participants in the programme

Leading the project
Zoraida Mendiweiso-Bendek

Research Assistant
Kathrin Forstner

Steering Committee
Alan Robson
Chris Lamberton
Jane Fletcher
Dawn Rennie
Rebecca Herron

Participants in this Report
Liz Ash
Rebecca Dray
Thomasin Alsop
Dawn Rennie
Christian Bartlett
Paula Noble
Vanessa Lindley
Jenny Reynolds

Additional Contributors
Suzanne Saunter
Janet Clark

Photos
Helen Humphrey
## contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Part</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROGRAMME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>i. Introduction to the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ii. ALAC National Programme and Lincolnshire/ East Midlands Hub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>iii. Active Citizenship: Guidance for practice from Lincolnshire/ East Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>iv. Case Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Case Study 1: Migrant workers in Boston, Lincolnshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Case Study 2: The ‘R U Listening?’ Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Case Study 3: Community Project Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.1 Involvement and Development (ID) - Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.2 CALL Advocacy in Lincolnshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.3 Value Added (Lincolnshire and Rutland Learning Partnership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.4 Interpreting and Translation Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.5 Lincolnshire Rural Stress Network (LRSN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>v. Reflections on Learning Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>vi. Conclusions and Next Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Appendix 1: National Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Appendix 2: Notes on Methodology and Learning Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is no single way to improve the societies that we live in, and there is no single issue that can exclude all others. This variety is presented here. We see different people working to improve different aspects of their environments. For example, we detail case studies looking at citizenship issues in relation to the relationship between service users and the state (in this case mental health service users and the NHS), the relationship between generations (young people and adult decision-makers), the experiences and opportunities for migrant workers and their hosting communities and the continued development of collective processes of reflection and action within the voluntary and community sector as a whole.

The Active Learning for Active Citizenship Project has looked at ways in which informal learning processes can support adult learners to reflect about their experiences and the ways in which those experiences help (or hinder) the development of the society around them.

Readers are invited to consider if, how and why such informal, community learning processes might both support and challenge their own work and how engaging in such processes in the future might provide new opportunities for constructive dialogue, both within organisations, within the voluntary and community sector and with the statutory sector, business sector and other institutions that constitute our society.

The report is presented in 2 parts: the first summarises national and local developments and the initial lessons learnt from those participating in the Lincolnshire/East Midlands hub to date. The second part provides different case-studies of individuals and organisations actively engaged in processes designed to strengthen citizenship competences across the voluntary and community sector.

This is an ongoing process in which you are invited to Take Part. Our next stage is to widen the scope of this report and learn about other similar activities happening around the county and the region. We hope to build a sustained process that supports informal learning and the enhancement of decision-making within and between communities.

You are invited to provide your views, both through the accompanying, printed questionnaire, through agreeing to meet us to discuss your views further and/or through becoming actively involved in the future learning experiences of the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network and Take Part East Midlands.

We hope the following practice guide and case studies give you ideas about how informal, reflective learning can support communities and the different ways in which people are building on the concepts of Active Citizenship in our community.
Introduction to the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network

The Lincolnshire Citizenship Network was established in 2001 with the aim of enabling citizens to take an active, reflective and critical role in their communities. It aspires to promote social inclusion by improving citizenship competences in relevant organisations and communities in Lincolnshire. The network was a result of an action research project undertaken by the Community Operational Research Unit (CORU) at the University of Lincoln.

The Lincolnshire Citizenship Network encourages reflective practice at the individual, group and community levels in order to build community capacity - using the principles of self-reflection, self-regulation and self-organisation. These principles are implemented through constructed conversations in workshops, seminars and short courses. These are community learning opportunities to develop citizenship networking activities across the region aimed at building the public domain.

In 2004 the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network was recognised by the Home Office’s Civil Renewal Unit as one of seven hubs in the country to work in the programme Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC), one of the cornerstones of the Together We Can cross-government action plan. Today these hubs are working under the umbrella of the Local Democracy Directorate of the new Department of State for Communities and Local Government.

In 2006 DEFRA’s Rural Community Programme (RSCP) and Lincolnshire Enterprise/EMDA agreed to fund the project Active Learning for Active Citizenship in Lincolnshire for the next two years. The Lincolnshire Citizenship Network is carrying out a countywide project to produce a guide of best learning practices for active citizenship.

ALAC’s work is enabling adult citizenship learning at local and national levels. Nationally, Take Part: Active Learning for Active Citizenship has just been set up to implement the hubs’ learning experiences. A government White Paper is being published this autumn to reinforce these findings and set up future policy. The Lincolnshire Citizenship Network is playing a significant role towards implementing Take Part in the region.
ALAC is part of Together We Can, a cross-government action plan with the overall goal of providing more opportunities for people to influence the public policy decisions that affect their lives and communities. ALAC is the third phase of the government’s strategy to promote education for active citizenship. It focuses on adult learners and opportunities for learning in community settings.

ALAC is part of the government’s agenda for “civil renewal”, which highlights the importance of people and government working together to find solutions to local problems and to make life better for all. Civil renewal in this context has three main themes: active citizens, strengthened communities, and partnership with public bodies. ALAC addresses each of the three elements, starting at the level of the individual. It aims to equip people with confidence, political literacy and other necessary skills to enable them to “actively shape social change, promoting social solidarity and social justice within the context of globalisation” (ALAC Evaluation Report 2006, p.12).

ALAC Learning Processes
ALAC supports practitioners who are already involved in community-based activities, but at the same time wants to inspire, inform and provide practical ideas for individuals, community groups and organisations interested in becoming engaged in adult education for active citizenship.

It is a learning process for all involved. The programme aims to encourage policy makers, funding bodies, planners and other professionals to acknowledge the value and the impacts of active learning for active citizenship, to recognise its nature as a long-term process and to get involved in the learning process themselves.

ALAC considers education as a means for enabling individuals to choose what they want or need to know, allowing society to progress, and facilitating learning about how we can change the world. Education needs to be an active experience that involves sharing what we know as well as learning from others. The knowledge that people have gained has to be combined with understanding, confidence and skills.

ALAC is a process of re-engagement that starts with community concerns and combines the principles and practices of informal adult education with those of community development. It establishes programmes following a cycle of reflection and action. Such learning programmes have to be flexible enough to accommodate learners’ individual needs and circumstances. ALAC should not be prescriptive, but instead encourage learning providers and participants to develop their own learning opportunities.

Whilst it promotes a flexible approach to personal and community development, ALAC is based on certain core values that have emerged as overarching themes across all seven regional hubs in the national programme. These values are social justice, participation, diversity and equality, and cooperation. They are reflected in the three principles that define ALAC processes: that is support for processes that are learner centred, active and reflective, and community based.

The ALAC programme has been developed in a collaborative national process with seven regional hubs, Lincolnshire / East Midlands being one of them.
The Lincolnshire/East Midlands ALAC Hub

The Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC Hub works from the principle that while citizens have the potential competence and capacity to identify issues and injustices in their communities and to work collectively to help resolve these, a process of learning and enquiry may help support and extend them. (ALAC Evaluation Report 2006)

The Lincolnshire Citizenship Network hosted by the University of Lincoln is one of seven National hubs supporting Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC). The Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC hub works in partnership with a diversity of voluntary sector project managers and organisations.

