



Learning for Life

Response to

***Shaping the Way Ahead:
Informal Adult Learning***

From the Novas Scarman Group

Novas Scarman Group
68 Parkway
Camden Town
London NW1 7AH
Tel 020 7424 3000
Email: titus.alexander@novas.org

People creating a better world
"Charity of the Year Award Winner 2007"

About the Novas Scarman Group

The Novas Group was set up in 1998 and transformed itself from a provider of large hostels for homeless people to be at the cutting edge of tackling social disadvantage through arts, enterprise and community support. We change lives and create opportunities through education, training, employment, culture and regeneration. We have developed a strong reputation for quality community-based services, and for innovative approaches to working with people who experience inequality, exclusion and discrimination.

Early in 2008 The Novas Group, The Scarman Trust and Path merged to form the Novas Scarman Group as a major social justice charity.

Novas Scarman works at a local level to empower people and communities by creating opportunities for positive change through personalised support and development, pathways into work and learning, inclusive local decision making and change programmes, and releasing enterprise and cultural expression.

We bring communities together by enabling a voice for those often not heard or marginalised, to be at the heart of our communities and aim to become one of the world's most influential and effective catalysts for social justice, inclusion and diversity.

The organisation has four core activities:

- Community support services serving the most disadvantaged communities
- Clusters of social enterprises based in Contemporary Urban Centres
- Learning and inclusive pathways to work
- Campaigning and policy advocacy work – “connecting the streets with the corridors of power”

The Novas Group was Charity of the Year in 2007 and combines support for vulnerable individuals with major programmes of social enterprise development

The Scarman Trust pioneered support for grassroots social entrepreneurs and recently helped to develop proposals for a new Social Investment Bank – backed by both Gordon Brown and David Cameron

PATH supports Black and Minority Ethnic entrants to professions and has recently been given both the RTPPI and Civil Service Diversity Award

We run contemporary urban centres offering integrated arts, performance, small business development and community activity; community support services working together with 6,000 people a year with customer input at every level; a translation and interpreting service utilising the skills of over 200 Black and Refugee people, and coffee shops offering fair trade and organic produce.

Our initiatives positively change the lives of people, including those experiencing homelessness, health issues, prejudice and isolation; and they all contribute to bringing communities together. All profits are reinvested back into Novas learning and development programmes for disadvantaged groups, and at least 50% of all jobs created are targeted for these groups.

Solidarity with the Community Sector Coalition

The Novas Scarman Group is part of the Community Sector Coalition of umbrella organisations, which has 20 national members reaching many thousands of grass roots community organisations involving tens of thousands of people active in their communities.

Rather than make a separate response, we whole-heartedly endorse **Free to Learn**, the Community Sector Coalition statement, which is incorporated into our response, below.

However, we have added case studies and a more details about our approach to learning in order to provide additional evidence for how these recommendations can support a revival of adult and community learning.

A welcome approach to learning

We welcome the consultation's wide scope and its recognition of the diversity and importance of adult learning. We urge the Government to acknowledge that this sector is more valuable than is reflected in the current level of funding by DIUS in comparison with the formal education sector. We are concerned that the narrow, employer-driven interpretation of skills adopted by the Leitch Review has led to cuts in funding and support for adult and community learning by subsidising training that would otherwise be funded by employers themselves. We also note that other Government Departments, as acknowledged in the consultation paper, have been more innovative and supportive of community-based learning. However, funding from other Departments has often lacked the infrastructure and support available to more traditional adult education providers.

We therefore hope that this consultation will lead to a more coherent, vibrant and innovative system, which supports the diversity of adult and community learning.



Hussein Hall, Novas Scarman customer who successfully completed traineeship and is now in full-time employment

Free to learn

To meet the diverse needs and aspirations of adults learning, we want a system that is

- learner centred;
- simple to understand yet flexible, responsive and accountable to the public;
- easy to navigate, connecting the wide variety of provision for learning available;
- low in administration and high in quality;
- an attractive alternative to passive or more solitary free-time activities.

