

ALAC National Network

## Active Learning for Active Citizenship

A report by  
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## Foreword

Like many others, I have long believed that citizenship skills are both an indispensable part of a healthy democracy, and also invaluable in building stronger and more cohesive communities.

It is heartening that this evaluation of the work of the seven pilot ALAC learning hubs demonstrates this so clearly from their experience in very different communities across England. Undoubtedly active learning for active citizenship has a central role to play in carrying forward the Together We Can approach, and in doing so to make sure that people can influence the shape and design of our public services, so that they are more responsive to their needs.

The recommendations in the report set out a clear agenda for action, which we are already beginning to take forward. The key now is to build on what we have learned from the hubs and to spread it in a much, much wider way. The Learning Framework for ALAC that we will be publishing later this year will provide the foundation for this. The new ALAC National Network will help to disseminate the lessons across the country. At the same time we will be working with our partners across Government to ensure that ALAC is recognised as an important contributor across the whole range of Government policies. These will include community empowerment, devolution to neighbourhoods, community engagement in health, rural development and raising awareness of European and global, as well as UK, citizenship.

I am enormously grateful to the ALAC hub facilitators and participants, to the Steering Group members and to everyone who has contributed to the success of this programme, and look forward to our working together to build on it for the future.

Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP  
Minister of State

## Introduction

Citizenship has come centre stage as a public policy concern in Britain in recent years. The current Labour Government has been committed to developing strategies to transform citizens from passive recipients of public services to self-sustaining individuals, active as individuals and as members of communities. Citizens have been the subject of policies to activate and to empower them, making them the subjects of 'responsibilities as well as rights' (Clarke, 2005. 447). Citizenship education, starting with citizenship education in schools, has been promoted as part of this wider aim to change the political culture 'for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life...to build on and to extend radically to young people the best in traditions of community involvement and public service and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action' (DfEE, 1998.7).

In summary, young people in schools, and then also in colleges, were to develop social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. Parallel aims inform the programme to explore ways of developing community-based citizenship education for adults, Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC), which was set up through the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit in 2004 and is the subject of this report. Professor Sir Bernard Crick's contributions to both strands of citizenship education have been seminal.

ALAC was set up as education for active citizenship, firmly based within the voluntary and community sectors. ALAC programmes were to be delivered through seven regional 'hubs', voluntary and community sector organisations working with relevant agencies, including universities and the Workers Education

Association, to form learning partnerships. The learning programmes would be based upon the values of social justice, participation, equality and diversity, and co-operation, addressing local people's own priorities, rooted in their collective experiences. These seven hubs were developed, building upon existing networks and partnerships and existing experiences of good practice in South Yorkshire, the Black Country (West Midlands), Greater Manchester, the South West, Lincolnshire (East Midlands), London, and Tees Valley (North East).

David Blunkett, Home Secretary responsible for launching (ALAC) argued that 'We must aim to build strong empowered and active communities' (Edith Kahn Memorial Lecture, 2003). Fiona Mactaggart, the Parliamentary Under Secretary responsible, wrote in her introduction to Active Learning, Active citizenship 'we should therefore work to improve the capacity of individuals and communities to relate to the world around them as active, critical, engaged citizens. If we are to have a healthy democracy we need to support each other in identifying the issues that concern us, and develop the confidence and skills to make a difference to the world around us' (Woodward, CRU, 2004. 1). Active citizenship was to be promoted within the framework of strategies for empowerment, addressing existing structures and relations of power in order to promote democratic change. Specifically, Active Learning for Active Citizenship sits within the government initiative 'Together We Can' led by the Home Office, which is an example of the government's commitment to developing active citizens. Together We Can brings together twelve government departments in an action plan to develop and work with active citizens who have the confidence to speak about the matters that concern them, to strengthen communities

to find shared solutions and to encourage public bodies to be willing and able to work in partnership with local people.

Whilst this commitment to promoting active citizenship has been a central theme for the current Labour Government, citizenship has become a major issue in public policy debates more widely too. Around the globe, it has been argued, despite the spread of democratic forms of governance, the relationships between citizens and the institutions that affect their lives have been characterised by a growing crisis of legitimacy (Kabeer, 2005). As the Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship argued in similar vein, more locally, in the British context, 'There are worrying levels of apathy, ignorance and cynicism about public life' (DfEE, 1998: 8). The report of the Power Inquiry into Britain's Democracy, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust provides disquieting evidence about this growing crisis of legitimacy. The report explains this, not in terms of public apathy, so much as in terms of public scepticism as to whether those with the most power actually listen to those who have less (Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, 2006). Governments and international institutions have been concerned to address this 'democratic deficit'. They have been facing increasing pressures for rights-based approaches to development, with increasing challenges to institutional failures to meet the needs of the most deprived groups in society, both locally and globally, as demonstrated, for example, in the global campaign to Make Poverty History. As Giddens has argued, in the global era, active citizenship needs to engage with processes of structural change as part of a social justice agenda (Giddens, 2000).

In the context of the continuing ascendance of neo-liberal approaches to development, rolling back the state and shifting the emphasis of service provision

from the public towards the private and not-for-profit sectors, globally, there has been widespread emphasis on active citizenship for other reasons too. Active citizens take increasing responsibility for their own health and welfare, it is argued, and they contribute to their communities as volunteers and community activists, thereby reducing the pressures on public provision. There are potential implications here, in terms of the independence of citizen action. There are challenges too for the voluntary and community sectors and for civil society more generally. As Bernard Crick has pointed out 'There is a real danger that voluntary bodies and charities, sometimes even more informal community groups, can end up tied by grants as virtual agents of the state' (Crick, 2001: 7) rather than as independent organs of civil society.

Active citizenship has been promoted, then, for a variety of reasons, to offset the dysfunctions of neo-liberalism on the one hand and to respond to mobilisations for human rights and deepening democracy, on the other. In view of the differences that underpin these varying agendas, it is not surprising, then, that 'citizenship', in general, and 'active citizenship', more specifically, have been and continue to be contested terms. There were, it has been argued, by implication, at least two approaches to defining citizenship education – a minimal definition and a maximal definition, the first formal and didactic and the second values based, process led and interactive (Tate, 2000). Which definition or definitions of citizenship were to be promoted through community-based learning programmes, in pursuit of whose aims and objectives?

The seven hubs that have been delivering ALAC learning programmes across the English regions have explored these questions as part of their joint discussions,

sharing their learning and identifying frameworks for evaluating their experiences. The hubs shared their thinking on these issues, reflecting together upon how their experiences related to the relevant literature. Through these processes of shared reflection – processes that mirrored the **participatory action-learning** that has characterised ALAC more generally – the hubs identified and evaluated a number of different definitions and perspectives, together with a number of typologies based upon these. This first section of the report summarises issues that emerged from these discussions, exploring typologies with specific relevance (ALAC), within the overall context of agendas to promote community empowerment and democratic strategies for social justice.

For ALAC, citizenship was more than a formal status, with rights and responsibilities within a particular nation state. How far, though, was active citizenship about civic engagement – as voters or volunteers, for example? Active citizenship was seen to be concerned with more than learning 'the rules of the game', how to participate within existing models and structures. From ALAC's perspective

active citizenship should be defined more broadly to encompass active learning for political literacy and empowerment, addressing structures and relations of power and working to change these, where necessary, in the pursuit of social inclusion and social justice agendas (Lister 1997).

*'I have developed the drive to make change and the confidence to influence. At the same time I have been building up my knowledge of knowing where to influence.'*

ALAC participant

Then what about the potential contributions that active citizens might make in the pursuit of agendas to promote community cohesion and social solidarity, strengthening civil society, as well as empowering individual citizens? And what about community development approaches to the promotion of active citizenship – 'working both sides of the equation' to build 'a more active and engaged civil society and a more responsive and effective state that can deliver needed public services' (Gaventa, 2004: 27)





One of the models that hubs brought to these discussions was the typology developed by Westheimer and Kahne. This identifies three separate models of citizenship and citizenship education - 'the personally responsible citizen' (for whom citizenship education increases their awareness of individual rights and responsibilities), the 'participatory citizen', (for whom citizenship education also enhances their knowledge of participatory structures and rights) and the 'justice orientated citizen' (for whom citizenship education also adds a high level of awareness of collective rights, more widely, and a high level of collective political and social responsibility, including responsibilities to engage with issues of social justice and equalities) (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Whilst this approach stimulated useful discussions, the hubs also raised a number of reservations. There was some merit in the notion of a typology that comprised three differing definitions of 'citizenship' and 'active citizenship' in their view:

- the citizen as a 'voter, and 'volunteer'
- the citizen as an individual within a group(s), actively participating in existing structures, taking up opportunities for participation including participation in the planning and delivery of services and
- the citizen as an individual who also participates within group(s) actively challenging unequal relations of power, promoting social solidarity and social justice, both locally and beyond, taking account of the global context.

The ALAC hubs concluded, however, that frameworks also needed to avoid rigidity. It was important to emphasise flexibility and change. Active Learning for Active Citizenship needed to be conceptualised as a process. So, for example, individuals may become active as volunteers, but this

in no way suggests that individuals may not be supported to move on to engage as members of community groups, actively participating in governance structures (such as school governing bodies or local strategic partnerships, for example) or as active members of organisations campaigning on human rights, the environment and social justice issues.

*'I'd been asked before [to be a school governor] but always steered away from it - but now I feel as if I know a bit more about governance; what it is and what it is supposed to be, knowing the system a bit more. I have been doing it for two months now and feel very comfortable. I am a community governor and had to go through a nomination and election process. I now do performance management with the head and another governor.'*

ALAC participant

In addition the hubs explored a number of references including Westheimer and Kahne's discussion of the potential relationships between these different definitions of citizenship - from the more restricted version to the fuller and more comprehensive definition - to varying approaches to adult learning. The more restricted definition of citizenship could be related to a relatively constrained view of learning in the context of social change, locally and globally. Here learning focuses upon gaining knowledge of the self, in the individual's social, cultural, political and legal context and developing the self confidence to become active as a responsible citizen. The second and fuller

definition could be related to learning that goes on to enable citizens to gain the knowledge and skills to cope, responding to opportunities to participate and engage, in order to adjust and to adapt to social change. Finally the third and fullest definition of citizenship could be related to learning that goes further still, to enable citizens to gain the knowledge and critical understanding *actively to shape social change, promoting social solidarity and social justice within the context of globalisation*. Education for citizenship, as Ralph Miliband defined this 'means above all the nurturing of a capacity and willingness to question, to probe, to ask awkward questions, to see through obfuscation and lies'. It requires 'the cultivation of an awareness that the request for individual fulfilment needs to be combined with the larger demands of solidarity and concern for the public good' (Miliband, 1994, 56).

Having reflected upon these different typologies the hubs concluded that no one typology offered a precise fit – one size did not necessarily fit all. There was widespread agreement that for ALAC, the principles and practices of active learning for active citizenship cross the boundaries between these differing definitions of citizenship (Espejo, R. 2003, Mendiwelo-Bendek, Z. 2002). Each type of learning needs to start from people's own issues and concerns, and each needs to be participatory and reflective, constructed through critical dialogues between learners and learning providers. Each requires long-term, sustainable support structures, based upon relationships of trust. And each needs to be delivered in a variety of ways at differing levels, depending upon the priorities and needs of the learners in question. Subsequent sections of this report address each of these aspects in turn. Appendix 1 provides a table that encapsulates some of these discussions.

## The structure of this report

This report has been compiled by the external evaluation team, based at the Centre for Urban and Community Research at Goldsmiths, University of London, working in collaboration with the ALAC hubs and their participants and with the ALAC Steering Committee. ALAC's evaluation has been carried out as a continuing process of sharing the learning and critically reflecting upon experiences, together, through a series of visits, workshops, seminars and conferences. This was intended to be a participative approach to evaluation, facilitating the consolidation of lessons learnt from these varying experiences, to inform the policy-making process. As the Interim Evaluation Report pointed out 'The approach is participative in accordance with the participative approach to Active Learning for Active Citizenship overall. Together with the hubs, the aim is to share critically reflective self-evaluations, developing shared learning between the hubs on an on-going basis' (ALAC, 2005). The evaluation process itself became a valuable part of the learning, and the hubs themselves very much appreciated the opportunities to share these reflections, exploring common themes as well as differences of experience. It was particularly relevant that ALAC participants shared in these reflections and actively contributed to the final evaluation workshop.

Evaluation issues are explored in the penultimate section of this report and Appendix 2 includes the evaluation framework to supplement the more quantitative data that was provided to the Civil Renewal Unit at the Home Office, through the hubs' regular monitoring returns.

**Section 1:** The first section explores the principles that have underpinned Active Learning for Active Citizenship, together with the approaches that have been associated with these, rooted in ALAC's values and tested through ALAC's experiences in practice. Whilst there are parallels with the principles that have underpinned citizenship education in schools and colleges there are also important differences in approach, if Active Learning for Active Citizenship is to meet the needs of adults through community-based learning. This section sets the scene for section two which explains the work of the hubs themselves and their achievements, in summary.

**Sections 2 and 3:** The following sections move on to focus upon the shared learning, from the hubs' experiences, together with the potential implications for policy and practice. Section three is subdivided into two sections. The first part of this section explores the hubs' learning from experiences of tackling barriers and facing challenges: the prerequisites for establishing effective programmes to promote active learning for active citizenship. This part goes on to examine the hubs' learning from their experiences of identifying and reaching their target audiences (including the lessons for marketing and outreach, and the lessons for identifying and meeting learners' support needs). The second part of this section focuses more specifically upon the hubs' approaches to addressing racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination and oppression. There are important lessons here for agendas to promote community cohesion and social solidarity.

**Section 4:** This section sets out the progress that has been achieved so far in developing a learning framework for Active Learning for Active Citizenship for adults.

As the section explains in more detail, this is being developed as a learning framework, rather than a core curriculum. *ALAC's principles are rooted in experiential learning, taking account of the needs and priorities of different target audiences with varying requirements at different levels, up to and including higher education and professional level qualifications.* The learning framework needs to be flexible if it is to reflect these different learning needs. Similarly the framework for accreditation should take account of the needs of learners at different levels, facilitating progression whilst respecting the choices of learners who decide not to pursue formal accreditation or further learning, formally. There are important policy implications here.