The hub aims to build capacity for active citizenship by supporting a range of informal, flexible learning experiences and more formalised learning opportunities such as workshops and seminars.

Such activities have supported learning within many contexts - including within crime reduction partnerships, mental health service user and carer groups and migrant worker communities.

The aim of the Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC hub has been to encourage the growth of both individual and organisational capacity to influence and change society. Much effort has been put in to building networks of learners and providers and to providing varied opportunities for participants to interact through these networks. This kind of learning is different from other forms of provision. It is based around existing community activities, is in relaxed informal situations and is grounded in the experiences and reflections of the individuals involved.

Much of the ‘learning’ involved does not look like learning in a traditional formal sense, but rather involves conversations constructed around participants’ experiences, their perception of civic processes and their reflections on the kind of civil society they wish to help build. It involves exploring resources, challenging assumptions and making new connections/building up capabilities which in turn create new possibilities for civil (and civic) engagement.

Learning Framework

An important concept in the design of the national framework: Take Part: Active Learning for Active Citizenship is to provide participants with the space to tackle significant issues. In this space facilitators are not the ‘experts’ in the sense of providing all the curriculum content to passive learners. When it comes to understanding local situations, participants’ knowledge has to be valued and critically reinforced in such a way that it emerges in a stronger form and change can be made possible.
The facilitator’s role is to highlight issues relating to citizenship and social justice and to challenge participants to actively engage with these concepts and reflect how they relate to their community activities. Through this process several recurrent citizenship themes have emerged as important in underpinning conversations about community engagement and the building of civil society. These themes have included:

- Social Justice
- Rights and responsibilities
- Individuals, collectives and the state
- The individuals’ relationship with others
- Identity and belonging
- Civil and Civic Society
- Governance and Civic Engagement
- Community Engagement and building Civil Society

Much of the success of the project has been through creating opportunities for citizens to meet and reflect and to interact in new ways. This process has led to surprises and the creation of new possibilities for participants that cannot be solely ascribed to a particular set curriculum but rather to the opportunities created by a continuously evolving learning framework.

Lessons Learnt from and for Practice

The experience of Active Learning for Active Citizenship has created learning at local and national levels. Nationally a learning framework has been constructed as part of the process. A Government White Paper (2006) also reinforces these findings and sets the foundations for future policy. Some of the national findings can be found in Appendix 1.

Participants within the Lincolnshire/East Midlands Hub have contributed to national findings and policy development as well as reflecting on their own individual conclusions for practice. Several of the participants in the Hub have contributed their case studies to this report.

At the end of each case study, ALAC participants have detailed some of the lessons they feel they have learnt about active learning and community engagement.

As a joint exercise, a number of the participants also met together in a workshop to explore common themes and to tease out some general conclusions for practice. This activity has been summarised in section III as a guide for practice from Lincolnshire/ East Midlands.

The aim of the guide for practice from Lincolnshire/ East Midlands is to summarise conclusions participants have made about making active learning for active citizenship effective in communities. It should not be viewed as a static document, but rather our hope is that readers will respond to the guide by adding their own reflections on experience and by challenging areas they may not agree with. We do hope, however, that the guide to practice may be useful to some, both in designing new opportunities for community learning and engagement, and for stimulating reflection and debate about existing activities intended to encourage active citizenship.
Much of the success of the project has been through creating opportunities for citizens to meet and reflect and to interact in new ways.
1. What is meant by Active Learning for Active Citizenship?

- “Learning opportunities for community engagement.”
- Bringing different members of society together to engage in active learning in order to resolve community issues (e.g. individuals, community groups, voluntary and public sector employees and other decision makers)
- Creating community learning opportunities that support people in taking charge of their own futures, i.e.:
  - Exploring people’s rights/entitlements/choices and responsibilities

2. How can informal learning processes support community engagement?

- Making connections (building bridges)
  - Supporting individuals & groups to identify bridges/links required or desired
  - Enabling people to act on their own either to make new connections or remove existing barriers
- Giving groups confidence to set their own agendas and to become interdependent members of their community and more active citizens, and ensuring that local statutory providers make changes where agreed

3. What characterises informal, community-based learning?

- Adult Learners
- Learning in community settings
- Learning about community contexts and issues
- Learning to influence decision-making
- Working in ways that are learner centred/learner led
- Learning based on experiences
- Learning that does not require prior qualifications or accreditation
- A mix of stakeholders and community learners
  - Funders
  - Providers
  - Users & Carers
  - Others (e.g. employers, trade unions, regional strategists, national policy makers, etc.)
- Informal learning, flexible but stable
  - Processes that are dynamic and responsive to changes in the environment (i.e. changes in issues, policy, structure and person)
  - Learning how to access people and organisations (e.g. identifying sustainable and fair routes that are comfortable and stable)
  - Learning how to influence policy and decision-making

ALAC participants used a process of reflection about their experiences as active citizens to draw up the following summaries for practice guidance. They have also contributed to the creation of a national framework – features of which are summarised in Appendix 1 and reflected in the Government White Paper (2006).
4. Outreach practice / identifying ‘what’s in it for participants’

- Identifying what practical things learners would want (e.g. language courses, IT provision... etc) & building these into more generic learning
- Supporting voluntary sector workers (& others) in their existing workloads / activities and in new developments and policy formation
- Liaison with employers / consideration of working commitments and restrictions.

5. How can informal learning for Active Citizenship be delivered?

- Starting from individual and group experiences and developing a dialogue about active citizenship issues that arise from these constructed conversations
- Using a variety of techniques to encourage participation
  - Discussion groups
  - Use of expressive art (e.g. music, drawing, dance)
  - Different tools/visual stimuli (e.g. Lotus Blossom diagrams)

6. Interpretation: language(s) used

- Supporting bridge-building (e.g. between people with different languages - e.g. different national/natural languages or differences in forms of (English) language used between institutions/within communities)
- Making use of language expertise within the community
- Letting people use their own words.
  - Repeating / reflecting your understanding and interpretations.
  - Exploring “difficult” language (e.g. jargon busting)
  - Facilitating joint drafting of documents
  - Doing things in pairs/avoiding potential embarrassment of reliance on literacy skills

7. Characteristics of effective delivery styles?

- Meeting people on an individual basis
  - Need for open-mindedness; “trying to meet people with no preconceived ideas”
  - Meeting on people’s own territory
  - Being flexible on the time allocated to individuals
  - Moving at people’s own speed, remaining committed to individuals
- Finding safe spaces
  - Confidentiality when required
  - Familiar and relaxed places
  - Safety for all involved
  - Moving locations of meetings to enable access
- Professional approach
  - Non-judgemental
  - Absolute trust
  - Respect for people
  - Shared power/care for the balance of power

