2. Mexborough Community Partnership**

Mexborough Community Partnership (MCP) was established in 1999 and became a company limited by guarantee in November 2000. They are based at the Mexborough Resource Centre which is a new build and nearing completion. The centre is a one-stop-shop which provides a home for MCP and likeminded organisations. The 3-story centre also has an ICT suite and facilities for local organisations and groups to meet in such as the local Scouts group, slimming clubs, keep fit classes etc.

11 people from MCP attended a 'Future Directions' course funded by AfCL, whilst AfCL also developed some tailor-made courses. They had been on courses at Northern College before so knew what AfCL were about but for these latest free courses they had received a flyer which brought them to their attention.

The main driver for attending the courses was that there was no fee, in the current climate of funding coming to a close this was the major factor in their decision to attend the courses. MCP do not have a budget for training or development as even though training is regarded as essential, there simply is not the flexibility in their budget to allow it. Necessities have to be put first such as finishing the building off, buying stationery and running the office and building so it is functional.

MCP now only has one member of staff but they found the course they attended very useful. It enabled them to re-focus and re-align their priorities. Working in the VCS tends to lead to aspirations and aims that ultimately are unrealistic. Going on the course allowed them to narrow down their objectives and concentrate on outcomes that are actually achievable, although there is some anxiety about the outlook, despite their new building.

Members of the MCP also attended courses which allowed them to undertake new roles and responsibilities on the board. The AfCL courses also allowed approximately 15 people in Mexborough who the MCP deal with back into employment who were initially either unemployed (some long-term) or economically inactive.

Two examples include a lone-parent who had not worked for more than ten years and going on the course (and then volunteering) gave her the confidence to seek employment and now is now employed as a supervisor at Ventura in the catering department. A second example is an individual who had been claiming unemployment benefit for over 20 years. Going on the course allowed him to have more self-confidence, self-esteem and 'get up and go' and join the Kerbside project. As a result he is now a qualified forklift truck driver with all the appropriate licenses.

They found AfCL very supportive whenever they had any queries and found that even if it took a few weeks in some instances, they are a 'can do' organisation, understand how the VCS works and are sympathetic to the problems that VCS can face. They feel that is a shame that the AfCL can no longer fund free courses as this has been a great opportunity for MCP. Courses can be very expensive and even Doncaster CVS applies a charge to training which they unfortunately cannot afford in the current climate.

### **6.3. Kiveton Park and Wales Community Development Trust**

Kiveton Park and Wales Community Development Trust was established as company limited by guarantee in 1997, became a registered charity in 1999 and is based at the Old Colliery offices. The organisation heard of AfCL's courses through an advertisement and people attended the following:

- Understanding Social Enterprise
- Counselling and Interpersonal Skills
- Managing a Community Building
- Chartered Management Institute Introductory.

Course content was a factor in their interest in the courses because they do not have much spare time to spend on training which has to be highly relevant to their organisation to justify the time. The key factor, however, was that the courses were free. Money has been, and continues to be, very tight with no particular training budget set aside. Training costs are (if possible) included into funding bids but this is not always accepted as part of a full cost assessment. When money is drying up, regrettably one of the first costs to be sacrificed is training as it can be very expensive.

All the employees selected to go on the courses were enthusiastic about attending and particularly found the Understanding Social Enterprise, Counselling and Interpersonal Skills and Managing a Community Building interesting and useful.

Since completing the three above courses (they did not complete the Chartered Management Institute introductory course which was considered too long, too generic and not relevant to their needs), those that attended felt that they had more confidence to fulfil their role in the organisation and have recommended the courses to colleagues in other organisations which have a similar agenda. The Managing a Community Building course enabled them to organise things differently. When people within the organisation go on course they cascade the knowledge acquired with colleague to share to enable all members of the organisation to benefit.

#### 6.4. North Doncaster Development Trust

North Doncaster Development Trust (NDDT) is a community-led registered charity that was established with EU Objective 1 funding and aims to promote the economic, social and environmental development of North Doncaster. Regeneration is focused on the four wards of:

- Adwick
- Askern Spa
- Bentley
- Great North Road.

Each employee at NDDT has a personal training allowance every year to attend courses and gain new qualifications such as ATT qualifications (Association of Taxation Technicians). Some members of the NDDT attended the following AfCL funded courses:

- Understanding Financial Accounts
- Participatory Budgeting
- Team Building.

It is not essential that the courses NDDT employees attend are accredited as long as it will be beneficial to the individual and NDDT. This was particularly the case for the Understanding Financial Accounts course as it concentrated on the VCS which was very useful for people with only experience in the private sector. NDDT provide sub-contracted services, under the Doncaster component of SYSIP, in Community Accountancy and in Business Planning.

NDDT work closely with Doncaster CVS and this where employees found out about the AfCL funded courses. The fact that the courses were free was an added bonus as they did not use up any of their annual training allowance. If there had have been a charge, the employees who went on the courses would have probably still attended.

As a result of attending the courses, the participants are more confident in what they do and their knowledge has been reinforced. This means that they are more assertive in their role in the organisation and whilst supporting members of the community and VCS.

