

Neighbourhood workforce planning and community skills development – evaluation report

Results from interviews with 15 early adopter sites - Autumn 2011

As part of formative evaluation activity undertaken by Skills for Care, Skills for Care staff involved in the project visited each of the 15 early adopter sites and administered a questionnaire including both multiple choice and open questions.

The headline findings are summarised below, and the full results reported in the pages that follow. The findings from the exercise will provide data to feed into and supplement the evaluation of early adopter sites in England, being conducted by Melanie Henwood Associates.

Headline findings

About the early adopter sites

- *Only a Footstep Away?* (SfC 2010) is aimed at both communities of interest and communities of place. Of the 15 early adopter sites, **nearly all (13) identify as a community of place.**
- Sites aim to foster a sense of belonging and **community cohesion**, improve the **skills of volunteers and residents**, utilise the existing skills of residents, empower people to live independently, and improve **health and wellbeing** of local residents.
- More than half of sites (nine of the 15) **aim to make savings in mainstream services**, and six aim to **fill gaps in mainstream service provision.**
- The 15 early adopter sites represent **diverse projects** covering community development, service provision and user-led organisations. They are led by a mix of **third sector, partnership, and community** organisations, with only two led by local authorities. Partners include parish councils, the health sector, police authorities, educational bodies and the private sector.
- Project managers are most often drawn from a **community development** background – only five of 15 project managers have a background in social care.

Role of Skills for Care

- Subsequent to commissioning the original study, *Only a Footstep Away?*, and producing the practical guidance, Skills for Care has played a key role in promoting the neighbourhood workforce development and community skills approach and helping to establish the early adopter sites with hands-on support.
- All projects were influenced in some way by the work of Skills for Care – two sites had started their project **as a direct result of being inspired by Skills for Care.**

- The remainder felt that Skills for Care had **enhanced their project by bringing different perspectives and awareness of other initiatives.**
- All but one of the early adopter sites had read *Only a Footstep Away: A Practical Introduction* (v.1). Most sites are adopting the parts of the guidance they see as relevant to them, **tailoring it to their own needs** in line with the open source spirit of the guide. Useful feedback has been received from sites on the contents of the practical guidance v1 that was used by Skills for Care to inform v2 [Version 2 has subsequently been published by Skills for Care as *Making use of 'Only a footstep away?'*.]

Support for sites

- In addition to the hands-on support from Skills for Care, sites also said they had received support from project partners, the local community and corporate sponsors.
- Most sites use a wide range of tools and materials to support their project, usually reported as useful and **complementary** to the Skills for Care material. No-one felt that the Skills for Care material duplicated other products on offer.
- Most of the early adopter sites felt that their support needs were now largely met, but a small number felt they needed further support or help with the next steps. The early adopter sites made suggestions for **support that Skills for Care could provide to future sites**, including creating case studies and continuing to facilitate learning fora.

Good practice

Good practice cited by the early adopter sites included:

- running community events
- using the press to disseminate information and raise credibility
- joint working
- work with social care staff to improve recognition of the role of connecting people who use services to their communities.

Measuring impact

- Eight of the 15 early adopter sites are planning their own local impact evaluation, some of which also plan to encompass elements of process evaluation, social return on investment (SROI) and cost-benefit analysis within their evaluation. The reports are expected between Spring and December 2012 and may add useful evidence to supplement the national evaluation.
- It was recognised that capturing the potential cost savings related to the neighbourhood workforce and community skills approach will be the most challenging part of evaluation – but seen as one of the most important.