Starting from individual and group experiences and developing a dialogue about active citizenship issues that arise from these constructed conversations.
8. Potential barriers to learning
- Recognising and overcoming practical barriers to learning
- Transport: provision and costs
- Location
- Care provision (e.g. childcare)
- Time of day and working patterns
- Recognising the importance of confidence building and establishing trust and freedom for discussion
- Recognising the importance maintaining the internal integrity of a project (e.g. if the environment changes)

9. Recurrent citizenship themes underpinning learning provision
- Social Justice
- Rights and responsibilities
- Individuals, collectives and the state
- The individuals’ relationship with others
- Identity and belonging
- Civil and Civic Society
- Governance and Civic Engagement
- Community Engagement and building Civil Society

10. Organisational Issues
- Importance of maintaining a good relationship with funders and organisational flexibility. Engaging with funders to build trust that the voluntary and community sector organisations it is working with are doing the best job possible (built on experience and an understanding of daily realities)
- Policy & relationship-building with funders
- Ensuring equal relationships (e.g. between funders and voluntary sector organisations)
- Identifying “holes in the net” of current provision/policy
- Importance of investing time working with funders to build a positive shared culture re funding and auditing processes
- Focus on OUTCOMES & IMPACT rather than OUTPUTS
- Put emphasis on quality not quantity (e.g. enabling flexibility with individual needs)
- Avoid overly pre-specifying numbers within contracts (except in cases with a clear reason for inclusion)
- Beware of unrealistic targets / creating undue stresses
- Building clear channels of communication
- Lobbying, listening and learning from discussions
- Following up decision making processes to ensure changes are implemented and effective
- Telling funders when there is a problem/disagreement
- Maintaining integrity

11. Sustainability and Planning
- Community-led exploration of learning needs, issues of concern and priorities for change
- Practical issues (venue, accessibility: how, what, when)
- Consideration of whether Individual or Group learning is appropriate, and of different requirements for support and provision
- Develop a strategy for community learning and engagement
- Supporting individuals
12. Ways to engage further / help shape the emerging agenda?

- Register interest with the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network
- Identify existing community engagement/civil renewal activity across Lincolnshire/ East Midlands
- Identify learning needs and priorities for extending community learning provision
- Identifying community learning opportunities at the individual and group level
- Join the LCN database to be provided with information about the Government White Paper (2006) and the National Learning Framework
- Join the mailing list for information on National Programmes and local initiatives
- Participate in the next round of research about active learning for active citizenship across Lincolnshire/ East Midlands
- Design a different contribution as an active citizen and engage with others to develop this further (looking for synergies with other activities within the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network and elsewhere)
The second part of this document presents a series of case studies; each looking at different voluntary and community sector activities striving to improve civil society. Each of these activities has been supported in some way through the work of the ALAC Hub. The second part of this introduction.
Initially each of these learners engaged with the project on an individual basis, discussing and reflecting how their actions were actively shaping civil society (or not as the case might be!). Then, over a period of time, a network of learners was formed. This network of community project managers met on a regular basis to share their experiences.

In doing this they were able to challenge each other on issues related to active citizenship to share experiences and to share with the hub their views on effective learning processes within their own particular voluntary or community activities. Much of the insight into community-based learning processes has been gained in this way.

The process is ongoing and we present our findings in order stimulate debate and to learn much more from the experiences of other individuals and organisations across Lincolnshire. Identification of those with an interest in this field is expected to help shape an agenda that can build on and extend community learning provision in the region, both for individuals and for organisations across our communities.

The first case study details the evolution of community-based provision for migrant workers in the South Holland area of the County. This activity involved a large number of participants from the voluntary and community sector, from the public sector and from the migrant worker community. It sought to identify current concerns and engage those involved in processes that could influence and resolve key issues within the local community.

The second case study looks at the internal learning processes involved in constructing effective conversations between generations, in this case between crime reduction partnerships and school communities, bringing young people into contact with decision-makers and working with them to resolve key concerns from these young (and often marginalised) communities.

In both cases the ALAC Facilitators became participants in the ongoing process of reflection and activity that aimed at stimulating civil renewal.

A variety of learning opportunities were provided through the hub (e.g. one-to-one and group discussions, workshops and conferences) and the hubs also contributed to the creation of new resources and activities leading from these learning processes (e.g. the creation of radio programmes by migrant workers participating in ALAC workshops).

The ALAC hub provided facilitation for a number of activities within each project. These included workshops, conferences, celebration events and constructed conversations within the projects challenging and recording developments. It also facilitated a number of semi-formal classroom activities such as IT sessions, English Language classes and the exploration of citizenship concerns through music composition workshops.

The third case study consists of several mini case studies from across Lincolnshire. What links them together is that a key community project worker from each project became active learners within the ALAC Hub.

Initially each of these learners engaged with the project on an individual basis, discussing and reflecting how their actions were actively shaping civil society (or not as the case might be!). Then, over a period of time, a network of learners was formed. This network of community project managers met on a regular basis to share their experiences.

In doing this they were able to challenge each other on issues related to active citizenship to share experiences and to share with the hub their views on effective learning processes within their own particular voluntary or community activities. Much of the insight into community-based learning processes has been gained in this way.

The process is ongoing and we present our findings in order stimulate debate and to learn much more from the experiences of other individuals and organisations across Lincolnshire. Identification of those with an interest in this field is expected to help shape an agenda that can build on and extend community learning provision in the region, both for individuals and for organisations across our communities.

Case studies are presented in the following order:
1. Migrant workers in Boston, Lincolnshire
2. “R U Listening?” Project
3. ALAC Learners - Community Project Managers
3.1 Involvement and Development (ID) - Mental Health
3.2 CALL Advocacy in Lincolnshire
3.3 Value Added (Lincolnshire and Rutland Learning Partnership)
3.4 Interpreting and Translation Project
3.5 Lincolnshire Rural Stress Network
I came to England in February
I lose somewhere my vocabulary
I’ve been here nearly a year
And in my soul I have no fear
The dream was a better life
To send money to my kids and wife
But I’m not always informed of my rights

**Verse of immigrants’ song in Boston**

From the perspective of citizenship those arriving in the UK have a complex identity. For example, legal seasonal and migrant workers are eligible to vote in local elections provided a period of residency can be proven, but there are barriers to creating such a democratic identity, including challenges in accessing accommodation, financial services and other contacts with the UK establishment. Beyond the legal eligibility, there are gaps in community education about rights and responsibilities - gaps to be found within both new and established communities, which can be addressed in whole or in part by structured or informal learning processes.

Finally, if people are to become active citizens there is a need to tackle wider issues of social exclusion through learning. Barriers to engagement need to be overcome, for example by connecting people and providing feedback that participation can actively alter their experience of life in the UK. The Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC project has worked with groups of service providers and migrant workers to increase their understanding of these issues and their competence to find ways to address them and engage more actively in shaping their civil environments.

Lincolnshire, East Midlands
In addition to building citizenship capacity through workshops and seminars and supporting learning, this hub has developed expertise in working with migrant agricultural workers in this region, an extremely vulnerable group, with particular barriers due to language issues and shift working. Based in the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network hosted by the University of Lincoln, this hub works in partnership with a diversity of voluntary sector project managers, Integration Lincolnshire, the local Crime Reduction and Disorder Partnership, Local Education Authorities, Boston College and the Church of England.