**Section 5:** This section moves on to discuss issues of sustainability. The hubs' successes could not have been achieved if they had been parachuted into their regions 'cold'. On the contrary, it is argued, the hubs have built upon existing relationships of trust, and experiences of good practice, developed over time with key organisations and groups in local communities. Active Learning for Active Citizenship requires long-term engagements with communities. There are significant implications here too, for policy and practice, and especially so within the context of current funding arrangements and the relative lack of emphasis given to adult non-vocational learning, more generally. These implications should be considered alongside the opportunities for and challenges to the voluntary sector as a learning provider under Change Up.

**Section 6:** Section 6 examines the lessons to be learned about evaluation processes within ALAC. The hubs were able to draw upon a range of existing methodologies to monitor and evaluate the learning journeys that individual

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a denim jacket over a white top, looking down at a large sheet of paper she is holding. She is standing outdoors on a paved area. The image is partially obscured by a yellow text box.

Image from weymouth  
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participants travelled. The impact of ALAC upon service planning and service delivery posed additional challenges for the evaluation, tracking the impact of citizens as they gained the knowledge, skills and self-confidence to participate more effectively. The most problematic challenge, however, was how to evaluate ALAC's impact on community cohesion and social solidarity, the relationships within and between communities as these were strengthened, for example, through training in conflict resolution. Section six explores the ways in which the hubs addressed these challenges for the evaluation process.

**Conclusion:** Finally, the conclusions explore the key messages that emerge from ALAC. Whilst there are points in common with programmes for citizenship education within schools and colleges, there are also specific features and principles that underpin successful community-based programmes to promote Active Learning for Active Citizenship with adults. The Interim Evaluation Report suggested, in its preliminary conclusions, that active learning for active citizenship requires SPACE for sustainability. Here the term space is used to describe safe and accessible physical spaces, more generally, and standing for the Social and Political Active Citizenship Education in communities that is a key prerequisite of Active Learning for Active Citizenship. This final report confirms the relevance of this finding. Provided in such ways, Active Learning for Active Citizenship can empower citizens to use whatever democratic spaces there may be to maximum effect, in the pursuit of democratic change to promote equalities and social justice agendas.

These spaces are not neutral, however. Spaces for citizen participation, it has been argued, on the contrary, are 'permeated with relations of power' (Cornwall, 2004. 79) within communities, between communities, between communities and states, and between states and communities internationally. Developing a critical understanding of the power relationships that permeate these spaces has been key to the learning for active citizenship at every level, locally as well as globally.

*'Working with such a diverse group of women has its rewards and difficulties. It can be hard to create 'safe' spaces to raise issues and has led us to look at how we develop safe spaces to talk about difference, diversity, assumptions, stereotypes, and working together'.*

ALAC facilitator

The totality of ALAC's experiences, as a national programme, located within the voluntary and community sectors represent more than the sum of its component parts. The hubs have valued these opportunities to share their learning, and so have their participants. This wider dimension has been significant, opening up spaces for wider reflection on the interconnections between the local, the national and the international, together with the implications for building strategies and for policies for democratic social change.

## Principles and approaches

ALAC started from the principles that active learning for active citizenship should build upon existing models of good practice across the voluntary and community sectors, working in partnership with different forms of public provision. The hubs were to be located 'where it is known that community based groups in partnership with others are able and willing to initiate new work on active learning for active citizenship'. (Woodward, 2004.6). There are two key principles here. Firstly, active learning for active citizenship for adults should be firmly rooted within civil society itself, rather than being simply provided for citizens, as public policy should deem fit. Secondly, there was commitment, right from the outset, to addressing issues of sustainability, active learning for active citizenship being conceptualised as an on-going process of learning and reflection, within and between partners within civil society and between civil society and the state. The hubs would 'embrace projects working towards extending democratic activities within civil society as well as offering educational and partnership opportunities for government agencies' (Woodward, 2004. 11). ALAC started by recognising and valuing local expertise, knowledge and experience and building upon these, developing partnerships for the longer term. This was a community development-based approach, working towards empowerment, supporting organisations and groups within communities, and pursuing agendas for equalities and social justice.

The hubs or 'learning partnerships' were to be based upon networks characterised by diversity. Equalities issues were to be centre stage and ALAC was to develop models of good practice in addressing issues of equalities, valuing diversity and strengthening co-operation, social cohesion and social solidarity, taking account of issues of gender, race and other aspects of

marginalisation, in the pursuit of participation for social justice. As 'Active Learning for Active Citizenship' argued 'Providing education for and encouraging active citizenship needs to actively challenge exclusionary attitudes and practices, not just guarding against excluding groups of people' (Woodward, 2004. 13).

*'The trainers made a real point of respecting each other and each other's opinions - even if you didn't agree with them. They developed ground rules which were crucial so people knew to respect each other and the ground rules were owned by the group'*

ALAC participant

Most significantly, ALAC was to promote active citizenship, participation and empowerment. *This implied that the learning process itself should be participatory and empowering.* Citizenship education was to start from local people's own perceptions of their issues and their learning priorities, negotiated in dialogue rather than imposed or parachuted in from outside. In common with the Neighbourhood Learning Centres to be developed by the DfES, the hubs were to be local people's provision – their provision, based in accessible premises, with a variety of programmes and activities tailored to local people's interests, driven by the priorities and aspirations of the learners themselves. In summary, then, learner participation was to be central at every stage in the process of:

- Identifying learning priorities
- Developing the learning programme to be directly relevant to learners' interests and experiences

- Delivering the programme with the active involvement of the learners, with an emphasis upon the links between knowledge, critical understanding and active citizenship in practice, collectively – political literacy – and
- Evaluating the programme participatively.

### Speaking Up The flexibility of learning programmes ALAC South West

The Speaking Up programme is run by Exeter CVS for carers, people with mental health issues and learning difficulties. Learners have gained the skills and confidence to speak up where it counts and represent both their own and their interest group's issues. Through consultation with projects and working with co-tutors, the courses are continually developed. For example, a co-tutor recruited from the learning disability team in mid-Devon helped to develop active role play through her experience with a local drama group. Another co-tutor on a recent course for a mental health group was able to bring his own experiences, as a service user, to the design of the course



By implication, ALAC learning programmes were to be flexible as well as diverse, to take account of these differing interests and needs. Each hub would negotiate the range of programmes to be offered, and the levels at which they would be provided. Whilst the original focus was upon ensuring that those most at risk of social exclusion would be enabled to be included, the hubs' experiences soon demonstrated the importance of providing for a wider audience. Whilst it was essential to facilitate the participation of individuals and groups that have been characterised as 'excluded', ALAC programmes were relevant to a broad range of organisations and groups more generally, including service providers, professionals and policy makers too – just as ALAC programmes were relevant for the range of activists working for solidarity and social justice agendas. For example, once people with learning disabilities gained increasing self-confidence to 'Speak Up' for themselves, to express their views and priorities, including their preferences in relation to the delivery of health and welfare services, it became clear that their carers were also a group who wished to learn how to 'Speak-Up'. Local service providers were equally in need of learning – to learn how to listen and to learn how to respond. This was anticipated in the original ALAC Report, recognising that 'government at all levels needs political will and training to cope with active, empowered, sometimes dissenting citizens' (Woodward, 2004. 10). ALAC has absolutely not been based upon a deficit model of learning. As the following section illustrates, the hubs, between them, offer active learning for active citizenship for the widest range of learners at different levels, up to and including higher education and professional training.

The provision itself is similarly diverse. By definition, negotiating learning provision with

potential learners, rather than imposing courses from the outside, results in varying forms of provision. ALAC hubs provide the range from accredited courses through to tailor-made training workshops, visits to key institutions of governance, e-learning, mentoring and one-off training sessions.

Whilst the forms and levels of ALAC provision have varied enormously, however, there are a number of shared principles and approaches. Starting from people's own priorities and needs, ALAC emphasises experiential learning, processes of critical reflection and dialogue rooted in people's own experiences, both individually and collectively, through collective action. This learning draws upon the methods and approaches developed by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (Freire, 1972); facilitating the development of critical consciousness and understanding, through cycles of action, reflection and then further action, informed by these processes of reflection. In this model of learning, defined in terms of collective and critical reflection and dialogue, learners and learning providers learn together. Freire's ideas have, of course, been central to debates on adult learning and the development of critical consciousness, as these have been developed and applied in Britain, and in popular education and social movements globally (Merrifield, 2000)<sup>1</sup>.

*'I never had the choice and opportunities to do what I wanted to do and now I'm not going to let any of them stop me - I just want to carry on learning'*

ALAC participant

Summarising the principles and values that should guide local authorities in supporting learning for neighbourhood renewal, Merton et al offer a comparable list. The learning should be driven by the needs and aspirations of learners and this should be negotiated between participants and providers, beforehand. The learning should be flexible and it should be developed in the context of sustained engagement – as part of continuing relationships between learners and providers, rather than as one-off events parachuted into particular neighbourhoods. The learning should be based upon a desire for social justice, fairness and respect, with an active view of the learners, respecting and building upon their existing knowledge and skills, rather than a 'deficit model' of individuals and communities as being in some way inadequate and in 'need of treatment' (Merton et al, 2003).

*'Through our being part of ALAC there is more interaction with children in my local area now. We are building bridges with different groups in the community. Children and young people are getting more engaged.'*

ALAC participant

There are parallels here with ALAC's approach. There are parallels too with approaches developed in citizenship education in schools. The Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship: Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools emphasised that citizenship education was about social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy, rather than indoctrination or rote learning. It

<sup>1</sup>As Coare and Johnston's collection of essays demonstrates, there is a wealth of experience to draw upon here including, for instance Allen and Martin, 1992, Brookfield, 1995, Coare and Johnston, 2003, Crowther et al, 1999, Jeffs and Smith, 2005, Tett, 2002'

should develop skills of reflection, enquiry and debate (Craig et al 2004). There was emphasis upon experiential learning too. The ongoing development of pre and post 16 citizenship education demonstrates the ways in which citizenship education is in continual development in terms of both learning processes and types of learning. The DfEE (1998) report similarly underlines the importance of a flexible framework for citizenship education. The most successful projects had included active approaches geared to the specific needs and circumstances of particular organisations, staff and young people. An emphasis on 'combining knowledge, understanding and skills with practical action – what is termed a 'political literacy in action' approach, as opposed to a narrower political knowledge approach' was identified as a key factor in the most successful provision' together with the 'involvement and participation of young people in decisions about their learning, and the development of a student voice' (Craig et al, 2004. i-ii).

similar questions about the extent to which citizenship education was preparing young people for citizenship in the context of globalisation, including the impact of globalisation on Britain, in terms of migration flows, including the flows of refugees and asylum seekers (Osler and Starkey, 2003). In response, citizenship education in schools has taken these points on board. ALAC has been able to build upon this. So, for example, ALAC has focused upon the interconnections between the local and the global, from the outset, specifically including hubs with experience of working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, for example, as well as working with the white British communities amongst whom they were living, as neighbours. The interconnections between the local and the global represent a recurring theme throughout ALAC's work.

There are, in any case, inherent differences between citizenship education in schools and colleges and Active Learning for Active Citizenship in community-based settings. Without getting into debates about the nature of adult learning per se, it is important to recognise the significance of these differences. In particular, adults, unlike school students, do have choices as to whether or not they participate in learning programmes (Jarvis, 1995, Rogers, 2002). Similar points apply to young people outside school settings. Typically adults have other pressures on their time and energy, too, whether these are the pressures of paid employment, or the pressures of childcare and other caring and community responsibilities or both. As ALAC recognised at the outset, the learning needs to be relevant and seen to be relevant to adults' and to young people's needs as they themselves perceive them, provided flexibly and accessibly to take account of all their other pressures. And the learning needs to be enjoyable as well as useful, building upon the learners'

existing knowledge and skills. Realistically, these requirements necessitate a flexible learning framework rather than a core curriculum approach.

### Community development through Active Learning for Active Citizenship

To summarise then, ALAC was based upon a community development approach. The emphasis was upon working democratically and learning collectively, through organisations and groups in communities. ALAC focused upon community empowerment, through learning, enabling organisations and groups to enhance the effectiveness of their strategies for social change. Through increasing their knowledge and their critical understanding of power structures and decision-making processes, ALAC participants would be empowered to intervene and, where necessary, work towards changing these, in the pursuit of the values of equality and social justice.



*'I feel much more interested in politics - have followed the election campaign quite religiously this year - the first time I have ever done this - normally I vote on instinct, rather than an informed decision'*

ALAC participant

These developments have been built on, over time. Approaches to citizenship education in schools, for example, were initially criticised on a number of grounds including the extent to which issues of race and racism had been adequately addressed. Was this multicultural education for monocultural citizenship, asked Stuart Hall (Hall, 2000). Osler and Starkey raised

# ALAC and its outcomes

As the report launching ALAC explained, the programme was initiated following a literature review and mapping exercise to identify relevant learning programmes in the voluntary and community sector, recognising and valuing the knowledge, expertise and understanding of those directly involved in work at local levels (Woodward, 2004). Whilst this mapping exercise provided no more than a snapshot in a dynamic and constantly changing scene, this was sufficient to identify a wealth of approaches, working with a range of groups and communities. Following a consultation and planning workshop with voluntary and community sector groups, held in Birmingham in October 2003, Home Office ministers approved funding in April 2004. The ALAC programme proposals were finalised and the launch report was published at the first ALAC conference, held in Sheffield in June 2004 (Woodward, 2004). A Steering Group was established, to be led by the voluntary and community sectors and supported by the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit, in accordance with ALAC's emphasis upon partnership with the voluntary and community sectors, building upon existing research and expertise, in practice. Bringing together the partners in this way was key to ALAC's approach, based upon collaboration across sectors and stakeholders.

The mapping exercise enabled the sub-regional learning networks or 'hubs' to be identified. These were proposed 'where it is known that community based groups in partnership with others are able and willing to initiate new work on active learning for active citizenship once resources are made available' (Woodward, 2004. 6). The first three hubs were to be 'trailblazers' 'to allow the voluntary and community sector to firm up what they can and wish to do, but also for the Government to ascertain the best form of sustained support and

involvement' (Woodward, 2004.6). These hubs were selected to reflect the experiences and approaches adopted in different regions, within different social and economic contexts, to facilitate comparisons and contrasts. And they were selected to encompass diversity in terms of the learners and learning priorities.