We hope that the following ten recommendations for the structure, funding and priorities of adult and community learning will release the potential of educators and providers to support the diversity of learners in our communities.

1. **“Adult and Community Learning” (ACL)** should be recognised as an independent, community based, pluralistic and diverse sector of education which supports adults learning throughout their lives in ways that they want. The sector includes all kinds of informal, community, public and private learning providers as well as cultural institutions, libraries, museums, media and outdoor activities which support adults learning when, where and how they want. ACL is distinct from school, further and higher education, but may be provided by institutions in these sectors as well as organisations of all kinds, including informal community groups and national voluntary organisations.
2. Local authorities should have a statutory **“duty to secure adequate, accessible and affordable opportunities** for all adults to enjoy learning throughout their lives for pleasure as well as personal, community, economic and political development of themselves and society” (echoing aspirations of the 1944 Education Act).
3. **Public funding and accountability** for adult and community learning should be provided through three main channels:
 - 1) **Personal and Community Learning Grants** for people who have had least access to learning and are on low incomes, including older people;
 - 2) an independent **Community Learning Councils** within the Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreement framework;
 - 3) an independent **Adult and Community Learning Council (ACLC)** for strategic learning providers, such as the ACL, NEC, WEA, Women’s Institute, unionlearn, U3A, YMCA, residential colleges, broadcasters, internet learning and other national or specialist providers.

Personal Learning Awards (or Grants) of up to £300 a year should be available as an entitlement to anyone who is on a low income or in receipt of income-related benefits. Grants should be able to fund any form of learning recognised by local or national Community Learning Councils.

People facing multiple challenges, such as alcoholism, drug addiction, debt, homelessness, mental illness or a prison conviction, have a hard time getting their lives back together. Personal development workshops, 1:1 coaching, learning how to manage money or arts workshops can help people regain confidence and skills for life. A Personal Learning Award with the flexibility to pay for coaching sessions, an individual financial advice session or a drama course would give someone greater control over their own life and learning.

Community Learning Awards (or Grants) of up to £3,000 a year should be made available on a discretionary basis through intermediary agencies, like the former DfES Community Champions fund, to provide flexible support for community-orientated learning, including learning by doing, childcare, books, course fees, fares and other expenses, based on principles of individual budgeting developed in social care by In Control. Where possible, Community Learning Grants should be administered by community-based intermediaries and allocated with panels of local people, like the Community Champions Fund.

Community Champions: an inspiring model

The DfES Community Champions scheme (2000 – 2008) gave thousands of people an opportunity to learn by doing something for their community. Almost half of all projects have explicit learning aims both for the individuals and the communities in which they were involved, most of which was informal, but about a third of Community Champions either achieved a qualification or began studying, often as a result of the programme.



Louise Honisett set up an educational /cultural exchange project with African Dance, drumming and story telling in her community. Terry Scott organised Summer Fun and Learning event for residents of Tillingham estate so that they can have some fun, be safe and learn together. Acorns started a parent and toddler group for residents in the Bridgemere and Roselands areas of Eastbourne for travellers. The Traveller Community Cultural Exchange trained story tellers so encouraging people to share their oral traditions within the Wealden community. Sydoney Massop lived on a large estate in West London. She had professional training in upholstery and sewing and wanted to share these skills with others. She set up a sewing club for unemployed people with childcare responsibilities and language difficulties. The group sells its products at a market created by the group. Previously, the estate only had one shop so the market has completely altered the dynamic of the place. She aims to set up a similar project in Jamaica, her country of origin.

These are some of over 10,000 community champions supported by the scheme.

Community Learning Councils should streamline current partnership arrangements such as Learning Partnerships, PCDL Partnerships etc., into independent, elected bodies linked to local authorities through Local Strategic Partnerships and LAAs.