(ALAC National Evaluation)

What citizenship means for migrant workers & host communities

**Immigrant & Seasonal workers**
Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC has supported a space for informal learning for adults recently arrived in the UK to work and also for those providing employment and services for this new workforce.

**Lincolnshire, East Midlands**
Migrant workers in Boston, Lincolnshire
Despite this, enthusiasm has been high and participants have asked to bring along other friends in similar circumstances. Issues of importance identified include housing, employment, access to health and other services, acting within the law and the relationship to the authorities/institutions, the building of cohesion with existing communities and the creation of relaxed and happy places to live and work.

This has been a practical, sustained engagement focussing on providing participants space to reflect and reorganise themselves and their activities.

ALAC Lincolnshire/ East Midlands has supported the ability of key community leaders to observe their own actions (through meetings and workshops) and has provided an exciting learning environment for a group of migrant workers. There they meet college tutors, university facilitators and music tutors to improve their own ability to articulate and influence their social experience. Meetings have sought to explore issues of citizenship, experiences of being migrant workers, access to local provision and services, ways to strengthen communities and community provision and aspirations for the future. Some members of the group have serious language barriers - something that has hindered basic communications, let alone active citizenship. It was in response to this problem that language tuition was organised at the Boston College and that music was used to facilitate reflective learning in citizenship. These two activities have proved to be powerful vehicles to engage them with service providers and other members of the community, enhancing their sense of belonging and citizenship.

As an example of the importance of increasing the viability of networks through the ALAC hub, exploring this theme has generated new connections between individuals and organisations. The migrant workers theme in ALAC connected learners both in migrant worker groups and in service provision. The project has also supported reflective practices of local project managers and community workers and has had impacts further afield.

Approaches to Good Practices:
- Letting the learners identify their biggest barriers to learning
- Being imaginative in overcoming barriers to learning - for example using music for those who struggle with the language
- Allowing the participants’ circumstances to dictate the time of all activities
- Providing transport to activities to encourage participation
- Providing language tuition which is engaging, participative and tailored to the individuals’ needs
- Drawing out from the learners their current issues and allowing the group to brainstorm solutions
- Combining formal learning methods (classroom tuition) with more innovative techniques (workshops and learning through music)

This group has met over the past year at the Boston College and also at the University of Lincoln. The University of Lincoln has facilitated aspects of the process and Boston College has run the language course, organised through ALAC, in response to the learning needs articulated by the group. Transport has been provided and the timing chosen to help shift workers, but all the same the demands of work for this group have meant participants have been challenged to come to each session.
ALAC is concerned with closing gaps between generations, and in promoting conversations between adults and children to promote learning in adults. For example, in an effort to create links between the generations, young people in Primary Schools in the Lincoln area, together with parents and teachers, have been involved in the “R U Listening 2 Us?” project since January 2006.

An earlier pilot project was run in the Grantham area between 2004-2005 with successful outcomes. It involved engaging local people to first identify and then work together to address issues of local concern. In many cases, the issues which concerned young people were very similar to those identified by representatives of older generations in a separate study.

For example, the issue of litter was of concern in two schools.

The pupils at Huntingtower School also identified graffiti in the nearby underpass as an area of concern. To try and change their peers’ attitudes towards how they disposed of their litter, the group designed litter bins which they felt would be more appealing, and worked with a Lincolnshire artist who specialised in metalwork to adapt their designs.

To find a solution to the graffiti issues, the group contacted Network Rail to express their concerns, and lobbied for the area to be redecorated, with successful results for the local community. Similarly, at Spitalgate School, issues involving litter and disposal of cigarette waste were addressed by the purchase of attractive new bins for the school playground, and the running of a poster competition by the pupils to influence the behaviour of adults near the school. Later, the group arranged for ‘No Smoking’ signs and a cigarette litter facility to be sited at the school entrance.

Also within the Grantham trial, local groups, including schoolchildren, identified issues with traffic speed near schools, and problems with dog fouling. In partnership with the local authority’s road safety team, the pupils of National School were trained to use speed monitoring equipment to record traffic speed over a set period.

At Barkston & Syston School, the pupils tackled dog fouling problem by organising a petition and lobbying the local Parish Council to erect Dog Litter bins. In both cases, successful outcomes illustrate the value of community involvement.

Following this trial period, in 2006 further community engagement began in the Lincoln area, involving assisting young people to identify issues which concerned them. This was achieved through a Theatre in Education workshop, facilitated by the Rhubarb Theatre Company in January of that year at Lincoln University. The workshop not only enabled the young people to identify issues of concern in their local communities, but also helped them to communicate their concerns to adult representatives from local public services.

It opened up dialogues between young people and adults in the public sector which had not previously existed, and is engaging young people in active citizenship projects - empowering them to make a positive difference to the communities in which they live.

In the Lincoln area project, groups have identified issues like excessive volume and speed of traffic outside one school, the reclamation of a public space opposite another school, dangerous litter and graffiti in the locality of another, and a lack of appropriate play facilities to replace an all-weather sports field site which had been built on.
These issues are seen by the young people as a cause of anti-social behaviour in their community. Their concerns are shared by adults in the localities, but finding a channel through which to effect change is often the stumbling block which inhibits action. ALAC Lincolnshire/ East Midlands is providing an opportunity for young people to achieve success which will encourage them to become active citizens as adults.

Difficulties have been encountered in persuading some agencies of the importance of hearing what young people have to say and actually engaging them in the process. On the other side of the equation there have been difficulties experienced by schools in finding space in the crowded timetable to devote to this more practical aspect of the Citizenship curriculum.

A possible solution to this situation might be to target the voluntary youth groups in future.

It is important, however, to acknowledge the value of the experience gained by all concerned in the schemes which are currently running and which have already taken place, and the good practice identified will be shared and built on in the future.

Equally the various public sector agencies engaged in the dialogue with these young people are recognising the value of listening to and acting upon the concerns raised. Reflecting on the process of engaging local public sector agencies and young people in schools, it is evident that there is a willingness on both parts to effect positive change, but the barriers to progress should also be recognised.

Approaches to Good Practices:
- Providing spaces for conversations between children and adults
- Including the outcomes of these conversations in decision-making processes
- Conducting real conversations rather than patronising participants or displaying a condescending attitude
- Reinforcing relationships between communities, parents and schools
- Allowing the local residents to set the agenda and prioritise their concerns
One of the ways that ALAC has been engaging with the community is by its involvement with a group of community project managers. These people represent a wide cross section of organisations and groups which, in various ways, help to build active citizenship in the region. Each group or organisation assists people who, in a specific way, are hard to reach in mainstream formal education. ALAC has invited the project managers to share their experiences, discussing local community concerns, stories, expectations and good practices, especially with regard to the learning they have encouraged, promoted and provided in the community, which enables local people to develop their citizenship skills, knowledge and understanding. They have built connections, or bridges, between individual learners and community groups and organisations, they have empowered individuals and groups to interact with the decision-making process, and they have assisted vulnerable and unrepresented groups to have a voice in the community.