As good practice, employees within NDDT always debrief colleagues who did not attend the course to allow knowledge transfer. This way, all members of staff can benefit from the courses that colleagues attend. NDDT employees enjoyed the

courses they completed and most improvements are measured qualitatively such as communication improving and better processes in delivering contracts.

## **6.5. Conclusion: an Effective Model?**

AfCL is a tried and tested brokerage model that has now administered, in two phases, over £8m of funding for this form of provision. It has effective procurement models in which providers are as much a part of the development of the model and of delivery as is AfCL.

In this second phase, the delay in approval of the full funding package effected initial delivery (both pace and scale), but a lot of ground was made up. Quantitatively and qualitatively, performance has exceeded targets. Not all of the funding has been utilised, e.g. the YF contract value was reduced by £190,000.

As a skills-based initiative aiming to secure (in SYSIP terms) organisational development impacts, the model suffers in the same way, historically, as the division in responsibility for and funding of skills development support and for business support. Practice in the past has been to hope these come together to meet customer needs. The effort in Y&H, through Better Deal for Business, to bring these together in terms of information, diagnostic and brokerage may be equally applicable in principle to the third sector and relevant for the various infrastructure development initiatives underway.



## 7. Key Findings

### 7.1. Outputs and Impact

In terms of contracted targets (Tier 3) and applying the 25 per cent attribution to Single Pot proportion the latest figures, subject to final verification, are shown below.

	Target	Delivered	Single Pot Target	Delivered
Employment support	125	398	31	99
Regeneration investment levered	-	-	£3m	£2.81m
Skills	2500	2730	625	682

Some explanation and interpretation is appropriate:

- employment support was through providers at the end of the course and usually involved information and some advice, e.g. referrals rather than full matrix guidance services, i.e. generally a low intensity intervention
- the leverage delivered is reduced as YF took back £190,000 which is matched by ESF. The definition for this target on what is levered and what can be counted is open to interpretation
- the skills total is from AfCL's learner database.

The AfCL project has, however, met and exceeded its main output targets.

Impacts on VCS organisations (other than the third sector providers) are derived from the knowledge acquired by the learners and are subject to the organisations' capacities to absorb and apply that knowledge. From the learners' database, the indication is that 600 VCS organisations have the potential to benefit in this way. Learners' perceptions on organisational impacts are covered in section 4 and are mostly about internal processes. AfCL case studies convey a sense of better knowledge and improved skills, often soft, acquired by VCS workers and volunteers that they are able to apply to their roles and cascade in their organisations and networks; bursaries' case studies indicate enhanced professionalisation in VCOs.

Informal conversations with learners, eg at the Cutler's Hall and Northern celebration events, also reveal how people from local groups, engaged in local activities, have found themselves absorbed into consultative structures and forums. Exposed to a new language and terminology, they perceived a need to get more familiar with policies and structures so as not to feel talked down to and to be able to contribute.

In terms of a gross to net additionality assessment, the counterfactual case (at the two levels posed in section 3) provides the reference points. Full assessment of net impacts needs to incorporate considerations of the evaluation work relating to the four local core infrastructure organisations. Information on learners' employment status and volunteer roles is imperfect, especially in relation to learners employed in the public sector who may have attended in that role or in a separate volunteer role.

The gross outputs and the proportion attributable to YF Single Pot are shown above. Deadweight effects are considered to be low in some regard and moderate in others i.e:

- learners are shown, on the whole, to be frequent participants and may therefore have pursued their learning ambitions through other means had AfCL not been there
- but AfCL provision, being free to the user, may have induced new learners and is not comparable with fee charging courses which may deter frequent learners
- approximately half (or less) of the provision could have been financed without YF's 25 per cent contribution - the additional leverage effect is therefore 1:1 whereas the gross leverage is 1:3
- around a third of the learners attended courses whose content is already provided by core infrastructure bodies. Because AfCL procured extra and outreach provision, the full third is not wholly deadweight
- the employment support provided was primarily information and there is no basis for judging employment. Adult guidance is, however, freely available but prioritises sub-level two adults which most AfCL learners are not. It is probably immaterial if the deadweight effect is 25 per cent or 50 per cent.

A judgement on the deadweight effect, relating to learning participation, is that around 20 per cent of the learning could have been accessed without AfCL.

Leakage effects are minimal because it was a sub-regional managed and delivered project, by South Yorkshire providers almost totally, and for South Yorkshire beneficiaries. A minority of learners may have lived in South Yorkshire and worked or volunteered elsewhere and a minority may live across the South Yorkshire boundary yet work or volunteer in the region. Numbers appear miniscule. Some of the activity around refugees, travellers and third world aid could represent fractional leakage. The leakage factor is (in our view) virtually zero.

Displacement effects could conceivably occur in several ways. Examples may be when a learner with new knowledge/qualifications is recruited as a volunteer in lieu of a funded post approaching the end of contract or when an organisation has enhanced internal capability and either secures 'market share' at the expense of another or foregoes the use of external paid-for services. These are tenuous effects to trace back to participation as a cause of displacement. Accordingly we attach no significance to displacement.