There was a particular emphasis upon facilitating the participation of marginalised, disadvantaged and oppressed minority communities, including black and ethnic minority communities, white British communities, women from disadvantaged groups, people with disabilities including people with learning disabilities, migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers. There was early recognition too that learning for active citizenship needs to be envisaged as wider by far. ALAC is not based upon a deficit model of citizenship education – pouring knowledge into a minority of supposedly inadequate individuals and communities. Professionals and policy-makers, in common with the rest of the population, stand to benefit from Active Learning for Active Citizenship, including learning how to develop strategies to promote social solidarity and social justice, challenging inequalities as well as learning how to listen to those whose voices have been less heard. So ALAC hubs have been working with a wide range of individuals and groups, as subsequent sections of this report demonstrate.

The first hubs that were identified and funded in 2004 were:

## South Yorkshire

Based in Sheffield, this hub is a partnership between the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and Northern College, an adult residential college near Barnsley. Both organisations are well-established

providers of adult community education, and have worked together over many years. Much of this work has had an international perspective, with courses focusing on local economic regeneration and Europe, migration and racism.

The hub has maintained this tradition, providing a wide range of learning opportunities, often at short notice, to local groups and organisations. It has sponsored weekly teach-ins at the College on 'Issues that Matter': Palestine, Aids, asylum, Liberia and Roma in Europe. Attended mainly by college students as an 'extra' to their programmes, the meetings have also been a way of introducing non-college learners to an adult residential college environment, giving them an opportunity to both present their case to a wider audience (Africans have talked for instance about living in Sheffield) and consider taking up the wider programme offered by the Northern College.

Other College learning events have been directly supported by the hub including residentials on 'Combating Racism', 'Living in the UK' and 'Black Britons'; workshops on 'Why vote?' and international adult education seminars for practitioners and activists.

Working together, the College and the WEA ran a 6-month programme on Migration and Europe, with evening sessions in Sheffield, a two-night residential at the College and a study visit to Glokala, a people's high school in Malmo, Sweden. The College has long had links with the European people's high school movement but it was the hub that made this programme possible. Participants came from refugee organisations, the local racial equality council, school support workers, and officers from a primary care trust and housing provider. The programme – 'Home is Where the Heart is' - looked at contemporary EU issues, including the impact of the 'No' vote in the French and





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Dutch EU referendums, the implications of Turkey's application for membership, and the rise of right wing sentiment across the continent. Whilst in Malmo, the group met refugees and asylum seekers, and visited adult education and community projects that encouraged community cohesion. The group is writing a report to be circulated to relevant organisations in order to influence local policy and practice.

As part of its continuing commitment to internationalism, the College, again supported by the hub, has been working with Gypsy and traveller groups, researching EU and specifically Hungarian policies towards Roma communities. This included a study visit to Hungary in mid-March 2006, hosted by the Civil College in Kunbabony. The intention is to gather information useful to citizenship, education, employment and cultural programmes in the UK.

### Black Country, West Midlands

Based in Wolverhampton, this community based hub (linking Wolverhampton Asian Women and Diabetes Group, Working for Change and Fircroft College) works with diverse women, exploring innovative and creative ways of encouraging them to get involved in communities and public life. The IMPACT programme offers accredited training and support around power, participation and leadership, together with a network that can offer encouragement, skill sharing, information and mutual support. One of the important messages to emerge from this hub is that women have a thirst for increased confidence, skills and knowledge to equip them to make a difference, be involved and be taken seriously. Flexibility of delivery, plus the provision of childcare has been particularly critical to this hub, given that women generally carry out the lion's share of domestic responsibilities.



Greater Manchester

IMPACT takes a community based approach working with a diverse group of women from across the Black Country, exploring innovative and creative ways of encouraging women to get active in their communities and public life by supporting women to:

- Value and develop skills, knowledge and experience
- Identify shared experiences and common issues and understand more about how power relationships work
- Understand how politics and structures affect everyday life

The hub has concentrated upon providing IMPACT citizenship courses for women, especially but not exclusively women from black and ethnic minority communities, creating safe spaces where women can explore issues around diversity and difference, looking at ways of working together to influence decisions that affect them.

The course itself consists of a sequence of learning sessions, two residential weekends at Fircroft College, a trip to Parliament in London and a visit to the European Parliament. It is complemented with the provision of individual advice and guidance on educational pathways by Fircroft College.

Women from the courses have already found the experience invaluable, both in terms of challenging barriers and power structures and changing their views of the world around them. One of the important lessons to emerge from this hub has been that there is thirst for confidence, skills and knowledge to equip women to make a difference, be involved and be taken seriously.

*'Taxis were arranged for me - I hadn't gone out of the house by myself for 10 years - I got back to (me) as a person - it was a big, big confidence boost'*  
ALAC participant

### Greater Manchester

The Greater Manchester hub was initially based around the delivery of a Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) module in community audit and evaluation. This hub offers opportunities to work towards professional qualifications in youth and community work at various levels. Partners include regeneration partnerships, Community Pride, Groundwork and residents groups. The hub's offerings include teaching research, evaluation and audit skills to enable community members as individuals and as part of a community group to do these for themselves. This has included: identifying the requirements for effective volunteering, evaluating a Healthy Living Network, exploring who is involved in different types and levels of decision making, and looking at the appropriateness of NHS services for women experiencing domestic violence. Three new University modules have been developed and are being delivered both within the University and in community settings as a result of the work of the hub. Recruitment of participants was through existing organizations such as Womens' Aid, the Third Sector Coalition and Community Forums. The training is delivered in a variety of community venues alongside participatory research and evaluation. The audit teams are engaged in a cycle of action and reflection. In this way analysis of practice is as much a part of the learning process as the formal workshops



The Manchester hub's work includes the Gender and Community Engagement (GEM) project which carries out research and makes recommendations for gender balanced community engagements as well as developing and delivering gender awareness training. So for example, Asian women carried out research into barriers to Asian women's participation in local formal community engagement structures. The hub's work also includes a School for Participation and a Healthy Living Network which brings together local people to address health inequalities and promote healthy living. Recently a conflict resolution forum has developed. This works with parents who identify and research local community conflicts and practice conflict resolution skills in these local contexts. There are valuable lessons being learnt here about the benefits of participatory planning, learning, and evaluation. Lessons are being learnt about increasing the capacity for both individuals and groups to engage with local participative structures at neighbourhood, regeneration and local policy levels.

Subsequently, further hubs were supported, as follows:



### South West

This hub is based in Exeter, led by Exeter Council for Voluntary Service in partnership with local carers' groups, mental health advocacy groups and Devon Learning Disability Team. The South West hub has a particular focus on promoting civil renewal by empowering some of the most excluded people to speak up for themselves and their issues, to influence the planning and delivery of services in their communities and to take an active role in community development. Exeter CVS has developed particular expertise in providing 'Speaking Up' courses to enable

people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health issues to make their voices heard effectively, and this has led to the provision of courses for carers, as well as providing inputs to training programmes for professionals, including the police, enabling them to listen more effectively. This hub also includes Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change, the Plymouth Community Partnership, Plymouth Guild, and Students and Refugees Together supporting the integration and social inclusion of asylum seekers, refugees and Black and minority ethnic groups through mentoring and cultural activity. Plymouth based initiatives include training opportunities for social workers, placed with community organisations and groups.

### London

This hub is based in the Civic Forum, the organisation that facilitates participation London-wide, engaging with the Greater London Authority and related bodies. In partnership with Birkbeck College, University of London, the hub provides courses for representatives and activists from a wide range of community organisations and groups including black and ethnic minority groups, people belonging to faith communities, suburban residents, members of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, and older people as well as for professionals and volunteers who work with them. Like Greater Manchester, this hub also offers accreditation and opportunities for learners to access higher education programmes. Accredited cross-community learning and dialogue takes place at Birkbeck College in community leadership sessions jointly led by participants, Birkbeck academics and London Civic Forum staff. London Civic Forum hosts complementary active learning sessions at locations around the capital, for

participants and governance officials (including elected representatives) to engage with each other. The emphasis is on drawing on participants' existing knowledge and experience of community work to create a learning programme, while highlighting the wider governance structures in which this work is situated. Networks, skills and contacts gained by participants have been used to benefit their wider communities, and to increase levels of engagement with local, regional and national governance, including decision-making. Cross-community partnerships have also been established and several former participants have subsequently been elected to London's Civic Forum council (the organisation's policy-making body).

### Lincolnshire, East Midlands

Based in the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network and led 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. In addition to citizenship capacity building through workshops and seminars and supporting learning related to crime prevention by bringing generations together, 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.

The Lincolnshire ALAC Hub works from the principle that whilst 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



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them. Within ALAC's principles and values the Lincolnshire hub developed a framework that recognised the need for catalysts to support self-organising and self-constructed communities. Individuals and groups of learners were engaged as catalysts. Different collective learning experiences (workshops, seminars, conferences) permitted the gradual evolution of a network of learners. This process had the additional intention of increasing community connectivity, enabling learners to create their own networks and capabilities for observation, reflection and action. The Lincolnshire project sought to develop two strands simultaneously through this process; firstly individual learning that constituted the public domain and civil society and secondly the improvement of community structures (i.e. the networks, capabilities and responsiveness of collective provision). The project made use of, and extended, an existing network - the 'Lincolnshire

Citizenship Network' and the services of tutors from the University who facilitated this network. The network consisted of approximately 30 people from many community organisations who had met at annual events over a couple of years to explore citizenship themes. These themes have included work in schools on citizenship and organisational citizenship. Several 'activators' from this network emerged as key champions for the ALAC project and invested much time and effort to collaboratively shape the form that the ALAC project took in Lincolnshire.

Though this process several distinct themes have developed over time. Each has been supported by the ALAC facilitators to build up internal 'conversations' about citizenship in these spheres and encourage participant's self-reflection and analysis of activity. The themes explored in these learning processes included:

- Citizens and their relationship to the National Health Service
- The inter-relationships between citizens of different generations
- What citizenship means for migrant workers and host communities
- Building a stronger active citizenship within the voluntary and community sector.

### Tees Valley

This is the latest hub to be resourced. This has resulted in a differing timescale for this hub, as it developed its programmes over a shorter period. The hub continues to grow as the longer-term results of their initiatives become apparent.

The Tees Valley hub is led by SkillShare, a well-established community-based training organisation in Hartlepool, alongside the

Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Adult Education and the borough councils in Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton, and Redcar and Cleveland, and a number of other voluntary and community organisations in the area including organisations that represent carers. This hub has a particular focus upon promoting citizenship skills and opportunities to learn at neighbourhood level and expanding learning opportunities aimed specifically at carers. Five local citizenship partnerships have been established, one in each borough. Each is now tailoring its work to local priorities. For example, Hartlepool provided residents with the opportunity to find out how the local authority works, in order to promote more effective participation and Darlington has focused upon equality and diversity issues. This hub is developing innovative ways of using information technology to support and enable young and isolated carers to be more active in decision-making.

The ALAC hubs have provided regular monitoring returns to the Civil Renewal Unit, with details of the courses and learning provision that they have offered, the number of learners and their learning outcomes (see Appendix 3).

In summary, these outcomes include the following:

Over thirteen hundred learners have participated in ALAC programmes.

Of these -

- 286 participants have gone on to further and higher education
- 292 participants have attained accreditation
- participants are on the way to achieving this
- 161 participants have significantly improved their employment prospects.

Most importantly, ALAC, participants have gone on to become more active in their communities and in public life more generally, as school governors, local representatives, members of service user forums and as organisers in the community sector.

Whilst these statistics provide the raw data for monitoring and evaluation, however, they are, inevitably, less adequate in more qualitative terms. This summary simply sets the context for the discussion of the more qualitative accounts and the case studies that illustrate the key findings, in subsequent sections of this report.

*'I went on to join (the local) Council. I became the rep for disabled people in the community and started getting involved in decisions affecting disabled people in the community. I got involved with another rep and his organisation - it has made a real difference and helped me to know someone else doing something similar and we have supported each other. Up until then I felt very isolated, I didn't know about these organisations and I realised there are a lot more people involved and doing things.'*

ALAC participant



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Tees Valley

# Tackling barriers and facing challenges: prerequisites for establishing effective programmes to promote Active Learning for Active Citizenship

As the Introduction explained, whilst there are important points in common between citizenship education in schools and community-based learning for active citizenship with and for adults, there are significant differences, too. In summary, adults participate in community-based learning programmes as a matter of choice, making the choice to participate despite the pressures of competing demands. The learning has to be relevant, and be seen to be relevant, and the learning has to be provided in ways that tackle a number of the barriers that so many adults face. These include the barriers that are due to lack of information, lack of confidence - whether this is a lack of self-confidence or a lack of confidence and trust in learning providers - or barriers due to more practical considerations such as the lack of time, transport and support for caring responsibilities, particularly child care, and, significantly, a lack of belief in the possibility of influence (as revealed in the Home Office 2003 Citizenship survey). There is an extensive literature, based upon evaluations of previous programmes and initiatives, documenting the significance of these, both in British and in international development contexts (Coare and Johnston, 2003, Crowther et al, 1999, Mayo, 1997). ALAC's experiences confirm and further re-inforce these findings, as applied to a broad range of learners in differing local contexts.

Starting from the principle that learner participation was central at every stage, the ALAC hubs identified potential learners and

learning priorities on the basis of existing knowledge, networks and relationships of trust. These relationships of trust enabled processes of dialogue to be developed, identifying learning priorities together, building upon the methods and approaches developed by Paulo Freire (Freire, 1973, Freire and Shor, 1997). The hubs were neither designing nor imposing learning programmes from outside nor passively waiting for potential learners to express their learning needs. As Freire emphasised, learning should be developed in a democratic atmosphere, but this did not in any way imply total abnegation of responsibility for leadership 'never an atmosphere of laissez-faire, laissez-aller, never' (Freire and Shor, 1997. 90). The educator, Freire argued, 'has to assume the necessary authority which he or she must have, without going beyond it, in order to destroy it, by becoming authoritarian' (Freire and Shor, 1997. 91).