**Extracts from Participants’ Comments**

ALAC has given to the Mental Health Service User and Carer Involvement and Development Project (based at the Community Council of Lincolnshire), the valuable tool of reflection amongst peers to enable a 360° view of the project aims and goals. It has enabled the project manager to define best practices and also increased morale as it has enabled her to see how much the project has achieved.

Rebecca Dray

CALL Advocacy in Lincolnshire has become more involved in the Citizenship agenda because of the ALAC process and now feels it has a much more realistic view of how advocacy fits into citizenship / developing communities. The ALAC conversations have allowed participants to explore and evaluate each others projects, thereby being critical friends and learning new techniques from each other.

Liz Ash

By discussing and analysing the Value Added’s project methods, in comparison to other projects in the county, we have been able, through ALAC participation, to pool expertise, familiarise ourselves with different working practices and consider the differing needs of the diverse Lincolnshire communities.

Thomasin Alsop

The ALAC hub has facilitated the growth of good work practices alongside COMPACT development. ALAC has enabled and facilitated a clearer vision for the group and the principles and codes that COMPACT is promoting.

Dawn Rennie
One of the projects working with the ALAC Lincolnshire/ East Midlands hub is the Involvement and Development project, which is funded by the Lincolnshire Partnership Trust and based at the Community Council of Lincolnshire. The ID project supports those who have had mental health treatment, people in recovery and their families and supporters, and members of the wider community, to be more involved in local service delivery, design and planning, interacting with the NHS trust, and learning from this process of interaction. The project aims to reduce the isolation and powerlessness of people with mental illness and their supporters by enabling them to influence the services and care they receive and to take charge of their own recovery.

By giving them the confidence, knowledge and structure to have a voice, the ID Project has created a two-way dialogue between the local health trust and its users.

The facilitators are providing the space to enable the learners to link to mental health services within the county and across the wider region. Service users and carers in Lincolnshire can now get involved in a variety of ways. This has led to local resolution of issues and a better understanding on both sides about the real situation on the ground for people in receipt of services.

The project has set up, and supports people to join, one of three local service user and carer run mental health forums. Each forum moves around to different locations in its area to ensure as many people as possible are able to get involved. The forums now visit eleven market towns and villages in the county.

A second way for service users and carers to get involved is to talk about their views, experiences and ideas on an interactive, information sharing website www.linkingvoices.org.uk The proof was self evident from day one, as the popularity of the website was staggering. It had over 8,000 hits and gathered around 1,000 regular users in its first four months of operation.

The project also provides small grants to independent mental health support groups in Lincolnshire to help with costs that are traditionally hard to get support for, for example ongoing revenue expenditure, transport costs etc. This money has proved to be a lifeline for some small groups who struggle to keep going due to lack of funding.

The project has created a sustainable communication process, so that even after the involvement of the project is complete, the users of the service can continue to influence their service provider’s policies in a constructive way.

### Approaches to Good Practices:
- Enabling the group to identify its learning needs
- Planning how to achieve aims together with the group
- Identifying barriers for people’s participation, and working around them - e.g. moving a meeting’s location each month/providing support with transport
- Allowing for different ways for people to access the group
- Recognising that attitudes to learning may have to be addressed
- Building an atmosphere of free and open discussion. Establishing trust and a good relationship with the group
- Using a variety of techniques other than simply group discussion
- Retaining an outsider’s viewpoint in group discussions as the facilitator
- Keeping integrity to the aims of the project
- Assisting the group to set its own priorities and become independent
- Giving the group the confidence to have a say in how it works with local statutory bodies
Everyone, at some time in their lives, may have felt powerless as a result of difficult circumstances. Advocacy supports people in these times of need and enables people to get what they are entitled to. More importantly, the process of advocacy empowers people and builds confidence, so that many are able to deal better with situations they might experience in the future.

CALL Advocacy in Lincolnshire is a charity providing free and independent advocacy to people in Lincolnshire. Advocacy gives people a voice to get their views heard and their choices respected. It gives individuals the ability and the confidence to achieve the outcomes they desire, supports them in achieving their rights and enables people to live with dignity.

Advocacy helps people speak up for themselves and challenges social exclusion at the ground level. Advocates do not give advice, but provide independent, conflict-free support to the individual in obtaining advice and support.

The support given depends on the issue. But in principle, advocates work alongside their clients, helping them to follow processes that will allow them to help themselves. We always allow the client to decide what level of support they require. On many occasions, clients build more self-confidence through the process. But in other cases, clients will need support again in the future.

What has been done - an example
A local hospital referred a lady to CALL. She was 40 years old, and had mental and physical health problems and learning difficulties. The lady had the additional complications of having children in care who were awaiting adoption, and having a violent ex-partner who was bailed on remand for his violence towards her.

CALL was asked to help to re-house her as her previous accommodation was unsuitable for her return. On the advocate’s initial visit it became obvious that there were several other issues.

- She had not seen her children for two months due to her being in hospital.
- Her landlord had given her 8 weeks’ notice to leave her home.
- Despite her various difficulties, none were classed as serious enough for her to be allocated a Social Worker. The County Council had been informed but it seemed that she had ‘slipped through the net’.
- There seemed to be various organisations involved and they were failing to communicate with each other.
- She had no family or friends who could help her in any way. Even her neighbours were elderly and unwell.

The advocate worked with the client and it was agreed that the immediate priority was to re-establish contact with the children. The hospital staff confirmed that she could leave the ward to visit the contact centre.
The advocate spoke to the children’s Social Worker. It was found that the Social Worker had only very recently been informed that the lady was in hospital and had believed that she had chosen not to visit the children. Due to the advocate’s intervention, contact with her children was resumed. The advocate then arranged for her to be granted a social worker.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

The advocate spoke to all other organisations involved in the lady’s care, including the neighbours, the Women’s Centre and the solicitor, making them aware of her involvement. As a result, everybody started working together in order to help this lady.

After a few weeks the ex-partner was released from bail and returned to the family home, against the wishes of the lady and her landlord. He began writing to her and was reported to be removing bin bags from the house. The lady decided she would prefer to move to a house in a different area.

The advocate spoke to the Homeless Department at the local council and ascertained that due to her violent partner and physical difficulties she could be re-housed in the locality. The advocate gathered evidence to support the move from all other organisations involved and filled in the application with the lady, who subsequently moved into a ground floor flat in the area of her choice.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

The advocate spoke to the landlord and the local social housing group in her area. It was established that the housing group would put the lady on the emergency housing list, on the condition that the landlord re-wrote the terms of notice in the correct fashion.

Outcomes
As in many cases, in this example, the issue that caused the client to be referred to CALL Advocacy was a minor one in comparison to the other problems this lady was encountering. The advocate’s intervention acted as a catalyst in making real progress, in that she gathered all relevant information from all the organisations involved, meaning that she became the only fully informed person on the case. This enabled her to act on behalf of the lady, and to ensure that all organisations were kept up to date.

