

## **Building on Success**

### **A response by the Scottish Library and Information Council and CILIP in Scotland to 'Building on Success' a Consultation Paper on the Lifelong Learning Strategy**

#### **Overview**

The Scottish Library and Information Council and CILIP in Scotland welcome the opportunity to participate in the Scottish Executive's 'refresh' consultation on the Lifelong Learning Strategy. SLIC and CILIP in Scotland welcome the ambition set out in the document for a world class educational system accessible by all Scottish citizens and supported by a dynamic community learning and development sector.

We have some concerns about the breadth of the definition of lifelong learning. The Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) Report uses the following definition:

*" the ability to read and write and use numeracy, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners"*

We are of the view that learning to learn, and the development of basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, are key to lifelong learning alongside employability skills. We believe the vision statement could be strengthened by making it more learner centred and balanced to better reflect learning 'from cradle to grave'.

#### **Libraries supporting lifelong learning**

Both SLIC and CILIP in Scotland are concerned about the lack of reference to the library and information sector. Libraries operate in a range of settings, schools and tertiary education, public libraries, industry, health, prison, legal and the voluntary sectors. They are local, hospitable, trusted and well used social institutions in the communities they serve, be it a school, university or town. They provide support to students, teaching staff, researchers and other professionals; supporting the curriculum, organisational goals and personal interest.

Libraries provide a range of flexible learning opportunities through offering:

- Free access and resources for lending and study
- Wide range of resources for age, ability and interest
- Informal/non-formal learning opportunities, taken up on a voluntary basis
- Range of opening hours including evenings and weekends
- Community located facilities
- 8.5 million hours of free Internet access
- Access to wider resources through well-established networks, offering economic use of scarce resources, such as the National Library of Scotland and the British Library

- Links with other libraries and partner organisations
- Shared services and joint use
- 24/7 resources through web, including online transactions, soon to be interoperable with the National Entitlement Card
- Engagement with hard to reach groups and those with different abilities
- Adaptive technologies to support those who need extra assistance to access learning materials – screen readers, tracker ball mouse, etc
- Basic skills (ALN, Big+)
- Support from trained staff
- Referrals to specialist help through well-established partnerships

The support of trained staff in a less formal learning environment enables individuals to acquire basic skills and the confidence they need before progressing through local learning partnerships. Libraries can offer a wide variety of choice for learners and, working in partnership, can build learning communities as an integral part of Community Learning and Development Strategies. These learning experiences can be enriched through partnerships with careers and guidance networks.

The strategy does not place enough emphasis on the importance of information literacy i.e. knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, how to evaluate it, use and communicate it. Information literacy has relevance for all ages from primary school to senior citizens and is an essential life skill. There are strong links between information literacy and social and economic development and learning to learn which places libraries at the heart of delivery. SLIC is currently developing second qualification with SQA in information literacy, which builds on lessons of a previous course which has been piloted with a number of learners across the country. CILIP in Scotland advocates that professional staff in all kinds of libraries can provide individuals with the skills and competencies to learn, develop and enhance skills to find the right information at the right time.

### **Engagement with employers**

The strategy currently concentrates on employability skills and post compulsory education and training for the core workforce and does little to address informal learning. Lifelong learning must encompass pre-16 (including pre-school) education as well as post 16 education. We believe that the strategy should include recognition and support for socially valuable learning of which there are many examples including; inter-generational learning, family literacy projects and readership development. In partnership, libraries reach out to marginalised and disaffected groups such as literacies learners, teenagers and young people and ESOL learners, who can then be brought into learning networks and, on occasion, to work.

### **Flexible learning opportunities, entitlements and discretionary support.**

We agree that learning throughout life is vital if people are to make informed choices about their lives and the society in which they live. Participation in learning is linked to economic, social and personal benefits and learning throughout life gives people the knowledge, skills and confidence to make both personal and career decisions. We agree that learning provision needs to be more flexible to better support individuals throughout life. We consider that libraries are vital to the development of the knowledge economy and encouraging individual skills development. Libraries need improved and sustained investment to support this role.

- Public libraries have long been a natural place of learning for many. They provide access allowing people to achieve their potential as learners and to contribute to the economic prosperity of Scotland. Libraries can offer the first step back into formal learning through the provision of a range of courses or resources for independent learning through local, national and digital networks.
- The achievements section does not reflect the significant accomplishment of the implementation of the People's Network project in Scotland's public libraries in 2003. This has contributed to a 5% increase in visits to libraries. Our 545 libraries have almost 3500 PCs and staff who have been trained in supporting individuals and communities to use these facilities to access learning. Increasingly WIFI connectivity is being made available to allow for more flexible use of facilities.
- Public Libraries have expanded their educational role:
  - increasing the number of accredited learning centres, growing the number of registered learners and developing new projects;
  - the formalisation of the "Bookstart" scheme which encourage the youngest learners at pre-literacy and numeracy stages;
  - the establishment of a national partnership with Communities Scotland Learning Connections which encourages adult literacy and numeracy initiatives through the network of public libraries;
  - shared services, bringing together public libraries and museums and colleges
  - closer partnerships with health - the Glasgow Health Hub and Macmillan Cancer Information Centres in public libraries;
  - self-evaluation frameworks for school, public and college libraries to improve the quality of the learners' experiences; and draft prison library standards
  - information literacy qualification and materials;
  - improved access to resources through technology, web-accessible catalogues and cross-sectoral resource-sharing initiatives.
- There are 300,000 registered learners in public libraries. However, there are constraints that restrict the ability of library and information services to effectively contribute to lifelong learning:
  - the short term nature of funding for initiatives;
  - the obvious focus on employability skills which may act to discourage disaffected learners;
  - the current operational framework still has a focus on the roles of organisations in learning and does not always fit with learners needs and aspirations as to why or how they wish to learn;
  - the current difficulties libraries have in registering as ILA providers.

The Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix is to be published shortly and encourages services to evaluate and improve services to learners.
- Public libraries account for 15% of the learndirect scotland network and learners are using libraries as the flexible learning point of choice with 45% of Scots using libraries for learning, supporting their studies or homework in the last year. SLIC has fully supported and endorsed the partnership between learndirect scotland and libraries which has seen the development of learning centres in libraries.
- SLIC has supported and encouraged new service delivery models such the John Wheatley College/Glasgow City Council partnership at the Bridge which is developing lifelong learning

in a collaborative resource-sharing model. SLIC and CILIP in Scotland believe that such models should be encouraged through further investment which put the learner at the centre.

- We note that the document uses the term 'learner centred funding' without clarifying what this means. Whilst public libraries provide learning for the 6% of the population who are registered learners, according to a recent CIFPA survey 45% of Scots use their public library for learning, supporting their studies or homework. We would welcome improved access to sustained levels of investment for learning, possibly through funding following learners and being made accessible for a range of agreed taster sessions and accredited programmes.
- SLIC and CILIP in Scotland believe that existing good practice in libraries should be properly acknowledged. If people have easy access via the library network to learning throughout life, they will always find themselves part of a coherent framework of lifelong learning.

### **Information, advice and guidance**

Libraries are the gateway to the world's information and cultural resources with the provision of books, newspapers, music, DVDs and access to the Internet and electronic databases.

- CILIP in Scotland believes that the librarian's role is to offer:
  - access to and trained support for a wide range of information services and resources;
  - support for attainment across educational establishments;
  - support for the development of literacy, including increasing reading confidence and fluency;
  - expertise in the development of information literacy;
  - assistance with the effective use of ICT in learning;
  - knowledge and skills in promoting reading for enjoyment;
  - support for personal and social development.
- Public libraries in 100 locations are hosting Careers Scotland adult guidance and career information points and are fulfilling a 'support' role by giving information on progression routes from informal to formal learning and working in partnership with other providers such as further education colleges. Staff have received specialist training and have a core collection of resources recommended by Careers Scotland. The uncertainty over the future of Careers Scotland is causing concern over the sustainability of this initiative and it would be much improved by the extension of the initiative to cover the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area.
- We believe that access to information and guidance is of vital importance to learners and needs sustainable and continued investment to ensure quality service provision. We believe this provision should be extended, but it would require investment

### **Community learning and development**

- The document does not adequately reflect the over-arching role of Community Planning as a focus for lifelong learning and the wider role of local authorities. This omission excludes a range of learning stakeholders and the contribution they make. Colleges, schools, public libraries and voluntary groups play pivotal roles in the lifelong learning continuum and can add value by being encouraged to work together.

- There is a huge variety of national delivery organisations engaged in lifelong learning but little or no national coordination. SLIC believes that this has sometimes encouraged a tendency towards “silo” approaches rather than seamless services. SLIC works closely with Lifelong Learning UK and recognises this is the only forum where the many agencies can come together, but service delivery matters are not the function of Lifelong Learning UK. SLIC suggests that the establishment of a national learning forum bringing all the various agencies together should be considered to encourage greater cross-organisational engagement. This could bring benefits such as closer links with providers, increased opportunities for partnership working and improved sharing of information.
- Libraries are among many providers not acknowledged in the document. All libraries regardless of sector have a contribution to make to the lifelong learning agenda from engagement with community planning processes, through work with Careers Guidance and learndirect scotland centres to supporting the formal education process in schools and tertiary education. This role should be made explicit in the document.

## Summary

SLIC and CILIP in Scotland believe the Strategy can be strengthened through:

- Acknowledging the significant contribution libraries make to learning for all;
- Supporting libraries through investment to ensure that existing provision can be maintained;
- Enabling libraries to access the full range of investment opportunities to support and develop lifelong learning;
- Encouraging employers to continue to support staff development so that skills are kept up-to-date, enabling better support for learners in the changing environment;
- Ensuring Public libraries are able to register as an ILA provider and the present barriers removed;
- Widening opportunities to broaden participation in the Careers Points in Libraries initiatives to include all areas of Scotland, and exploration of developing this with other sectors should be encouraged;
- Exploring the possibility of investment for joint service provision which puts the learner at the centre;
- Establishing a national forum of service stakeholders to enable discussion and explore partnership working.

The Scottish Library and Information Council is the advisory body to the Scottish Executive and Scottish Ministers on library and information matters. The Council was established in 1991 to create an organisation to support and lead strategic development for all library and information services in Scotland. SLIC members include all local authority, higher education, further education organisations, NHS Trust library services as well as other specialist library and information organisations, including the National Library.

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland is the professional body for librarians and information managers and represents personal members from all sectors - public, school and academic libraries, and libraries from both the voluntary and commercial sectors.

# Journeys into and through learning

Libraries contribution can best be represented by the diagram.