So for example, through existing networks and relationships of trust, built up in partnership between people with disabilities and their carers on the one hand and agencies working with Exeter Council for Voluntary Service on the other, the South West hub developed Speaking Up programmes to enable people with disabilities and carers to gain the knowledge, understanding, skills and self confidence to express their needs and preferences to service providers. Carers were often not aware of the support they were entitled to from social services and health providers, for example. As service users their voices were

not heard and due to their caring commitments they were the last group to be included in much service planning and consultation.

The South West hub has also worked with service providers to learn to listen more effectively. Similarly, in South Yorkshire, the hub's partnership with and physical proximity to the Yorkshire and Humber Refugee Consortium (located within the same building in Sheffield) enabled the hub to identify and respond to the learning needs of refugee and asylum seeker communities. They gained IT skills to develop web pages to facilitate communication between scattered refugee and asylum seeker communities and research skills to identify the causes of and potential solutions to particular issues, including intergenerational conflicts within their communities.

*'People in organisations are comfortable with things as they are with them having the power. But ALAC changes things at the level of the individual practitioners who are delivering services.'*

ALAC participant

Further examples include:

- The Greater Manchester hub developed learning programmes with local networks and community organisations. The Manchester hub has grown organically, building on what was already being delivered locally in response to local issues and gaps in citizenship learning. So in addition to ongoing work with core partners such as the South Manchester Healthy Living Network, partnership work with

Community Pride led to establishing a School for Participation through which local people could decide what they want to learn about and through which they could share their experiences.

*'I'd lived there for 21 years - it had never dawned on me that we had nothing. There are 1500 properties and no services or amenities - not even a shop. This course definitely made me realise that wasn't right, that I could do something - it continually strengthened me.'*

ALAC participant

Recognition of gaps in citizenship learning also led to the development of a partnership with the Centre for Conflict Learning Education. As the hub's reputation spread, local organisations and groups continued to approach the hub for training and research. As the Greater Manchester hub has grown in scope and numbers, its location, at the Community Audit and Evaluation Centre, MMU, has provided crucial facilities, space and infrastructure which has allowed for productive and creative team work and the sharing of expertise between the numerous organisations and groups involved in this hub.

- The Lincolnshire hub developed programmes in partnership with a diversity of voluntary sector, Integration Lincolnshire, the local Crime Reduction and Disorder Partnership, Local Education Authorities and Boston College to provide for groups not currently engaged in public decision-making such as migrant workers, mental health groups and young citizens aged between eight and eleven. This hub's

work has built on previous knowledge and contacts with organisations, agencies, volunteers and community members, working together to strengthen active citizenship. This has been done, in part, by creating a valued space where participants have been able to improve their citizenship competency, learn from each others' practice, identify gaps and articulate new networking perspectives, in the context of rural isolation.

- The London hub developed programmes for a wide range of community activists, community workers, voluntary and community groups and organisations working through the London Civic Forum, a regional organisation. The London hub links into the learning that has been developing through London's Civic Pioneer authorities, in particular the

London Borough of Camden, where Birkbeck College, its partner organisation, is located. The hub has focused particularly on people belonging to faith communities, suburban residents, members of black and minority ethnic and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, and older people. The hub's emphasis has been on drawing on participants' existing knowledge and experience of community work to create a learning programme, while highlighting the wider governance structures in which this work is situated. The networks, skills and contacts gained by participants have been cascaded out to benefit their wider communities, and to increase levels of engagement with local, regional and national governance.

- The West Midlands hub's IMPACT programme was somewhat different in

### IMPACT in the West Midlands

The West Midlands hub is the only ALAC hub working exclusively with women. At a time when gender issues have slipped down the policy agenda, the IMPACT programme, developed and delivered by the West Midlands hub, recognises the specific barriers and opportunities that women encounter when becoming active citizens. By working closely with women, carefully and flexibly, considering and addressing the practical barriers many women encounter, even when attempting to attend a course, the IMPACT programme builds confidence and encourages women to become questioning and challenging, while developing self awareness and a belief that they can make a difference.

The West Midlands hub has gradually and methodically engaged women and their families in effective community organising and increasing their ability and confidence to exert influence at the levels of policy and service delivery.



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*'I am chair of the local Somali community organisation. I have learnt a lot about government in London and I will be taking back that information to my community.'*

ALAC participant

that this set out to provide learning programmes through working directly with individual women rather than via pre-existing groups. This work with individual women then provided the basis for developing new organisations and structures with a view to sustainability for the future. A considerable number of women had to be approached in the first instance. This proved necessary in order to identify and recruit sufficient numbers for a viable group. Despite considerable interest, there were also practical reasons why it was difficult for many women to take up the IMPACT places. In addition, it was realistic to anticipate some drop out, especially when working with people with so many commitments, including caring responsibilities as well as paid work.

Like the other hubs' programmes, however, the IMPACT programme could not have been effectively launched 'cold' without any previous local knowledge, and most importantly without any existing relationships of trust. As the original ALAC Report argued, drawing upon the experiences of planning learning for Neighbourhood Renewal local people were to play a key role; learning was not to be 'parachuted in from outside' (Woodward, 2004. 7). The point to emphasise here is not simply that outreach work is vital, in order to reach particular individuals and groups, including groups experiencing disadvantage and discrimination. The ALAC hubs developed far

more active processes of dialogue, engaging with individuals, groups and community organisations over time, developing learning initiatives and learning programmes on the basis of mutual understanding and trust.

In recruiting for and then delivering the programmes, self-confidence emerged as a key issue, typically the first key issue to be addressed. Lack of self-confidence and self-esteem was identified as a key barrier, across the ALAC hubs. As the West Midlands hub's IMPACT programme illustrates, the first dimension to learning for active citizenship was 'valuing your own skills, knowledge and experience and self-esteem'. This was the prerequisite to learning about your self through and with others, moving from the 'I' to the 'we'. This was about identifying shared experiences and common issues and then moving on to know how the external world operates. This led to women 'choosing where you want to be and finally knowing where to go for what you need and how to get it' – understanding formal structures and processes and the most effective ways in which to work with these for democratic change. When the hubs began working together to develop the learning framework for Active Learning for Active Citizenship, every hub identified personal development outcomes as key to the learning, outcomes such as self-awareness as well as self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness. The West Midlands hub is proposing to work with NIACE to develop a board game around these issues.

There were, in addition, as it has already been suggested, a number of further barriers and challenges to be overcome, practical as well as motivational. Practical issues included the timing of courses and workshop events and their location. The Speaking Up courses for carers, for example, were scheduled to take place later in the morning to give carers time to attend to the people they cared for, and

for any respite care to take place. The London hub's programmes were scheduled on Saturdays, to take account of the numbers of participants who were in paid jobs or had other commitments during the week. The Lincolnshire hub took account of the time pressures of shift work and round the clock working, through flexible provision and one-off events, on site – a factor that has emerged as centrally important in the planning and delivery of workplace learning more generally.

*'The presentation skills gave me real confidence to approach things within the PCT Forum. I am now deputy chairperson of the PCT. And, as representative on the mental health scrutiny committee, I am now more assertive.'*

ALAC participant

### Flexible engagement – ALAC in Lincolnshire

Migrant workers are particularly hard to reach and particularly vulnerable as a result of language barriers, difficult and unpredictable working patterns, and a lack of information about their employment rights. The success of the Lincolnshire hub's work with migrant workers has had at its core a flexible approach to promotion and outreach, for example visiting temporary accommodation sites.

In this context straightforward classroom-based, regular learning is unworkable due to the living and working conditions of the learners: who are migrants working in agriculture. Learning provision has therefore been extremely flexible, with an emphasis upon outreach work and one-off learning engagements and creative workshops, to cope with the problems associated with round-the-clock shift working. Learning provision and content has been negotiated with migrant workers, identifying concerns that have sufficient relevance to ensure their engagement. The key issues and learning needs that were identified were around coping with their immediate living and working conditions:

learning how to get a national insurance number and how to open a bank account, for instance and learning about employment rights and housing law more generally.

As well as supporting the improved citizenship experience of migrant workers in that process, ALAC Lincolnshire has been actively working with groups of local service providers who are pro-actively taking their learning from the experiences and reflections of migrant workers into their organisations to improve services and joint working.

Language emerged as a barrier to be overcome when working with migrant workers, for example. Transport and transport costs were also significant. This was the rationale for the provision of IT training in South Yorkshire, to enable refugee and asylum seekers to communicate with each other, and to gain access to wider information via the web.

Venues for courses and workshops needed to be accessible in every sense, physically accessible and conveniently located, whether in local neighbourhoods (such as the local cafe where the South Yorkshire Globalisation course met) or centrally, with good public transport links (as in the case of London) to enable participants to attend from across the city. In Greater Manchester, in contrast, the Salford Community Organisers attended only one session per week in a fixed venue, the rest of the time working out on the streets in neighbourhoods, with an 'office' consisting of a mobile telephone. The key point to emphasise here is flexibility, to meet local needs appropriately, for different learners in different locations.

Venues, most importantly, also needed to be accessible in the sense that they felt comfortable and appropriate to the needs of particular communities including women from ethnic minority communities, safe spaces such as the South Yorkshire hub's space in Sheffield, physically located in the same building as the Yorkshire and Humber Refugee Consortium. It was the South Yorkshire hub that coined the term SPACE, as being both key in its own right and as standing for the key prerequisites of Active Learning for Active Citizenship more generally, Social and Political Active Citizenship Education in communities.

Another significant barrier addressed by some hubs was that of the widely differing

requirements of a diverse range of participants. In London, for instance, participants were from a range of communities, including a range of black and minority ethnic communities and faith communities. Participants came with varying levels and experiences of engaging with governance. The challenge here was to design a programme of learning that was relevant and appropriate for all, addressing any tensions or differences constructively. Through involving participants in shaping the learning, the London hub found ways of taking these varying interests and priorities into account effectively.

*'Meeting different people on the course was really useful. For me as a Ghanaian, I think we should get more involved in events by other communities. For instance I saw notices about a party for Eid. Anyone could go [participant was not muslim] but I wasn't sure about going. But after going on the course I thought I would try it, and I went and had a great time, even though there weren't many people there. I think it's something that more Africans should join in with – there's a lot of singing and dancing, which we enjoy.'*

ALAC participant

Costs can also be a barrier in a number of ways. For example, respite and travel costs were an issue for carers in the South West, an issue that was resolved because the local carers' projects were able to provide the necessary resources. In the case of

Speaking Up courses for deaf people, the cost of interpreters was also a potential barrier. After negotiation, the local college of further education met these costs. Without such resources, though, these programmes could not have been successfully run.

Overall, the most significant barrier for women was the need for childcare. The importance of childcare can scarcely be over-emphasised. As previous programmes and studies have concluded, those with caring responsibilities, especially women with childcare responsibilities, are effectively excluded, unless childcare is provided, whether this provision is on site, or whether this takes the form of payments to cover the costs of childcare closer to home. The West Midlands hub, for example, was clear that without the provision of affordable childcare there was no way that women could have participated in the IMPACT programme in the West Midlands, let alone participated in the study visits to Parliament and to the European Commission in Brussels.

### The role of ALAC facilitators

Finally, the importance of the roles of ALAC facilitators can scarcely be over-emphasised. This finding emerged from the hubs, as they reflected upon the key factors that had contributed to successful learning. The facilitators combined the knowledge and skills of adult educators with those of community outreach and community development workers. They worked together with organisations and groups as well as with individuals over time, identifying learning priorities, developing learning programmes, reflecting on the learning and re-engaging with these processes. The facilitators needed to build sustainable relationships of trust not only with the learners but also with the providers and with the range of partners

and stakeholders. The hubs concluded that training, continuing support and opportunities for professional development were essential, to develop the necessary pools of expertise amongst facilitators.

### ALAC hubs' approaches to addressing racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination and oppression

ALAC hubs were chosen specifically so that equalities issues would be central to the programme as a whole. This was key to ALAC's overall concerns to address structural inequalities of power through participatory learning for empowerment. As the original ALAC Report pointed out for example, 'Women need to be equally involved in decision making that affects themselves, their families and their communities, as well as accessing existing services and resources' The West Midlands hub was selected to address the relative lack of women's involvement in regeneration issues and the fact that women had been identified as being 'disproportionately disillusioned and disengaged with wider political systems and public life' (Woodward, 2004.8). The Greater Manchester hub similarly focused upon challenging women's under representation, through the Gender and Community engagement (GEM) project which has carried out research and made recommendations on gender equalities issues, as well as delivering gender awareness training.

Black and ethnic minority communities and their organisations were prioritised, not only in the West Midlands, but in each of the hubs. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were targeted through the hubs in Lincolnshire, London, Greater Manchester, the South West, South Yorkshire. The South West hub specifically focused upon

working with people with disabilities including learning disabilities and with carers, a highly disadvantaged and excluded group, many of whom are disabled themselves.

ALAC hubs' approaches to addressing issues of discrimination and oppression have included a number of particular features. In addition to focusing on those directly affected, at the receiving end of discrimination and oppression, the hubs have specifically included wider groupings in the learning too. So, for example, the South Yorkshire hub included white British communities in their learning programmes, exploring the roots of racism and discrimination via Northern College programmes to 'Kick Racism out of our Communities'. This was part of wider strategies to promote increased understanding between local communities and newcomers, including refugees and asylum seekers. Similarly the course on 'Globalisation and Local Action' linked local issues such as shopping and the development of supermarkets with wider global changes in the production and distribution of food, exploring the interconnections between the local and the global, identifying common interests between producers and consumers in different contexts.

Another feature of the ALAC hubs' approaches has been to include carers and service providers in learning programmes for people with disabilities, including learning disabilities. Here too, the hubs have identified the importance of more inclusive strategies, so that carers and service providers learn to listen to the voices of those who are learning to speak up. This has been a feature of the work of the South West hub and the Tees Valley hub, for example.

This point about inclusivity is central to

ALAC's whole approach. Far from being confined to those with particular problems, whether as a result of discrimination, oppression or social disadvantage, active learning for active citizenship concerns us all as citizens. There is, of course, scope for learning programmes focused upon meeting the needs of particular groups, such as women only courses.