This ultimately led to the resolution of all issues. At the heart of the advocacy process is facilitating a process so that people are more aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. This can only be done by working with people where they feel most comfortable and giving them the skills to deal with issues better.

Approaches to Good Practices:
- Working with individuals where they feel most comfortable
- Building trust by showing empathy for the client’s situation, and by calling back when promised and maintaining professionalism at all times
- Being flexible in the time allocated to each person
- Communicating issues and good practices to the national level, especially issues specific to rural areas
- Highlighting trends, poor policies and missing services to the authority responsible
- Working in partnership with local infrastructure organisations and other networks and institutions
In recent years, there has been an increase in attention on the need to provide training and development to the voluntary sector. In particular, the following needs have been identified:

- The need for a change in approach to the valuing of skills development and access to opportunities.
- The need for organisations in the sector to develop robust, operational structures to improve organisation and ensure quality delivery.
- The need for workers’ and volunteers’ skill-bases to widen beyond their immediate work practices and to cover other areas – such as transferable skills and opportunities for cascade learning.
- The need for the sector to embrace the culture of income diversification in a manner which is sensitive to the make-up and operations of the sector. This change needs to be delivered in a way that is meaningful and inspiring.

Previously, the sector had a piecemeal approach to its learning and skills development activity – there was no coordinated strategy across the sector, as there is for other business sectors. Training and development were traditionally low priorities for the sector, with funding for core activities often limited to minimal expense.

The aims and focus of Value Added and this project were: organisational development, workforce development and learning and skills advice within the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The importance of working with Organisations is increasingly relevant as communities form groups and organisations that enable them to fill gaps in service, respond to their own local needs and formalise their activities. Supporting these community led structures to develop their activities with local, regional and national agendas means that communities can have a greater level of influence over policy. In response, local authorities and funding bodies are able to work more effectively with well structured, developed and flexible organisations, in order to meet their agenda’s and to access harder to reach communities. Although Value Added finished in September 2006 as a result of the Lincolnshire and Rutland Learning Partnership closure, it is hoped that the provision will be continued in recognition of Voluntary Sector needs.

This service was possible due to funding from Lincolnshire Enterprise and the Learning and Skills Council. Project funding of this nature meant the service has been delivered free of charge to beneficiary organisations, enabling an equality of service and an opportunity of development for organisations / groups of all sizes and stages of development.

What has been done - an example

An example of our work is a recent project with a local disability forum, a network of organisations that meet to act as a united voice for disability issues in the area.

The Workforce Development Adviser, representing Value Added, was invited to work with the group as an outsider, to assist the group to:

- identify its purpose. The group’s members were concerned that the forum was becoming a ‘talking shop’ and was losing its direction.
- identify a structure to ensure that the identified purpose can be achieved effectively.
- work towards sustainability, to ensure that the purpose and established structure can be effective over the long term.
How did we do this specifically?

- Our advisor facilitated an action planning session that allowed individuals to identify their own views on what the priorities of the forum were. She then put these views into a group priority list, on an interactive timeline. For each aim contributed by individuals, the group discussed its priority, its appropriateness and how realistic it was.

- The next stage was, as a committee, to convert this wall-based timeline into a paper-based action plan that can be used throughout the group’s development.

- We then compiled a summary of the roles required within the group - through a skills audit of the individuals within the groups. Group members volunteered and nominated appropriate people for the roles.

- It was then appropriate to discuss the group’s training needs and interests. Our advisor gave assistance on Workforce Development opportunities and Learning and Skills opportunities.

- The adviser worked with the group to establish the importance of looking into the future and planning.

Outcomes

We decided to do this because:

- we wanted to support people individually and contribute to their development
- we wanted to support the development of the whole group
- we wanted to benefit the wider community through an improved service, made possible by a more effective organisation

As a result of this:

- The forum became more aware of who made up the group, their needs and interests.
- The forum is made up of organisations which work in relation to disability issues. The group decided that each organisation would make an effort to introduce a member of their community to the forum, to ensure that the forum is more representative.

To do this it was agreed that current forum members would accompany individuals to the meetings until the individuals felt they were in a position to represent their views and the views of the organisation they were attached to.

- It was recognised that although the forum met regularly it had little structure or sense of shared responsibility. A lot of the responsibility rested on a small number of attendees. To overcome this the group identified different roles (such as chair person, treasurer, secretariat, minute taker) and organisations volunteered to ensure that role was fulfilled.

- The forum recognised that they are increasingly responding to statutory sector consultation and working together with local authority organisations. Whilst this was recognised as a positive, it was also acknowledged that this consultation had to be conducted appropriately.

Approaches to Good Practices:

- Establishing together what needs to be done to achieve these goals
- Being neutral, and not being influenced by one person more than others
- Encouraging the participants to lead and steer discussions
- Ensuring all who want to have their say; avoiding domination by one or more members
- Using a variety of techniques in group discussions, e.g. verbal, visual and interactive methods of communicating and sharing views
- Focusing on outcomes. Ensuring that the group has goals to work towards and that progress towards these goals is reviewed, and findings are acted on appropriately
Integration Lincolnshire exists to promote social integration by facilitating co-operation between organisations and people that provide services to New Arrival Communities.

Within Integration Lincolnshire, the most successful part of its work to engage newly arrived communities is the Interpreting and Translation project. In line with the principles of Learning for Active Citizenship, it seeks to help:

(a) individuals within communities to communicate,
(b) communities to develop through shared experiences and
(c) the identification and recognition of the “voice” of such communities through advocacy and representation.

Due to issues with the working conditions and the social welfare of economic migrants, mainly from Portugal and the 8 accession states (such as Poland, Latvia and Lithuania), there was a necessity for an unprecedented increase in the use of Interpreting and Translation, I&T, services in several languages “new” (at least on this scale) to the county.

Constraints on the use of such services were:
- Prohibitive costs
- Shortage of certain languages
- Use of translators/interpreters who had no appreciation of local circumstances
- Uncoordinated services
- Lack of quality control
- Lack of appreciation of when a translator/interpreter was needed

Initially, Interpreting and Translation was identified by the IL membership as a priority area. With no funds to resource it, the project has taken opportunities wherever they have presented themselves.

The project has been mentioned in every meeting and forum possible. Local District Councils and the Lincolnshire Criminal Justice Board - representing Courts, Police, Probation, Prisons, Crown Prosecution and Youth offending Services - have become involved with the project’s development.

Within the project, several clear strands are emerging, namely training of translators/interpreters, updating of course modules, research into needs/gaps, and development of a social enterprise. The aspect of the project that directly engages the migrant worker communities is the training of the translators and interpreters.
Setting up the project

Interpreters need not only linguistic skills, but an ability to balance the requirements of sensitivities and ethical issues with their core roles. Therefore the desired qualities of interpreters and translators are:

- Proficiency/ fluency in English and other language
- Interpersonal skills
- Ability to advocate, and to deal with tension and conflict
- Ability to remain neutral
- Meeting certain quality standards in translating/ interpreting
- Confidentiality
- Meeting the criteria for entry onto the national register for public service interpreters.