Substitution effects are foreseeable by virtue of the free courses and this may particularly relate to:

- a) public sector participation in the learning where this substitutes (in whole or in part) for use of existing budgets and training resources
- b) the content of management and leadership courses (where, as shown under deadweight, a third of learners studied) which are also provided by core infrastructure bodies at a charge and with some free or low cost places.

This free-rider effect is not easily quantifiable without a lot more extraneous data and the ability to disaggregate the public sector employee participation into work-related or volunteer attendance. Our estimate is that the substitution effect may be around 20 per cent.



Multiplier effects from delivering learning through community venues and from the incomes of AfCL staff and providers' tutors will be captured within the sub-region and are of value within the sector. Having regard to the nature of the project and the Scottish Enterprise multipliers, we consider the sub-regional multiplier effect to be minimal but, for all that, useful within the sector.

The crowding-out effects are a national level consideration and it is difficult to anticipate any measurable national economic effects from AfCL.

A net impact assessment, based on the above arithmetic, results in 1,747 additional learners, ie a gross to net percentage of 64 per cent. This is equivalent to a unit cost per net learner of £2,290 which is within the normal range of value for money and probably better than most business related supported training where the quantitative additionality is lower, but the economic benefit may be higher.

## 7.2. Strategic Added Value

Our SAV assessment, based on our research, is set out in the following table and relates to YF's role.

SAV Function	Assessment
Strategic leadership and catalyst	YF support for AfCL followed that from O1 and LSC and was based more on optimising the use of Structural Funds than on the merits of further support to AfCL. The YF role is (in our view) modest on this function
Strategic influence	The YF role here in overall management of the contract with AfCL and coordination with and then filling in for O1 enabled AfCL flexibility and supported innovation. In our view this is a moderate contribution
Leverage	Without the YF funding, at least £1m ESF would not have been available. While financially significant, it is more funding-led than strategy-led, so a moderate contribution is judged
Synergy	As with strategic influence, YF made an appropriate and moderate contribution on this factor
Engagement	Previous YF developmental work on community participation, with O1 on community economic development and with SYSIP partners helped create resources and frameworks for progress. But the complexities of SYSIP mean the full sub-regional value is hard to orchestrate. On balance, the YF role here is moderate and had the potential to be significant

A hard-to-reach group is a value laden term and third sector organisations generally say these groups are not hard for them to reach. The available evidence on learners is that there is a good representation of people from most groups likely to experience disadvantage. An exception is people with low or no qualifications where data is incomplete. As most learners are frequent/recent learners, they are evidently not necessarily hard-to-reach.

The activities supported by AfCL are unlikely to be provided without external funding except in some limited circumstances. The most evident sustainable provision will be core infrastructure organisations' short course training. Mainstream public policy relating to funding learning has a reducing appetite for this type of provision. Some providers have developed products and a market profile which may help them adapt to new opportunities and win work. Much depends on the outcome of recent Government consultation, but the direction of travel is clear.



## 8. Conclusion: Good Practice and Recommendations

### 8.1. Introduction

A requirement of the evaluation brief was to identify a series of lessons from the evaluation. These are to some extent redundant as the AfCL has ceased operation. It was an initiative supported to underpin the delivery of the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme Priority 4. With the passing of this programme and the considerable reduction in aid, the basis for the AfCL passed. Nonetheless, it should be recorded that the AfCL had some significant achievements, some of which are documented here.

### 8.2. Good Practice

In terms of good practice, there are lessons to be drawn from AfCL around:

- the brokerage model for its independence, transparency and willingness to adapt through experience and provider feedback
- the reach achieved by delivery across South Yorkshire and the equitable distribution by Districts
- the credentials of the providers with the target market, making appropriate access arrangements
- the AfCL and providers readiness to experiment, innovate and to put their customers to the fore throughout.

### 8.3. Recommendations

In terms of recommendations there are few to make. **It is very rare for Yorkshire Forward as a Development Agency to fund a project more than twice. AfCL is but one of very many publicly financed initiatives aimed at community-based learning and capacity building in South Yorkshire over the past 15 years.** While people and groups will avail themselves of free provision and have an appetite to consume public funding, the scale of need must be expected to recede over time if past provision has been effective.

The most apparent recommendation derived from the consideration of providing learning/skills expected to have organisational impacts is that this particular theory of change in the third sector needs to be rethought on similar lines to those under the Better Deal for Business, that is **start with the organisation's need first and then broker the appropriate supply whether core infrastructure services, leadership skills or whatever.**

From the point of view of the Academy, the funding environment has now changed a lot, as have (or may do) the lead roles of public sector organisations. Government proposals relating to learning and skills, worklessness, the role of Local Authorities (individually and in groups), and the new Homes and Communities Agency all recognise a third sector contribution and the importance of effective community participation. **The Academy has developed a model and a bank of courses which can be developed (and extended beyond South Yorkshire) in this new context.**