*'On the programme I found it interesting to talk to people from communities that I hadn't encountered before. I felt that there weren't any problems or difficulties because of the fact that I'm trans. I felt comfortable enough to be open, and people seemed happy to ask me questions - I think they learnt something from this. I used to be involved with Ftm London [support group for female to male transpeople], but haven't been active for a while. As a result of coming on the programme I've felt in a better position to go back to the group and offer my services as a volunteer.'*

ALAC participant

But the ALAC hubs have also demonstrated the value of shared learning, bringing a range of learners together, professionals and community activists and volunteers from organisations and groups across the city, in the case of the London Civic Forum programmes, for example. Providers continue to learn and participants cascade their learning as change agents and researchers in and for their own organisations and communities.

*Listening to people's personal experiences was mind blowing to hear. Now I try not to have preconceptions - now I think let's just see what this person is about and I realise that you can't instantly recognise who you have things in common with.*

ALAC participant



### Conflict resolution

Participants in this aspect of ALAC described the impact on them as individuals, in terms of:

- having more patience and understanding generally and with family members
- being more motivated to learn and engage in community activity
- making more time to listen
- gaining mediation skills
- gaining greater communication skills with others in general
- having improved relationships with partners and children
- having learnt the value of developing of a 'no blame' approach to resolving conflicts
- gaining better internet skills, ie search and research
- gaining community audit skills
- acquiring greater confidence in talking to people and putting forward (her/his) own opinions.

As one participant reflected 'we have all dealt with certain issues within the community and learning mediation skills has helped us to resolve issues in the community, i.e. violence between people. We are now able to take a step back from a situation and look at things from different perspectives'.

## Towards a learning framework

Given this range of learners and learning needs, in the context of diversity and difference, the ALAC hubs' participatory approach has resulted in a comparable range of learning programmes with a comparable diversity of levels. The importance of flexibility, to tailor the learning to learners' interests and needs, emerges as a key finding. Provision has ranged from one-off workshops (such as the IT workshops developed for refugee and asylum seeker groups in South Yorkshire) through regular courses (such as the IMPACT courses for women in the West Midlands and the Speaking Up courses in the South West), to accredited courses that provide access to further and higher education, professional qualifications and continuing professional development (such as the modules accredited by Manchester Metropolitan University, the modules accredited by the Greater Manchester Open College Network, and the courses accredited by Birkbeck, University of London). In addition to this range of courses, seminars and workshops, learning has been facilitated through mentoring schemes and through residential visits (such as the visits to Parliament and to the European Commission in Brussels).

By definition, then, Active Learning for Active Citizenship cannot be confined within the constraints of any one particular curriculum. ALAC depends for its success on flexibility to respond to learners' interests and learning priorities, as they themselves frame these, through processes of dialogue with learning providers. Whilst the notion of a core curriculum represents a contradiction in terms, then, the more flexible concept of a 'learning framework' for Active Learning for Active Citizenship has a key contribution to make. This learning framework will provide a series of benchmarks offering guidance

for learning providers and for funders. The aim of the working group tasked with developing the framework, is:

- To identify the common aims, values and principles, content and methods that characterise Active Learning for Active Citizenship, as a guide in planning activities and programmes
- To identify options for assessment, accreditation and progression, to facilitate the opening of pathways to education, training and employment opportunities for those learners who choose to pursue these options, and
- To encourage funders to embrace the relevance and importance of providing resources to promote Active Learning for Active Citizenship and to provide resources accordingly.

The learning framework sets out the key values and principles that underpin Active Learning for Active Citizenship. It identifies the learning outcomes including both those that have been planned and the multiplier effects of the learning as this impacts on individuals, their families and their communities. Finally, the framework sets out the basis for accreditation and progression and provides guidelines and toolkits for practice. The learning framework is scheduled for publication in autumn 2006.

# Sustainability for the longer term

As the section on Principles and Approaches emphasised, ALAC started from the principle that community-based learning for active citizenship needed to be rooted within civil society, building upon existing networks, partnerships and relationships of trust. Active Learning for Active Citizenship was characterised as an on-going process of learning and reflection (Woodward, 2004). Section 3 re-enforced the importance of this principle, illustrating the ways in which the different hubs each built upon existing networks and relationships of trust, as they identified learning needs and developed learning programmes, in response. This section moves on to explore the implications of this principle, for sustainability in the longer term.

Public policy has understandably emphasised the voluntary and community sectors' responsibilities for sustainability, and the importance of building exit strategies into projects and programmes when applying for public funding. Governments have key responsibilities here too, however. There is ample evidence to document the damage caused by short-term interventions, parachuted into neighbourhoods only to disappear when the funding runs out – 'government by initiatives' (Anastacio et al, 2000). There is extensive literature on the importance of scaling up, too, as part of longer term strategies, both in Britain and in the context of international development (Taylor, 2003. Blackburn and Holland, 1998). These arguments do not need to be rehearsed in detail here. The point to emphasise, from ALAC's perspective, is simply this: that to be sustainable, Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes require resourcing commitments from public bodies for the

longer term. The voluntary and community sectors need supporting if civil society is to work in partnership.

This has gained some recognition in principle. The Futurebuilders England programme, for example, recognises the need for capacity building, support and long term investment for intermediate bodies. This initiative recognises that the voluntary and community sector, which is often more local, flexible, creative and responsive to individual needs, is ideally placed to help meet many public policy goals in the education and learning fields. Futurebuilders has identified adult learning, the informal curriculum and citizenship education as specific areas where the voluntary sector can make a significant contribution. How then might this be applied to Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes?

Some of the hubs have developed innovative approaches to sustainability. In Lincolnshire, for example, the hub, in partnership with Lincolnshire Enterprise, has obtained funding from DEFRA's Rural Community Programme (RCP) for 2006-2008. This will enable learning processes to take place in four disadvantaged communities, building upon ALAC's Learning Framework. A best practice guide will be produced for the county, on the basis of these initiatives. Whilst this is a very encouraging development, one-off initiatives need to be backed by longer-term strategies for sustainability.

There would seem to be at least three key possibilities, over and above any direct funding programmes from central government departments (and there seems no immediate likelihood of any such programmes being launched on a

national scale, in the foreseeable future). Whilst each of these potential sources of support could reasonably be expected to include Active Learning for Active Citizenship within its remit, each is also subject to competing pressures. Without clear guidance from central government, Active Learning for Active Citizenship could be expected to experience difficulties in securing resources, in the face of such intense competition.

The first of these possibilities was already identified in the initial report, which suggested that the ALAC hubs could show 'that citizenship learning supports the remit, objectives and priorities of Learning and Skills Councils' (Woodward, 2004. 19). This has been made clearer by the inclusion of active citizenship in the LSC's Annual Statement of Priorities. This states that "Improving public services is a crucial economic and social activity. Active citizenship plays a key role in building the capacity of communities to engage effectively with public bodies" (p27). The work of the ALAC hubs demonstrates the potential for Active Learning for Active Citizenship to contribute towards improved service delivery, particularly to meet the needs of more excluded communities (identified as a priority by the SEU report 'Improving Services, Improving Lives')."

The learning framework spells out, in more detail, precisely how and why community-based citizenship education supports the remit, objectives and priorities of Learning and Skills Councils, including their objectives to facilitate adults' access and progression to further and higher education and to paid employment. Realistically, however, Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes face stiff competition from other demands and in particular, the strong focus on meeting DfES PSA targets around Skills for Life, 16-19 learners, and achievement at Levels 2 and 3. There has been a series of



commentaries reflecting upon the ways in which adult learning programmes, especially programmes that are less directly vocational in nature, have suffered in such competition. As Alan Tuckett has argued, provision for adults is essential, both to 'support successful transition to work for many, but also because no civilised society can afford to close down spaces where people have the chance to make sense of their lives, and to foster a delight in the richness, complexity and diversity of our culture' (Tuckett, 2005. 6). Learning and Skills Councils need to identify specific resources if they are to reverse this trend in relation to Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes.

The second possibility was also identified in the original ALAC Report which raised the question of whether further education colleges and departments of continuing education within higher education institutions would see in this 'a market for short courses in citizenship skills' (Woodward, 2004. 19). The partnership arrangements with Birkbeck College, University of London, Fircroft College in Birmingham, the University of Lincoln, Manchester Metropolitan University, Northern College in South Yorkshire and the University of Plymouth demonstrate their respective interests in and commitment to Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes. ALAC programmes and initiatives have been contributing to their strategies for Widening Participation, as well as contributing to strategies for community engagement, whilst offering students on professional programmes of study unique opportunities for field work, to develop their professional knowledge, capabilities and skills. The hubs have demonstrated the significance of such contributions, in terms of teaching and learning, in terms of research, and in terms of opening up opportunities for progression, from Access courses through

to professional qualifications and continuing professional development. Here too, however, such programmes have to compete with a range of other pressing demands upon scarce resources. Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes and initiatives have to be readily and specifically fundable, whether via specific grants or whether via earmarked streams within mainstream funding sources, from the relevant funding agencies.

The third set of possibilities, local authorities, are, of course, similarly pressured by competing demands for resources. This currently inhibits their abilities to respond to requests for resources, even where Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes clearly fall within their remits to promote citizen participation and user involvement in service planning and service delivery, for example, together with their remits to promote community safety, equalities and community solidarity and cohesion. Active Learning for Active Citizenship, as part of the wider 'Together We Can' initiative, contributes to the aim of 'transforming the relationship between the citizen and the state, to pass more power, control and influence from the centre to local communities' (Together We Can Action Plan, 2005).

*'It has...made me feel more influential...you can have influence on people every day - you don't need to be an MP. Without the ground level they wouldn't be able to do anything. In some respects it is even more important to be influential at that level.'*

ALAC participant

The work of ALAC also makes a particular contribution to the government's overlapping concerns with community cohesion and 'Safer Stronger Communities' a key feature of Local Area Agreements. ALAC's citizenship outcomes clearly demonstrate that active citizenship learning increases a sense of local pride, engagement in governance and increased influence over local

matters and public services. ALAC's work also contributes to building respect and understanding across ethnic groups. Here too, clear guidance is required from government, indicating when, where and how plans for particular funding streams, such as funds to promote community cohesion, need to include funding for Active Learning for Active Citizenship initiatives.



### **Towards community cohesion Greater Manchester**

In Manchester seven participants undertook a joint project drawing up a Refugee Charter for Manchester. Working with Community Pride Initiative and Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN), the group involved other refugees and asylum seekers in the drafting of the text, and the lobbying of the power holders in Manchester. This culminated in the launch of the charter at Manchester Town Hall in January 2006. This was attended by over 400 people, including the press and local councillors. The implementation of the Charter continues. Due to the shared commitment shown by those taking part in the Charter Project, communities that had never worked closely together previously formed close alliances. Community Pride Initiative (CPI) linked with Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) and with over thirty refugee community organisations, to gain endorsements for the Charter.

# Evaluation processes

## Planned outcomes and the wider multiplier effects Greater Manchester

A mature Asian man who had been organising football for young people as a volunteer became involved in the Tameside ALAC work by being part of a voluntary team across the borough trained in the MMU Community Audit Module to undertake participatory community auditing. Through becoming involved in this, he built his own levels of confidence and developed his networks and awareness of other groups and organisations. As a result, he was able to take on the organisation of the Mela in Tameside, a very large community festival. He has continued to work with colleagues from the university and from other agencies. Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) and with over thirty refugee community organisations, to gain endorsements for the Charter.

Monitoring and evaluating individual learning outcomes posed no particular problems for individual hubs given the range of experience within them, including experiences of accounting for learning and teaching programmes funded by Learning and Skills Councils and by the Higher Education Funding Council. The hubs had experience, for example, of recording the learning aims and learning outcomes of each learning session of the Speaking Up courses, with portfolios of evidence to document the progress of each individual learner. These records provided more detail, adding to the monitoring procedures formally required for the hubs' regular returns to the Civil Renewal Unit at the Home Office. Participatory monitoring and evaluation methods were used and learners kept logs and diaries, in many cases recording their learning, and these provided further evidence.

The hubs were, in addition, experienced in tracking each learner's subsequent progression. Written records were supplemented in many cases with other forms of recording, including the use of

photographs and video tapes, recording learning events as well as including learners' reflections on these (such as the video of the West Midlands visit to Brussels for example). The impact of ALAC programmes on individual citizens was relatively unproblematic to evaluate, taking account of the wider multiplier impacts as well as those that had been planned and anticipated, impacts in terms of individual learners' subsequent progression routes and impacts in terms, for example, of the encouragement given to their families and friends.



## The impact on individuals West Midlands/Black Country

The impact of the work of the West Midlands hub on the lives of individual women, their families and communities has been impressive. This was, at least in part, due to the careful consideration that had been given to addressing the barriers facing participants.

*'The first residential was a big concern for me. [It was] the first time I had ever left my family overnight and in a strange place on my own. I had to do a lot of preparation – a lot of practical organising; food, school clothes, washing and so on. I then threw myself into it and thought 'if the worst comes to the worst I can always leave and go home!' But it was great – and it changed our family relationships in ways I didn't think about (before); my husband spent time with the kids on his own, took them out for a meal – he'd never done that before. It changed his relationship with the kids – it's closer. They can't wait for me to go on the next one and go to Brussels for two nights. They keep reminding me to sort out the passport and all that.'*

Women discussed the ways in which they had become more assertive at home 'taking on being bullied by my son' for example. By providing a safe space in which to reflect, women have been able to learn from each other, increasing their understandings of difference and diversity.

On an individual level, participants from the West Midlands hub have gone on to be more ambitious regarding their job prospects, reassessing their skills, going on to further learning, and being more active citizens in a range of ways: by supporting others, being more active in faith-based activities, becoming representatives, volunteers, community organisers and influencing service provision. As a group, hub participants have gone on to develop IMPACT PLUS. This is a space where women can reflect on their active citizenship in their communities and continue the hub's work by training as trainers. In this way, citizenship themed courses and workshops can continue to be provided to women and Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the West Midlands.