The project was initiated by advertising within migrant communities, inviting people to come forward to undertake a basic introductory course in interpreting and translating and in primary health services, housing, benefits and education.

Applicants were from a range of countries: Portuguese and Polish migrants in the main, and some Russians and Latvians. 14 applicants were assessed (by telephone) as having the desired competencies and chosen to undertake the training. Local partners such as Boston College delivered parts of the process, such as some of the training.

A key part of the appeal of this process is that the interpreters and translators are encouraged to work directly with other migrants to help them to become active citizens.

Approaches to Good Practices:

- Researching the exact requirements before commencing the project: find what the users expect from the service
- Bringing together all the stakeholders to work on the plan
- Providing training and employment opportunities for individuals who can then become more involved in their communities
- Utilising the enthusiasm and commitment of the trained interpreters in other ways besides their standard job specification e.g. are they willing to work in other ways with different elements of their community?
- Avoiding pre-judging and making assumptions: these residents are very willing to be active participants in their community
- Learning from already-existing models of this type of service provision, especially with similar geography and origin of migrants
- Having the values of kinship with the stranger and empathy with the outsider.
- Ensuring inequalities are challenged.
In the midst of a changing rural community throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, farmers have shown a dramatic decline in numbers as a proportion of the rural sector, particularly in the unsubsidized sectors of dairy, pig, and chicken farming and vegetable producers. Subsidies in other elements of agriculture, such as the arable sector, are not always on the large scale that the media portrays. Over 85,000 farmers and farm workers have left the industry in 5 years. There are important questions to be asked as to how this has affected social cohesion in the rural environment. Farming has a consistently higher suicide rate than all other types of employment.

The Lincolnshire Rural Stress Network was formed in this background, with a determination to inform and educate people about mental well-being, the effects and causes of stress and how to alleviate the symptoms.

**The simple vision is:**
“A healthier and happier rural community in Lincolnshire.”

**The network’s mission statement is:**
“To harness the human and financial resources available to improve the social and mental well-being of individuals in rural Lincolnshire.”

The Lincolnshire Farmers’ Support Group was formed in 1999, as a sub-section of the LRSN, to assist the Lincolnshire Agricultural Chaplain in his role. A voluntary group of twenty people now form a listening service that will signpost to key agencies according to needs identified. A number of the volunteers are willing to go on to the farms for visits.

The organisation went through a range of difficulties. Initially there were financial difficulties with the agency that provided the project manager, which compelled the group reluctantly to separate itself from that agency. Funding the charity has always been a challenge; though Lloyds TSB was generous in the first instance, and later a DEFRA grant has allowed the group to sustain a Project Manager.

Over the past year, the trustees have spent time learning and seeking advice, to help the organisation to become more focused and to clarify its governance structure. We have become less functional and more proactive, able to take the initiative independently of external providers of funding. We now have a clearer view of why we exist and how we are going to react to the needs in our community.

The Samaritans have conducted the core training with specific emphasis on active listening skills and confidentiality and reporting protocols. Role-play and team skills have engendered confidence and enthusiasm amongst the group. A dedicated telephone hotline has been launched, and the group is marketing and publicising the service with the help of certain key members of the voluntary team. The Network is also expanding the service to sparsely populated regions of the county.

Becoming embedded in the community, and creating solutions from the locality, appears to be the best way forward. The group uses a participatory method of teaching, and uses an initially small group to expand the network over a period of weeks. These are still the early stages of this process, but first indications from participants are very positive.

**Approaches to Good Practices:**

- Learning within the organisation is vital. There was a need to challenge the trustees to learn new skills beyond the private sector.
- Using the volunteers’ own suggestions and ideas to explore new ways of communicating.
- Wherever the needs exist in the community, projects such as this need to reach them, regardless of distance or rural isolation.
- If a central call centre is used, volunteers need to be available to respond in whichever locality is required.
reflections on learning experiences

From the case studies presented on previous pages, certain common key principles and practices that have been found to be effective have emerged. These include:

**Preparation for learning**
- Establishing with the learners what they wish to achieve
- how they can achieve it
- what they need to achieve it
- Preparing an action plan together
- Facilitating learners to identify their current situation - strengths and weaknesses

**Encouraging participation/Making learning accessible**
- Identifying the main barriers to learning - for example
  - time
  - location/ physical access
  - lack of necessary skills (e.g. language)/ lack of confidence
  - attitudes
  - learning environment
- Being flexible in overcoming barriers to learning - for example
  - adapt to learners’ working schedules
  - choose accessible locations and/ or provide transport to activities
  - provide skills training (e.g. language teaching)
  - demonstrate the benefits of participation
  - create a learning environment suitable to learners’ needs

**Methods of learning**
- Being responsive to individual needs
- Using a variety of learning methods, such as:
  - Setting up group discussions led by the learners
  - Conducting formal classroom tuition (e.g. language classes)
  - Utilising constructed conversations
  - Experimenting with innovative, informal techniques (e.g. learning through music)
  - Learning through experiences
- Being flexible and adaptable

**Role of facilitators**
- Assisting but not dominating
- Remaining objective and treating all learners equally
- Ensuring that the learners understand their goals
- Building trust and a good relationship with learners
- Enabling learners to become independent of the facilitator to create sustainability in the learning process

**Sharing learning experiences**
- Learning from already existing models
- Communicating experiences to others engaged in citizenship learning

**From individual learning to collective action**
- Utilising the enthusiasm and commitment of participants to encourage engagement in community activities
- Making learners aware that they can participate in decision-making processes
- Creating the necessary confidence through the learning experiences(s)
- Connecting individual learners and creating a basis for collective action
conclusions and next steps

The ALAC experience has been about community learning on many levels. How we learn about issues of concern to different communities and how we learn to shape and influence situations and to engage as active citizens in our society. This is, of course, by its very nature an ongoing process.

This report has introduced three case studies that cover many different activities within the voluntary and community sector. What connects them all is the willingness of individuals to enter into a process of learning and reflection about their work and to engage with other individuals and organisations in doing this.

Participants have given generously of their time to this process, meeting with each other and hub facilitators to shape sustained activity over a period of years.

Our intention is to continue to support this agenda of informal, flexible, experience and community-based learning within the voluntary and community sector and to work with all those interested in participating in shaping this agenda in a participatory manner. This process will now involve identifying those with other experiences to share and those who wish to be involved in some form in the future.

We invite all those interested to take part, and particularly hope to identify (through our next round of questionnaires, conversations and interviews):

- how individuals and communities are ‘learning’
- how and why learning is valued
- what are the tangible outcomes of learning

In doing this we hope to be able to support a county-wide development of community learning opportunities, to test and improve local and national practice guidance and to provide valuable experiences and platforms to share know-how and support through the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network.
Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC has been an active member of the National ALAC programme. As one of only 7 pilot hubs we have had many opportunities to learn from other hubs and share our experiences. This joint activity has resulted in the following national conclusions:

### National Findings

1. **It is a flexible approach to personal and community development through experiential learning in a group setting.** The programmes offer proven strategies to build stronger communities through promoting personal effectiveness, social enterprise and lifelong learning.

