

N.I. IMPACT FORUM MEETING 15th June 2017

Present: Trevor Neilands (Chair), Saorlaith Ni Bhroin (AONTAS), Sandra Bailie (NICVA), Paul Donaghy (OCN NI), Janette Sproule (OCNNI), Claire Mulrone (Centre for Flexible & Continuing Education, Ulster Uni), Norrie Breslin (Big Lottery), Peter Matassa (BBC), Catriona McGarvey (NOW), Betty Murray (Extern), Kellie Turtle (WRDA), Susan Hunter (Dept of Communities), Janette Nhangaba (OU), David Vint (SRC), Vicky Duckworth (Edgehill Uni), Rob Smith (City of Birmingham Uni), Jan Eldred (L&WI), and Colin Neilands (FALNI)

Apologies: John D'Arcy (OU), Lorraine Boyd (VCS NEETS Forum), Joanne Morgan (Community Development Health Network), Emma Purdon (Extern), Emma Dunseith (BBC), Arlene Bell (NMNI), Peter Shields (Action Mental Health), Arthur Scott (Dept of Communities), Gerry Campbell (Colleges NI), Eileen Chan-Hu (CraicNI), Claire Gordon (Business in the Community), Anne McVicker (WRDA), Martin Flynn (OCN NI), Patricia Cochrane (Dept of Econ), and Ben Harris (COP)

Welcome & Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed members and thanked Janette Sproule for hosting the event in OCN NI.

Trevor summarised activities to date and then ran through the agenda for the meeting and its desired outcomes. The focus today is more internal, looking at the role of providers, first at good practice in terms of cross-sectoral collaboration and then at pedagogy.

EAAL in the UK - Jan Eldred

The English Forum has recently looked at the communities stimulus paper and there was a lot of discussion about issues of language/definition, around both community and adult learning. In Wales the focus has been on work with input from Whatworkswellbeing - <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/>. In Scotland there is a push from Government re attainment in schools and so the Forum has been looking at the role family learning can play.

Work is about to start on writing and compiling the State of the Nation report and this will be discussed further at the upcoming UK Ref Group meeting (20th June). The report will be presented at the London conference (4-5 Oct), though not in its final edit, which will follow after.



Forum for Adult Learning

NI

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Jan also described her role in looking at the impact of the Impact Forums.

Collaborative Practice

David Vint - Assistant Director Community, Schools' Partnership and External Funding, Southern Regional College

SRC has a strong commitment to adult learning and still retains 4 community development officers. Given the drive of Government targets in terms of curriculum c60% of provision is now Essential Skills. The vast majority of delivery is in the community and David attributes this to the high rates of retention and achievement - the most recent figures are 95% and 98% respectively.

The college values its community partners and seeks to work in a flexible and negotiated relationship - not having a restricted, fixed curriculum offer, but listening to community needs and responding accordingly (within funding constrictions). The college is also open to not being the lead partner and will support community organisations in accessing funds for needs they have identified. This partnership approach has extended to consultation about the college's new build in Craigavon where local community groups have influenced design.

David described various recent initiatives with community partners across the college's catchment area - in Armagh, Craigavon and Newry. Much of this work has been supported through the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme and has led to vocational training in a wide range of careers - horticulture, HGV driving, Hair and Beauty, First Aid, SIA Door Security, Forklift licences: this has been combined with mentoring support to pupils and young people progressing from School Partnership Programme on to FE and vocational training programmes at SRC.

In subsequent discussion members expressed their disappointment that the excellent approach of SRC is not mirrored across all other FE Colleges and the competitive relationship in FE does not support the sharing of good practice.

Janette Nhangaba - Senior Manager Widening Access, Open University

Access to Success is the key policy driver for widening participation in HE, but for the OU is also driven by a remit for social justice. In terms of addressing deprivation Government's emphasis has been primarily on young people. Janette argues that working with parents has a huge influence, but has received much less attention and support.

Janette then described her pilot work with Falls Women's Centre. As with SRC this has been based on negotiation around local needs. Here the OU has been delivering CertHE in Health and Social Care progressing towards Degree; Access Module in People, Work and Society progressing towards Stage 1 (QCF 4) studies; and new intake for Access Modules – bespoke arrangement with face-to-face tutor support and support services input throughout.

Key to success has been provision of support such as IT skills, childcare, mentoring and coaching which have been split between FWC and OU. It is planned to roll out this model in two other areas in the autumn.

Janette also raised questions about building collaborative delivery. At present there is particular instability in the community voluntary sector which can make entering into and sustaining partnerships difficult. Partners can have shared project goals but actually divergent organisational drives and priorities. And do we create true partnership in design, approach and evaluation or 'just' a pooling of remits to meet funding requirements?

The OU has been conducting research into widening participation and a report is due out in July 2017.

Subsequent discussion around collaboration lamented that examples of good practice such as those presented remain silo-ed, lacking policy will and support to achieve multiplier impact. These successes tend to be very locality focused and as such receive political support - our challenge is how to persuade government of the benefits of long-term sustainability.

FE in England - Transforming lives and communities - Vicky Duckworth and Rob Smith

See <http://transforminglives.web.ucl.ac.uk/about-this-project/>

Vicky and Rob had already circulated a brief report on this project and this presentation illustrated that by sharing video clips of stories of the impact of learning in FE amongst learners, their families, siblings, and employers over a long period of time. U-Tube clips, stories and photos are all available on the website as part of evidence for good practice and CPD (Vicky and Rob have used these in lobbying policy makers).

FE colleges are spaces where cultural diversity can be celebrated and social cohesion built. FE adult learning is transformative and contributes to: raising aspiration amongst adults – and their children; role models for communities; reclaiming spoilt identities of learners who believe that 'learning's for other people'; helping to address enduring issues of mental ill-health; and reducing social isolation. (all of which echo Janette's presentation).

Teachers need to be equipped to deal with diversity of learners (e.g. social needs, cultural diversity, the links between learning and health and work etc.) There needs to be a more holistic approach to both initial teacher education and continuing professional development. Teachers need to gain knowledge and empathy beyond their own community/cultural backgrounds. Currently teacher-training seems to take a 'reductionist' approach i.e. teach to the curriculum in an instrumental rather than creative, responsive, personalized way. Multi-disciplinary support is only used for crisis management, rather than being seen as an approach that would strengthen core provision.

UK State of the Nation Report and NI Conference

As previously reported there will be a specific NI section within the report and this will be written by Trevor and Colin - drafts will be circulated to members for comment. The main piece will just be 750 words and can only have 5 recommendations, so there will be distillation of ideas generated under thematic discussions. There will also be 9 case studies from each 'nation', so Colin will be chasing some members to include in this although the net will go wider than IF membership too: these will only be 300 words.

The UK Report will be presented in London at a conference (joint with EPALE) on **4-5 October**. Colin will keep members updated with details.

It is proposed that the NI launch of the report will be on **26 October** and will take the form of a conference to reach out to build alliances and engage decision-makers. If the Assembly is again working we will try to hold this at Stormont, but NICVA has been provisionally booked. Colin will be asking members to help ensure that key stakeholders and decision-makers from not just adult learning, but health, work and communities are in attendance. This is a critical event for the NI Forum - its first public venture, seeking allies for its future work.

Next Meeting

As Forum members have not had a chance to discuss the Communities stimulus paper from L&WI we are proposing that there is a meeting in Sept - which can also finalise details of our conference.

Date and venue will be decided and circulated asap.