Home Office trying to source more relevant image



*'I have a wider outlook than before – from seeing other people at work. Because I have been out of work for so long it has made me think that one day I may be able to get back into work full time and I would now have the confidence to go for a good management position – using my skills, whereas previously I had thought I would only be able to go for a basic clerk job.'*

ALAC participant



The wider multiplier effects on communities and on public policy and service delivery were more problematic to monitor and evaluate, however, and there were fewer models upon which to build. This indicates a wider challenge for evaluation studies more generally, rather than representing a challenge that was in any way specific to ALAC. It was for this reason that the Evaluation Team worked with the hubs to develop the Evaluation Framework (see Appendix 2). This framework was devised to collect more qualitative data through particular case studies, selected to illustrate the range of ALAC hubs' initiatives and approaches with diverse groups, organisations and communities. Once drafted, the Evaluation Framework was road tested with participants from different hubs, who came together for a day event in Sheffield to share their perspectives on ALAC's impact on them and their families, and to track the wider ripple effects on service planning, service delivery and policy. Using participatory methods, this day event also focused upon the most problematic aspects of the evaluation, the wider impacts in terms of social solidarity and community cohesion.

In addition, the Evaluation Team worked with the hubs to develop ways of triangulating the evidence about the wider impacts of learning programmes. For example, evidence would be sought from service providers and other relevant professionals and policy makers, to explore their views were individual citizens speaking up more effectively in their view, were user fora becoming more effective, and were services being planned and delivered in more appropriate ways as a result?



### **Speaking Up – the impact on services South West**

Working across statutory boundaries and bringing about a change in user involvement culture has been the hallmark of the ALAC South West 'Speaking Up' project. This innovative partnership between Devon Social Services, health authorities and the voluntary sector (Exeter Council for Voluntary Service, or CVS, with partners) has been instrumental in improving the practice and broadening the scope of user involvement.

The involvement of carers to train public sector staff provides a poignant example of the ALAC approach. A need was identified within Devon Social Services to provide learning and development opportunities for public sector staff to help them understand carers' issues. It was also felt that this training would be more effective if carers delivered it, and that the voluntary sector was best placed to act as broker to train and support the carers who elected to take part.

The ALAC-funded development worker based at Exeter CVS worked with a generic group of carers who were enthusiastic about the opportunity offered to them to begin to improve the relationship between carers and public sector staff in Devon. With support and guidance, the carers themselves designed the training package, and other carers who were unable to attend the training sessions made a 'talking heads' film. The impact that this training had on the public sector staff was reflected in the extremely positive training evaluation feedback. The carers' effectiveness and motivation in making their voice heard in such an innovative way encouraged them to continue with further consultation and involvement activities. This learning and development programme has brought together not only different social service departments, but also health staff, thus introducing a truly joined-up approach to the future design and development of services to carers.

Similarly, the Evaluation Teams worked with the hubs, sharing reflections on ways of evaluating the impact in terms of strengthening civil society, more generally, promoting greater mutual understanding, community cohesion and social solidarity. Like the related concept 'social capital', the concept of 'community cohesion' has been contested from differing perspectives. Community cohesion agendas have been criticised, for example, for fitting into wider approaches that imply that there are, or at least could be, unitary communities, without taking sufficient account of diversity and difference, including differences based upon structural inequalities. Government discourses in these fields, it has been argued in addition, open the way for increasing surveillance, with tendencies towards a new moral authoritarianism (Baron, 2004).

The hubs shared reflections on these issues and debates, just as they shared reflections on the nature and relevance of related debates on the notion of social capital. Social capital has been criticised on a number of similar grounds, for lacking conceptual rigour (Foley and Edwards, 1999, Fine, 2000), and for serving as an instrument of top-down policy. Social capital, as this has been conceptualised by Coleman and Putnam, has been promoted as a way of providing unthreatening solutions, it has been argued, tackling problems of deprivation and social cohesion without addressing underlying structural inequalities in terms of class, race or gender (Baron, 2000). Bourdieu's concept of social capital, in contrast, focuses upon the ways in which those with the most social capital to start with, use this to re-inforce their existing social advantages, thereby reproducing social inequalities more generally (Bourdieu, 1986). Either way then, the notion of social capital would seem potentially problematic if not actually damaging, in the context of social justice agendas.

Whilst both sets of criticisms have relevance, it has been argued, social capital can be relevant in alternative ways, however (Bruegel, 2005). These alternative approaches were identified as having particular relevance for ALAC. Networks can provide the basis for disadvantaged and oppressed groups to challenge inequalities, and these networks can provide resources for the benefit of wider communities. Bruegel uses a case study of women's community action via New Deal for Communities in East Manchester, for example, illustrating the ways in which women challenged a particular planning issue, enabling the space in question to be used to provide facilities for the whole community, including local youth (Bruegel, 2005).

Given that the notions of social capital and community cohesion have both been so contested, the evaluation of ALAC's impact needed to be approached with some caution, bearing these critical debates in mind. Community cohesion and social solidarity have emerged as key issues in differing ways. So it has been particularly important to take account of a wide range of perspectives here, and to draw out the implications from ALAC's experiences and reflections on these experiences, linking local issues and interests into the wider global picture. The views of umbrella organisations and federations of voluntary and community organisations were sought, for example, to explore these differing perspectives. Here too, this approach was road tested via a half day workshop with refugee and other community based organisations in South Yorkshire. As has already been pointed out, this direct involvement of ALAC participants was a key feature of the evaluation at every stage, from developing evaluation mechanisms to contributing to the final evaluation workshop.

### **Helping people in South Yorkshire see the global context for their activity in the community**

Because of its location, in a building shared with other community organisations, the South Yorkshire hub has been able to maximise partnership working with the Northern Refugee Centre, in particular. In addition to running ESOL courses with a strong 'citizenship' flavour, it is supporting a new Somali group: Sheffield Link Action, as well as working closely with two Sheffield neighbourhood groups, one based in a New Deal for Communities (NDC) area, and the other drawing on members from a local mosque. The NDC group had already taken part in a WEA 'globalisation' course but wanted to continue to meet with a more practical orientation. The hub encouraged research into the impact of a proposed supermarket in the area, which led to a wider discussion of food production chains and food miles. The group went on to consider international migration patterns, refugees and asylum issues and as a result, some members became ESOL volunteers with a local support group.

The work based on the mosque was a programme on 'Islam and Europe', made possible because of personal connections between a hub worker and a worker in the local authority's community and adult learning service. Trust was all important: the local authority worker knew the people from the mosque but needed help in running a programme. Together with potential participants, it was agreed to hold a series of open discussion meetings to consider thoughts and feelings post 9/11 and July 7 2005. The core of the group consisted mainly of younger men from the mosque, but there were also first generation migrants from the 1950s, Muslim and non-Muslim women, Christians and those with no religious faith.

The programme moved from 'being a Muslim in Darnall' (the mosque neighbourhood), to 'Islam and Europe today', to 'Islam and Europe in the past', with extensive discussions on the Moorish civilisation in Spain. The group was scheduled to visit Granada and Cordoba in mid March 2006. For many this would be the first time that they had visited another European country.

Visiting other places, 'seeing for ourselves', is part of the ethos of the hub. As well as the European work, groups have been to London and the Houses of Parliament, to Edinburgh as part of the Make Poverty History campaign, and to Liverpool to meet members of the long established black community there.

### **E-democracy and web citizenship**

The hub has been active in promoting and developing initiatives around e-citizenship and the following provide a flavour of this work. One Sheffield group has been using the web as a tool to investigate e-democracy, and to look at local democracy and power. This has been done as part of a European-wide project called RaCATEL – 'Raising Citizenship Awareness through English Language' – through an interactive website - [www.racatel.net](http://www.racatel.net) – set up by the South Yorkshire hub. Four European cities are taking part, examining their local government websites.

The Sheffield group widened their gaze to look at other local organisations that hold power, trying to unpick the confusing tangle of three letter acronyms that make up their local governance. So it has been a 'power-mapping' exercise – but using the web to deepen the group's understanding of the organisations that affect their daily lives, and to learn about where else e-democracy might be found blossoming.

In order to promote web citizenship a group was formed consisting of members of refugee community organisations from a range of countries (including Ethiopia, Iran, Liberia, Somalia and Zimbabwe). Each of the groups wanted to create a website to promote their activities and increase their visibility to potential members and partners. The group learned about the technical aspects of designing attractive web pages (using HTML and CSS), transferring those pages to a free public web server and considering different ways of linking to other organisations. One participant used the skills he learned to create an online version of a Farsi magazine, for example.

Overall, the hub has been concerned to undertake a range of activities and then to evaluate their effectiveness and value for both the participants and their communities, with particular emphasis upon promoting social solidarity within and between communities in the context of globalisation. As this report has already pointed out, there are challenges inherent in evaluating the long-term impact of programmes to promote increased social solidarity, challenges that are in no way confined to ALAC. Meeting these challenges remains a continuing task of considerable importance, given the crucial nature of the issues involved in the current context, both locally and globally.

Home office sourcing more relevant images



Together these case studies illustrate the range of perspectives that have been taken into account, developing strategies to monitor and evaluate the impact of ALAC initiatives on individual citizens and on voluntary and community sector organisations and groups, strengthening citizen participation and promoting community cohesion.

### Planned outcomes and the wider multiplier effects of the South Yorkshire hub

In South Yorkshire local Somali refugees received research training through ALAC and participants then went on to research the Sheffield Somali community's needs. Following on from this, Somali community participants have been attending further training on interviewing skills (provided by Birmingham University). This will lead to enhanced employability for those concerned (enabling them to obtain jobs as interviewers). The Somali representatives spoke of their commitment to increasing their involvement in the wider community, as a result of their learning through ALAC. Participants spoke of the importance of 'open windows' and the need for Somali communities to 'emerge from isolation'. It was important 'to learn how to integrate without losing our own cultures and identities'. The Commission for Racial Equality values the Community Needs Report as a tool to explore issues about needs participatively with other minority communities.



As the Interim Report pointed out, however, although there were encouraging signs that health and social service providers, for example, were valuing users and carers' enhanced capacities to participate, this did not, of itself, in any way guarantee that these voices would be effectively heard. This remained to be seen. Since that report was produced in April 2005, there have been further examples to demonstrate that citizens can

indeed make a difference. The extent to which this is the case, however, remains a question for the longer term. As the Interim Report also pointed out, there is evidence that the causes of citizen disengagement include a widespread lack of conviction that getting involved does actually make a difference. If active citizenship is to be promoted successfully on a national scale, this is an issue for policy-makers and service providers to address.



### The continuing importance of a national network

Sharing their reflections on their experiences, the hubs collectively came to the view that this wider perspective was key. ALAC was, they concluded, far more than the sum of its parts. There had been particular added value in sharing experiences reflexively, setting these within the wider framework, nationally and indeed internationally. Having so valued these opportunities to work together as part of a national programme, the hubs decided to continue this, for the longer term, through the establishment of a network, ALAC National Network (ANN). This was established:

- to continue to share experiences and best practice
- to promote ALAC's messages, to share best practice, developed regionally, between regions, nationally and internationally
- to provide training and support for the benefit of providers as well as learners
- to continue to press for the public policies and the accompanying resources required for the promotion of Active Learning for Active Citizenship.

## Conclusions

### Key messages

Together the ALAC hubs agreed that their experiences provided evidence to support the following key messages:

- Active citizenship and community engagement are central to the government's Together We Can action plan which aims to empower citizens and communities to work with public bodies to improve services. The ALAC programme has shown that active learning opportunities can make an effective contribution to achieving this objective.
- Active Learning for Active Citizenship is a process or journey that starts from people's immediate concerns. ALAC offers a variety of pathways from the individual 'I' to the 'we' of collective action in groups and communities, linking the local to the regional, national and global. ALAC works with individuals, groups and community organisations, building upon existing relationships and networks of trust. As well as affirming the importance of any roles participants play at the local or community level, the ability to see these roles in a broader context has enabled participants to make their work more effective. Wider knowledge of policy, governance and conceptual frameworks has helped them to draw broader strategic links and gain access to new networks.
- Social justice, equality and diversity are among the values underpinning ALAC. The programme has demonstrated in practice that active citizenship learning can make important contributions to community cohesion, strengthening social solidarity in the context of diversity and multiculturalism, and promoting democratic approaches to conflict resolution.

- ALAC achieves 'learning together', facilitating partnerships where stakeholders are 'learning to listen' as well as enabling citizens to 'find their voice'. Service providers and policy makers have continued to learn through the programme and participants have shared their learning as agents of change and as researchers with their own organisations and communities.

*'The openness and transparency which has been at the heart of being part of ALAC has made us reflect on how we can work together better'.*

Local Authority representative speaking at an ALAC workshop

- ALAC encourages and equips citizens to develop political literacy skills and become involved in governance structures, such as voluntary and community organisations, boards of school governors and local cross sector partnerships.
- ALAC has shown there is a need for a 'learning framework' to provide a benchmark, a resource and practical guidance for the delivery of effective community-based citizenship learning for adults. It will highlight opportunities for accreditation and progression. It will set out an approach that is based on participatory methods that have been tried and tested, developing tools for promoting citizens' capabilities, building upon learning from experience through processes of critical dialogue. It will emphasise that this approach requires outreach and continuing support for learners.
- ALAC has demonstrated the added value of national networking, to support both learners and providers.



- ALAC learning opportunities should be accessible to all, but there is a particular need to support those who face educational, social and other barriers to their participation.
- To achieve this effectively involves the investment of resources, both to support the learning process and the learners themselves, and also to train skilled learning facilitators.

These messages speak for themselves. Rather than posing one approach to active learning for active citizenship against another the hubs have identified this as a journey, an on-going process, moving from individuals' interests and concerns to wider perspectives, linking the local with the global within an overall framework of values emphasising equalities and the pursuit of social justice agendas.

The ALAC programme has provided key learning experiences. The learning from these experiences can now be shared and a learning framework published and disseminated more widely as a resource for all those concerned with community-based active learning for active citizenship.