2. **It is shaped by the values of participation, cooperation, social justice, and equality with diversity.** These values require the work to be (i) community-based, (ii) learner-centred, and (iii) developed through active and reflective learning.

3. **It is part of ‘Together We Can’, a nationwide initiative, to promotes strategic cooperation between the public, community and corporate sectors locally, regionally and nationally.**

4. **It forms the third phase of the government’s strategy to promote education for active citizenship in (i) school, (ii) college and (iii) community settings.**

5. **It is part of a nationwide cross-sector partnership to strengthen participative democracy across communities at every level.**

6. **It is where principles and practices of informal adult education meet principles and practices of community development.**

7. **It helps equip individuals and communities with the skills, confidence and experience to tackle the distinctive political, social and technical challenges and opportunities that confront us in an increasingly global society.**

8. **All individuals are members of communities and community change emerges from individuals working together.**

9. **It enables people to gain understanding of how power works and how individuals can learn to influence decisions and policies.**

10. **ALAC is for people who wish to engage effectively in developing their communities.** Previous experience or qualifications, though valued, are not required.

11. **ALAC plans to build - in association with Together We Can - a network of support from national, regional and local organisations committed to civic and civil renewal.**
**What are common characteristics of ALAC work?**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>ALAC is for everybody or anybody; many people in positions of authority and power could benefit as much from engaging in active citizenship learning as could those seeking empowerment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| (13) | Delivery around the Four Essential Ingredients:  
Valuing your own skills  
Knowing yourself through & with others  
Knowing how the external world operates  
Knowing where to go to get what you need  
This challenges the notion of individualism and competition by bringing people together in association, to collectively reflect upon and analyse the barriers to, and opportunities for, creating change for themselves and others. We suggest that once people make these connections, and see their own concerns and limitations reflected in the struggles of others, they can collectively develop strategies around how to overcome the barriers and make positive changes. |
| (14) | It is about learning with other people. |
| (15) | Its outcomes are unpredictable; this makes some formal educational processes - with preset outcomes - unsuitable. |
| (16) | It is best achieved through practice rather than by absorbing theory; thus, experiential learning is key. |
| (17) | It uses conversation and dialogue as key tools to facilitate learning; true conversation takes place when we are open enough to accept others’ points of view as worth our full consideration. Conversation is an opportunity to interrogate our own prejudices. |
| (18) | It puts our shared knowledge and our desire for change into action; praxis is central, describing the translation of theory into practice. |
| (19) | It enables people to gain new skills, insights and understanding through tackling real-life challenges in the community. |
| (20) | It is not just about accreditation; impact on individual perceptions and impact on relationships in communities are just as important. Progression does not always equal accreditation. |
The Lincolnshire/ East Midlands ALAC project has worked with groups of providers and migrant workers to increase their understanding of issues relevant to their experiences as citizens and to help them get better at communicating their needs and engaging more actively in shaping their civil environments. This has been a practical, sustained engagement, focusing on providing participants space to reflect and reorganise themselves and their activities.

The Lincolnshire/ East Midlands hub has taken as its approach the idea of ‘constructed conversations’. This means that it has entered into a systematic process of engaging with local groups and individuals who have already demonstrated an interest in citizenship issues and encouraged them to reflect on their activities, concerns and resources. In doing so, we have helped participants to articulate and resolve community problems through re-organising their resources, challenging their current thinking and making new connections.

Several assumptions underpin our methodology
Conversations unleash self-organisation processes as people relate to each other in shared spaces where the natural thing to do is to continue conversations. Also they help individuals’ self-observation and self-reflection and potentially improve the outcomes of their engagement in the community. ALAC Lincolnshire/ East Midlands is using all these considerations to support groups to learn through their conversations.

Conversations that are structurally constrained and well designed help to get the best from the participants. Groups have been provided with space to reflect and act collectively. In this space, these groups have made visible their collective knowledge with the support of facts, information, experiences, stories and other forms of evidence. They have constructed dialogues and exchanged views about decision-making issues, improving participants’ actions, as well as monitoring and challenging their collective participation. ALAC has offered these groups opportunities to learn how to explore issues, to engage in processes, to identify pivotal players in the community, to observe themselves and to define good practices. These conversations have helped them learn to see the connection between observation and action. They have an informal but stable structure and they are facilitated and monitored.

Operationalising these ideas
Behind each of these ‘conversations’ lie numerous one-to-one and small group reflective-learning sessions and explorations of local experiences and global concepts. Once participants became engaged with the hub the facilitators devised appropriate learning opportunities - time to meet, reflect and review experiences, goals and possibilities. These were student-centred, designed to match individual and organisational learning styles and where possible were conducted in physical spaces that suited the learner. Sometimes preference was given to sessions at community locations and sometimes to University venues; the facilitators attempted to remain as flexible as possible over this - maintaining a relaxed and informal style wherever appropriate.

In addition to these one-to-one and small group learning sessions, the participants in the Lincolnshire/ East Midlands hub started to interweave individual experiences into the discussion, especially during cross-over meetings, in which participants were encouraged to share ideas and experiences with each other across different projects.
The learning framework

In the early stages, this was intentionally a very informal learning process, working on a one-to-one basis with potential participants, exploring ALAC’s ideas of active citizenship as they might relate to the participants’ experiences. The process was very learner-centred: engagement with participants was designed to make them feel comfortable and the learning framework was developed in co-operation with them. This learning framework took aspects and concepts from citizenship and looked at how these might relate to their activities and reinforce positive aspects.

The role of the facilitator, or tutor, was one of a ‘critical friend’, challenging participants to further reflect on their actions and to explore side-effects and new possibilities. The importance of an experienced and knowledgeable facilitator becomes apparent when designing and implementing a flexible learning framework of this nature. The skill of the facilitator is to know the wider citizenship ‘curriculum’ so well that they can skilfully connect topics of relevance to the discussions of the participants’ experiences and aspirations.

As the hub developed and participants became more involved in its activities, these one-to-one sessions were complemented by a series of workshops, events, encounters, wider meetings, celebrations, conferences and more formalised courses. In this way the design started with the various learners and their experiences and developed reflective learning opportunities that progressively engaged them with wider citizenship concerns.

Examples of citizenship issues explicitly included in these workshop events included the historical evolution of notions of citizenship, citizenship education in schools, concepts of organisational citizenship and the development of an active citizenship agenda.
acknowledgements
A note of thanks

Thanks to all the members of the Lincolnshire/East Midlands Hub who have contributed with case studies to this best practices guide, which is expected will support an on-going process of policy development. This guide offers a summary of the conclusions participants have reached about making effective active learning for active citizenship in communities.

It is not intended as a one-off document, but rather as a living document where readers can add their own experiences and reflections and challenge aspects of the guide that they don’t agree with. The guide should be useful for designing, creating, developing, reinforcing and improving opportunities of community learning and stimulating reflection and debate about active citizenship.

You are invited to:
Take Part
Active Learning for Active Citizenship
community@lincoln.ac.uk
info@lincolnshirecitizenshipnetwork.org.uk