## Recommendations

- 1** A national 'learning framework' should be published as a resource for those wishing to deliver Active Learning for Active Citizenship. Central and local government, other public bodies, key learning institutions and practitioners, and learners themselves should recognise this as a benchmark for effective provision.
- 2** This approach to citizenship learning should be accepted by agencies of governance, including local authorities and primary care trusts, as a necessary process for strengthening citizen participation and community empowerment, for supporting an expansion in neighbourhood governance, and for promoting safer and stronger communities, and it should be resourced accordingly.
- 3** Active Learning for Active Citizenship should be recognised as a key component in achieving the government's commitment to empowerment, across all its programmes, as set down in the Together We Can action plan. The 'learning framework' should be recognised as a valuable tool for supporting the Together We Can agenda.
- 4** The role of Active Learning for Active Citizenship in stimulating a more active, deliberative and critical approach to democratically led social change should be recognised and supported by service providers, funders and policy makers.
- 5** A national network should be established to continue the promotion of Active Learning for Active Citizenship. The network would maximise the sharing of ideas and experience, and promote and develop the 'learning framework'.
- 6** The Learning and Skills Council should identify resources to support its commitment to the importance of active citizenship.
- 7** Formal learning providers, such as universities and colleges, should be encouraged to work with voluntary and community sector organisations to provide learning opportunities for community-based citizenship education for adults.
- 8** Accreditation systems and progression routes should be reviewed to facilitate opportunities for accreditation and progression via community-based citizenship learning, building on the experience of the ALAC hubs and other providers.



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# Appendices

# Appendix 1

## Towards an Active Learning for Active Citizenship typology

### 1. Definitions of 'citizenship' and 'active citizenship'

The individual as citizen, voter and volunteer



The individual within group(s) actively participating in civic society as user and planner of services



The individual within group(s) actively strengthening civil society promoting solidarity and social justice

### 2. Approaches to adult learning in the context of social change, locally and globally

Learning to know and understand self in a cultural, socio-economic and political context



Learning to cope, adapt to change and participate



Learning in order to shape social change

### 3. Approaches to Active Learning for Active Citizenship

Active learning to gain knowledge, skills and confidence



Active group learning for critical understanding of ways of engaging in civic society



Active collective learning for political literacy, to promote community solidarity, strengthening civil society, working for justice and social solidarity

### 4. Principles of Active Learning for Active Citizenship

Starts from people's own issues and concerns as individuals and as members of groups and communities

Participatory and experiential, learning for and learning from experiences of collective action

Constructed through critical dialogues between learners and providers, learning together

### 5. Active Learners

Individuals and groups characterised as 'disadvantaged'/'hard to reach' e.g. women, BME communities, people with disabilities, carers, migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers

Service providers, professionals, policy makers 'learning to listen'/'work in partnership as well as 'active citizens'

All those working for solidarity and social justice agendas

### 6. Prerequisites for Active Learning for Active Citizenship

Outreach work and sustainable support structures, long-term relationships of trust with individuals, groups, 'umbrella' organisations and networks embedded in local areas AND practical support for those with childcare and other caring responsibilities

Material support (such as travel and childcare costs)

SPACE: Social Political and Active Citizenship Educational spaces

### 7. Forms of provision for Active Learning for Active Citizenship

Courses (at varying levels), workshops, seminars, mentoring, group visits

### 8. The learning framework (q.v.)

See page 34

### 9. Outputs and outcomes: Action-learning and evaluation

Individual learning journeys

Outcomes in terms of service provision and policy development

Outcomes in terms of strengthened civil society, community solidarity and policies to promote social justice

# Appendix 2a

## Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework was developed by the evaluation team in dialogue with the hubs. It was devised to collect more qualitative data and identify the range of ALAC hubs' activities and approaches with diverse groups, organisations and communities.

<b>Overall aims and objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Change/justice</li> <li>• Inclusion/participation</li> <li>• Challenging inequalities</li> <li>• Equality/diversity</li> </ul>	<b>Programme/ project name/ case study</b> 'bullet' points may be sufficient to convey responses
WHY this particular programme of active learning for active citizenship and what is the context? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage excluded groups to engage in public life</li> <li>• Enable excluded groups to become more active citizens</li> <li>• Strengthen active citizenship in the voluntary and community sector</li> <li>• Enable people to know their rights and find their voice</li> <li>• Enable services users to shape and influence service provision</li> <li>• Enhance and/or develop skills that enable learning to engage in local decision making</li> <li>• Enable people to identify common issues/problems and finding solutions</li> <li>• Enable communities to negotiate conflict, for example between community members and service providers</li> <li>• Promote social solidarity to strengthen communities</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>	
<b>Target Group</b>	
WHO is this programme aimed at and why? For example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrant workers</li> <li>• Asylum seekers and refugees</li> <li>• Black and ethnic minorities</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with disabilities</li> <li>• People with learning disabilities</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Women</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> <li>• Community Activists</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>	
<b>Evidence and methods of assessment used, including participatory tools encouraging critical reflection</b>	
Which participative perspectives, approaches and methods are being used? For example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using participatory methods in identifying learning needs/aims</li> <li>• Participating in jointly negotiating project design (eg. the curriculum and delivery)</li> <li>• Participating in active learning</li> <li>• Participating in research and evaluation and drawing out the lessons and benefits for groups</li> <li>• Is there a feedback loop in place?</li> <li>• What happens to feedback?</li> </ul>	
<b>Promoting and outreach</b>	
HOW is this particular programme reaching the target group and how does the course, workshop or provision meet the particular learning needs? How have these been identified? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on previous knowledge and contacts with organisations, volunteers, community members, trade union activists etc</li> <li>• Undertaking outreach activities to reach excluded groups</li> <li>• Negotiating provision and learning contents with target groups and/or providers</li> <li>• Additional support including childcare, transport, mentoring etc</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>	

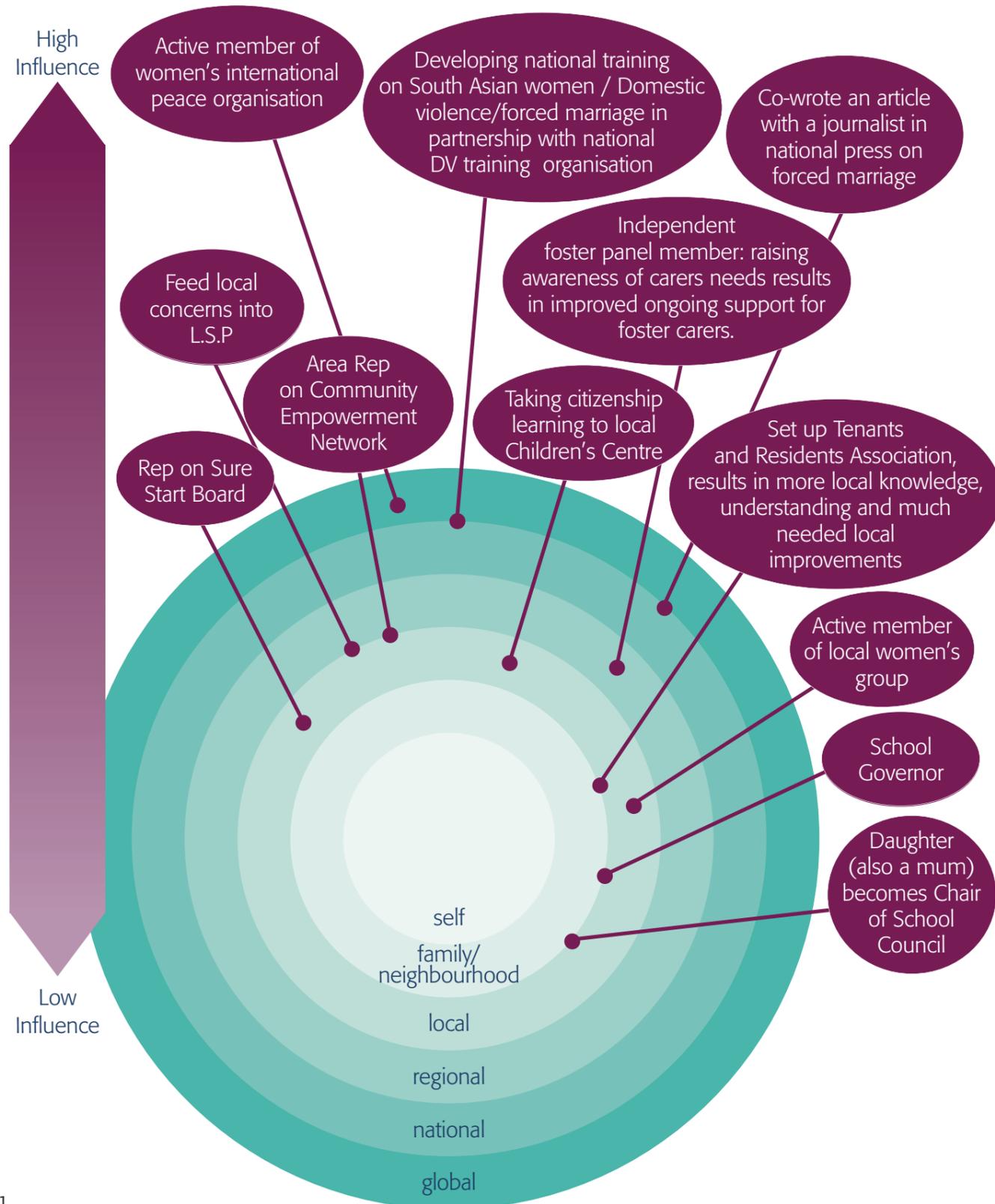
<b>Course content or forms of experiential learning</b>	
<p>WHAT is actually provided?</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the provision take the form of course, seminar, workshop and/or experiential learning</li> <li>• What course/workshop outline and resource material exist already, what are the gaps?</li> <li>• How has the course/workshop content been tailored to respond to specific learning needs?</li> <li>• What form does experiential learning take?</li> <li>• What topics are covered in what ways?</li> <li>• What works well and what needs changing and why?</li> <li>• What form of accreditation and progression opportunities are being provided or developed?</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>	
<b>What are the lessons for the future including things that were challenging or difficult?</b>	
<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for flexibility in tailoring provision to target groups</li> <li>• Sustaining long-term relationships with learners and providers</li> <li>• Participatory learning</li> <li>• Practical support like childcare</li> <li>• Learners' support such as mentoring</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>	
<b>HOW can the hub further active learning for active citizenship locally, national or internationally?</b> <b>WHAT would need to happen?</b>	
<p>How to evidence the impact of ALAC programmes on individual learners</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-confidence and how it relates to political literacy</li> <li>• Increased ability to participate as an active citizen</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the impacts include accreditation and/or progression</li> <li>• Different progression routes such as further learning, paid employment or future activities an unpaid volunteer or activist in the voluntary and community sectors</li> </ul> <p>How to evidence the impact on the wider community</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In terms of reduced tensions between different groups</li> <li>• Reductions in negative discriminatory stereotyping of minorities by 'host' communities</li> <li>• Increased social solidarity within and between groups and organisations as well as individuals?</li> </ul> <p>How to evidence the impact from the perspectives of policy makers and service providers. How to assess the impact, more generally, in terms of strengthening democracy and active citizenship based upon the core values of social justice, participation, equality and diversity and co-operation.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which users have been enabled to participate more effectively in user forums</li> <li>• The extent to which users have been enabled to influence improvements to service delivery</li> <li>• The extent to which policy makers and service providers are actually listening?</li> </ul>	
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# Appendix 2b

## A map of influence

This diagram is a reproduction of an evaluation tool which was used to map influence. This was used in a workshop with ALAC participants in Sheffield in July 2005. The participants worked to track their influence in different arenas, from the family to the global.



## Barriers to change

- The importance of reciprocity, openness, transparency
- Developing confidence, understanding jargon and not being put off by culture of official meetings
- Focusing on changing local from level of neighbourhood can be piecemeal if not linked to an understanding of wider local and regional work.
- Agencies (health/social services/local authorities) 'preciousness' about their projects
- Competition for local resources
- Agencies 'lip service' about working together
- Public not aware of what should be happening (e.g. in agency's action plans and strategy documents)
- Understanding local democracy and 'incestuous' culture amongst local councillors
- Timescale of change is not explained to local public
- Age discrimination encountered by qualified active citizens

# Appendix 3

## Summary of ALAC outcomes

These figures were compiled in January and February 2006. Together they are a representative selection of the achievements of the ALAC hubs and their participants. As the regional hubs started at different periods, the impact of the hubs has varied. In parallel, the short term impact of some of the later hubs is still being realised. The longer term impact of all the hubs is still being realised too, as the effects of active citizenship multiply out from the individual, to family and friends, to groups, to communities, to neighbourhoods, on service delivery and policy development.

## Participant breakdown

Table 1: Number of participants

West Midlands	42
Greater Manchester	266
Tees Valley	338
Lincolnshire	207
South West	151
South Yorkshire	242
London	128
<b>Total</b>	<b>1374</b>

At the heart of the ALAC process has been a spirit of openness which has aimed to offer opportunities for active citizenship learning to all. This has meant that significant numbers of participants from 'hard to reach' groups have benefited from ALAC. The figures below include significant numbers of people with mental and physical health conditions that affect people's ability to attend, people with care responsibilities, people with learning difficulties, people with physical disabilities, refugees and migrant workers.

### Accreditation

Through their participation in ALAC, 292 participants have gained a wide range of accredited qualifications. So far, these range from Open College qualifications to university level credits.

Table 2: Numbers of ALAC participants attaining accreditation

West Midlands	11 with another 13 working towards OCN Levels 2 and 3
Greater Manchester	44
Tees Valley	23
Lincolnshire	13
South West	92
South Yorkshire	35
London	74 cohort 1 only
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>

### Progression

At the time of writing, a total of 286 participants have progressed into further education, higher education and training. The progression of ALAC participants is considerable and diverse due to the variety of starting points. Examples of formal progression include participants training as trainers, registering for graduate teaching programmes and undertaking foundation degrees in community and voluntary sector management. The learning through participation in ALAC has also had an impact on progression as individuals have reconsidered the relevance of their previous study and qualifications. This impact has also multiplied out as family, friends and colleagues have been encouraged to study.

One of the hidden impacts of the hubs has been the way that informal, professional and stable learning processes have been established for participants, some of whom have been away from learning for considerable periods of time. In several hubs, participants from early cohorts have progressed into shaping or helping to facilitate the later cohorts of the ALAC programme. For example, participants in the West Midlands have gone on to establish 'Impact Plus', an organisation where women can reflect on their active citizenship in their communities and continue the hub's work. This has included training as trainers and delivering citizenship themed courses and workshops to women and Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the West Midlands.

Table 3: Numbers of participants who have 'progressed' into FE/Training

West Midlands	10
Greater Manchester	20
Tees Valley	9
Lincolnshire	13
South West	34
South Yorkshire	200
London	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>286</b>

### Employment

161 participants have progressed to employment and/or gained new employment through participation in ALAC. These figures are expected to increase as the impact of participation in ALAC spreads outwards. Through participation in ALAC participants' relationships to existing work has also changed. After recognising their own skills and capabilities, employment aspirations have been raised and employment prospects have significantly improved. For example:

- A participant left university with a degree but thought she had no recognisable skills. Participation in the ALAC training course helped her to recognise her skills and direct her to her current job in community work.
- After being out of work on disability benefits for 10 years, a participant moved from a previous career in clerical work to employment in a management role.
- Participants became health trainers improving patient choice for those in 'at risk' communities and linking to statutory

services as part of the Department of Health 'Choosing Health' initiative.

- Participants became sessional staff at a local community hospital, signposting people to appropriate services and referring patients to the Patient Advisory Liaison service.

### Active citizens and volunteers

Through their participation in ALAC 355 participants have become involved in volunteering for the first time, while others have become more involved in volunteering with an emphasis on citizenship. Participants have gone on to take up positions in community groups and organisations and have become more involved in public decision making. In this process they have developed influence and leadership skills while developing a greater understanding of governance structures and policy.

Examples from the hubs include:

- In London many participants were active already but 56% of participants reported greater contact with local or central government, or greater contributions to public decision-making. 46% reported increased involvement in networks.
- In Lincolnshire three ALAC participants who were migrant workers became informal community leaders supporting others in a similar position. Due to this the experiences of subsequent migrants have been improving. As one participant stated: 'New immigrants recognise that life has been easier for them'. Three of the participants have recruited friends in the factories where they work. As another reflected, 'I think the project has been good for me; it has given me opportunities and I want the same for my friends'.
- In the West Midlands, through Impact Plus, participants have used their own

language skills to do voluntary work with refugee children. This included developing work around girls' self confidence and using the knowledge gained through ALAC to support women not born in this country to understand British citizenship and governance systems.

Other examples in this area include:

- Participants contributing to obtaining funding for a drugs awareness programme
- Organising an exchange visit between Asian women with diabetes in the West Midlands and Dundee with the involvement of the Mayor
- Volunteering at a drop-in day centre
- Getting involved in action around sex trafficking
- Volunteering at a young carers organisation.

### Individuals and groups becoming involved in service developments and/or volunteering as trainers

Examples here include:

- Participants volunteering in primary care settings, running fitness classes and stop smoking sessions
- A member of a homelessness forum gaining new management skills in the running of the forum, and the forums joining in the Local Public Service Agreement
- Carers becoming peer group representatives in health and social services matters
- Carers contributing to training social workers at the University of Plymouth
- Participants carrying out organisational health checks with a drop-in project for

homeless young people.

### Individuals and groups becoming more organised and involved in structured grassroots community activity

ALAC participants have become engaged as individuals while as members of groups and organisations they have become more organised, knowledgeable and effective when engaged in community activities. A sample of the many examples here include participants:

- Becoming volunteers in their own neighbourhood to identify local issues around the environment, for example neighbourhood action to save trees
- Becoming involved in supporting young people who are representatives on committees in understanding their role.

### Individuals and groups becoming involved in formal volunteering and local networks

Across the hubs participants have become more active in civil and civic society. Specific examples here include:

- Working with a voluntary organisation planning a research project to talk to women's groups about health issues
- encouraging asylum seekers with medical qualifications to enrol on appropriate courses to enable them to work within the NHS thus filling gaps in NHS services
- Volunteering, helping young people and starting a new project for 13-17 year olds and for 18-35 year olds with help from church members and local people.

### Participants have learnt about and become more involved in governance structures

Across the hubs ALAC participants have learnt from and become more involved in structures of governance. This has included learning about the roles and responsibilities of elected officials from a local to European level and about how to communicate with such representatives. Participants have also gone on to hold one or more positions of responsibility and influence within their communities. Examples include participants taking up one or more of the following roles and responsibilities:

- Nine participants on the London hub's programme have subsequently been elected to the London Civic Forum's Council, which sets organisational policy and is the organisation's forum for engagement with London's governance, including the Greater London Authority
- Bid assessor for a New Deal for Communities area
- Representative on Regional and National Residents' Forum
- Chair of local Women's Development Agency
- Chair of Parent and Teachers Association
- Member of Youth Education Forum
- Chair of Women's Voluntary Organisation
- Board member of Diabetes Group (Company Secretary Role)
- Vice-Chair - Patients' Forum
- Member of Guinness Trust National Residents Involvement Group
- Member of 'Helping Hands for You', voluntary organisation that befriends the elderly

- Community Forum, committee member and subsequently instrumental in getting a local learning centre built
- School Governor and Special Educational Needs Governor.

### Part 2 The Multiplier Effect

ALAC's wide range of outcomes has included outcomes that have been planned and the multiplier effects of these, as active learning impacts not only upon individuals but also cascades to impact upon their friends, families and communities. ALAC has led to beneficial ripple effects on services and service provision and the development of more effective forums and partnerships.

### Impact on individuals & their families

Examples of impacts in this area include:

- Mothers reassessing their position within their own family, recognising they are 'more than just mothers – and their children recognising this too'. Partners have also been appreciating the benefits of ALAC, and respecting the time and space participants need to do their coursework. In some cases this has led to changes in family relationships, with partners more active in domestic responsibilities.
- A number of working class mothers have raised their children's expectations of education and employment possibilities and encouraged them not to just accept but to change the things that affect their lives. For instance, a mother's participation in ALAC provided a powerful role model for her daughter who subsequently decided to continue with her education rather than dropping out. Her daughter has since received a

prize for excellence in vocational studies at school.

- As a result of participating in conflict resolution training, a 'no blame' approach to resolving conflicts was being applied within the families.

### Impact on communities, within communities and between communities

Some of the learning, and the impact of this learning within and between communities has taken place through facilitated workshops but at other times it has been the result of activities that have cascaded from ALAC. Communities have come together around common concerns, identifying their issues and training needs, sharing information between groups and communities, increasing dialogue between communities and raising community awareness about local services and how to access them. Groups and communities have been taking a more strategic approach in addressing the issues that affect them. Participation in ALAC has enabled participants to address the barriers that specific communities face.

These have included:

#### Intergenerational barriers

- Facilitating a dialogue around community safety issues across generational barriers (through an 'r 'u' listening' programme).

#### Health

- Helping to organise a local event for 500 women, with stalls providing information on health issues such as domestic violence and breast cancer.

#### Inter-cultural relations

- working together to find commonalities and connections, for instance through helping Muslim women to overcome language barriers and isolation, and working on children's involvement in Month of Ramadan activities.

### Number of organisations and groups the ALAC hubs and hub participants have worked with including umbrella groups

It is difficult to quantify the number of organisations that ALAC hubs have been in contact with and worked with as these have been so extensive.

Examples include:

- In Lincolnshire the hub has involved organisations from the entire county and there have been contacts with representatives from more than 50 local organisations, including voluntary sector organisations, statutory sector managers, community workers and volunteers. Core partners have included a range of networks, agencies and organisations such as VOCAL (Voluntary Organisation Community Action Lincolnshire), the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, local educational authorities, Integration Lincolnshire, Boston College, Lincolnshire Development, COMPAC, Lincoln Dioceses and Community Development Lincolnshire.
- In Tees Valley, the hub has worked with or had contact with 410 local organisations across the five boroughs of the Tees Valley (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar, and Cleveland and Stockton).

### Impact on services and service provision including the development of new forums and partnerships

By building active citizenship and by empowering effective representatives, the hubs have had a significant impact on services in many areas. As a result, groups and communities have been taking a more strategic approach on issues affecting communities. The hubs' impact on service delivery has been directly relevant for a wide range of government initiatives including neighbourhood regeneration, New Deal for Communities, Sure Start services, the NHS, transport authorities, education authorities, housing departments and children's services.

Examples of these impacts include:

#### Crime

- Establishing closer links with the local authority and other service providers in one area through the Domestic Violence Routine Enquiry Audit.

#### Forming New Partnerships

- The Tees Valley ALAC Steering Group has brought together five local ALAC partnerships (one in each borough of Tees Valley) and three carers partnerships to work together for the first time. This has been highlighted regionally as an example of good practice. This has led to better joint work and improved services for younger and adult carers.

#### Education

- Participants working in schools, teaching citizenship to children in ways that make the syllabus more relevant to their lives
- Contributing to the restructuring of the way in which community education has been viewed and delivered in the NDC where one participant has been working.

#### Health

- Becoming a user representative on a fostering panel
- Becoming a representative on a Health Scrutiny panel and advocating on behalf of deaf women. The panel rules are being changed, as a result in order to enable deaf people to sit at the table and lip read, so that they can participate.

#### Transport

- Influencing public transport operators and overseers to give more attention to best practice regarding gender issues (as a result of gender empowerment training). The Final report to the Transport Thematic Partnership (TTP) will inform the TTP Community Engagement Action Plan for 2006-07.

#### Housing and neighbourhoods

- Supported the work of the neighbourhood management team and undertaking effective outreach on their behalf, in the Salford area.

### Additional educational provision including new modules and workshops at universities, and new courses now run by other agencies

Through ALAC a wide range of new courses have been provided with a range of accreditation options, and a wide variety of learning providers. The following are examples:

- In the Tees Valley, Hartlepool Carers have developed a City & Guilds 'Learning for Living' online course. The Stockton partnership has developed an Introduction to Volunteering and Confidence Building course and Middlesbrough ALAC partnership has developed a Skills for Working in the Community, and a Constitution and Funding course.

- In Lincolnshire ALAC has facilitated the enrolment of migrants at the Boston College and also supported their retention. Community workshops have been held at the University of Lincoln, with a focus on new learners not currently engaged with the University. A new language provision course for ALAC participants is being provided in Boston while the Faculty of Business and Law at the University of Lincoln is designing a post-graduate programme in Community Learning and Organisational Development (focused on the voluntary sector).
- In the South West ALAC has enabled the Speaking Up course to be developed for other learner groups. This has been done jointly with community organisations engaged with the groups concerned. Many of their staff have been trained through joint delivery so that they can now teach the course. Where the existing Speaking Up course in its current format is not suitable, the South West hub has been in the process of adapting it to suit learner needs. In addition, more training is being commissioned from Exeter CVS, building upon ALAC's work.
- In Manchester three new modules have been written based on ALAC's work, one of which has already been delivered as an elective within the Social Work and Youth and Community work courses. A team of trainers has requested more training in ALAC work facilitation, and this has resulted in the development of a 'Training the Trainers' module. Trainers have run seminars at the university for community group members and academics, on Schools for Participation and Conflict Resolution for instance. Each group/programme has included visits to familiarise participants with the University and to make them aware of further course possibilities.

### New initiatives, policy and the political impact

The ALAC hubs have had an impact on policy and the development of initiatives at both national and local level. This impact has been through the active participation of individuals, but most importantly through the active and effective participation of groups.

- The London hub held a round-table discussion as part of their contribution to the Power Inquiry. The discussion was facilitated by staff from the Inquiry and involved people from communities that have sometimes been described as marginalised, but who were actively engaged as citizens on a local or neighbourhood level, or as part of a community of interest. Whilst active in their communities these participants had been disengaged from formal politics and felt under-represented by formal governmental structures. The discussion explored the reasons behind this. As part of their activities, London Civic Forum also held participatory consultation sessions around the Commission on London Governance (re-assessing the powers of the Mayor and the Boroughs) and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's consultation on the same subject. The outcomes of these sessions fed into the regional and national government consultations.
- In Manchester the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Network group chose as their focus for ALAC learning to draw up a refugee charter, working with the Community Pride Initiative and Manchester Refugee Support Network. The charter has been written by refugees and asylum seekers with the aim of raising awareness of the issues they face, showing the positive contribution that they make and

opening channels of participation for refugees and asylum seekers in the city. This was launched at a major function in January 2006. While it is too early to assess the long term impact of this work, it is expected to have a major impact on the delivery of services for Refugees and Asylum seekers, in Greater Manchester. This has already led to other areas undertaking similar work.

- The activities of ALAC South West have led to the development of a Joint Agency/Service User Involvement Project. In support of this initiative local PCTs and Devon County Council are funding two posts, including one at Exeter Council for Voluntary Services.

ALAC has also had an impact at the level of strategic planning and development. So for example the GEM project, part of the Greater Manchester hub, has made a significant contribution to Manchester's Local Development Framework. Members of the GEM project (who were trained as a team in participatory community auditing), undertook an evaluation of the composition of who was involved in decision making from community to LSP levels, and followed this up with focus groups, exploring what could be done to facilitate fuller representation and more active participation. The findings of their work have been instrumental in the development of good practice guidelines including MCC Statement of Community Involvement 2005, and in getting decision making bodies to reflect on and improve the representativeness of their decision making bodies.

### Impact of ALAC as a national network

Participation in the ALAC network has also been a positive experience for the hubs. The formation of regional ALAC networks has increased awareness of Active Learning for Active Citizenship within individual organisations and across communities and groups in the regions. Similarly it has raised the profile of the work of organisations and groups within the individual hubs. The ALAC network has also provided an opportunity for the voluntary sector and statutory sector to work together in more effective ways. This has been a valuable opportunity to network, sharing and exchanging information, gaining awareness and insight into good practice, improving motivation, and increasing the profile of the hubs' network, nationally. As one hub leader reflected:

*'It is very useful to be connected to other ALAC projects, some of whose work relates to other aspects of our non-ALAC work. The sharing of ALAC information and approaches, and the discussions about the different facets of ALAC, have all been very inspiring and useful to inform the future development of our active citizenship activities. In this vein we support the ANN network and hope that joint funding applications will result.'*

The development of the ALAC National Network (ANN) will provide the possibility of continuing hub activities, with shared learning and further collaborative developments backed by joint funding bids. In parallel, the development of the Learning Framework will take the learning from ALAC forward nationally as well as locally, taking account of the wider international context.