They should bring together and manage funding for community based learning from other Government departments and agencies, such as education for citizenship (Home Office), democracy (Justice), community development and the third sector (CLG, OTS), environment (DEFRA), enterprise (BERR), development awareness (DfID), health or the European Union.

DIUS should actively persuade all government departments and agencies to fund and support adult learning through these three channels.

Community Learning Councils should be made up of elected representatives of learners, community organisations and funding bodies rather than learning providers. As far as possible, their membership should be elected by recognised constituencies, such as all registered adult learners and voluntary organisations as well as local councils.

At both local and national levels, Community Learning Councils should be led by **Community Learning Promoters** who are experienced educators, not accountants, administrators or commissioners, who have important support functions. They should

avoid the soulless, bureaucratic and exclusive procurement process of the LSC/Bravo Solutions. Community Learning Promoters should be able to fund any kind of provider and provision which enhances adult learning in line with the guidance on priorities agreed locally (see point 4 & 8). They should be able provide block funding for larger adult and community education providers as well as small grants for community groups who provide opportunities for learning on a very local or specialist basis, such as a breastfeeding network or book club for the blind. They should aim to fund three year rolling budgets and apply the principles of the Voluntary Sector Compact.

They should be encouraged to develop innovative models of commissioning, grant-aid, partnerships and support to enable community learning providers to improve the quality, reach and variety of learning opportunities.

Learning Promoters should be accountable for the adequacy, accessibility, affordability, quality and range of learning opportunities in their area, including public, private and community provision. They should ensure that funding is flexible, responsive, transparent and accountability with low administration, high trust and wide openness. This is based on the principle that the public benefits from

- diversity of providers and funding;
- delegation of decision-making over provision, funding and fees;
- clear responsibility for budgets, priorities, provision and delivery;
- coordination of funding streams;
- accountability to learners and elected representatives of the public.

4. Community Learning Councils should have a duty to consult on and set **guidance on priorities** for funding and provision of adult and community learning within their area, at least every five years, to inform but not dictate public funding (see 8 below). Guidelines should also cover **fee levels, concessions and cross-subsidisation** to encourage access and participation in learning. Providers and funders should be free to set fees based on their judgement of what will be most effective in attracting learners and widening access.
5. Public funding through Local and National Community Learning Councils should seek to raise the **quality of provision** through eight channels:
 - 1) Regular, independent **surveys & research** into adults' aspirations, participation, experience and appreciation of learning, to inform planning and provision;
 - 2) **Adult learner's voice** and representation of learners through elected class contacts and representatives of identifiable groups of learners;
 - 3) **Training, support and development of staff** at all levels, including paid and unpaid educators in the community, voluntary and private sectors, supported by LLUK;
 - 4) Investment in accessible **facilities for learning**: meeting spaces, libraries, equipment, online resources, workshops and other resources in public buildings and work places, wherever there is demand and appropriate supervision;
 - 5) Systematic **feedback** from users, through on site and online feedback forms;
 - 6) Light-touch **quality assurance** standards, along the lines of matrix, for externally moderated self-assessment;
 - 7) Learner-centred self-assessment moderated by Ofsted **inspection**
 - 8) National **learning networks** and centres of excellence to share knowledge, innovation and practice in different fields of adult and community learning (eg citizenship, literacy, numeracy, family learning, sustainable development, etc)

6. All adults should be encouraged to continue learning through a network of advice, guidance and motivation, including
- **learndirect** as a national telephone and online information and advice service
 - locally maintained **national database** of informal as well as formal learning providers, including local community provision;
 - the new **Advancement and Careers Service** for adults;
 - **learning champions**, including Union Learning Reps, voluntary learning advisers and other trained advocates for learning
 - clearer **progression routes** for people engaged in any form of learning
 - active promotion of all provision for learning by Community Learning Councils as well as providers.
7. DIUS should aim to **increase public, private and personal spending** on adult learning by encouraging local and national Learning Promoters and providers to be entrepreneurial, imaginative and innovative in making learning desirable and inclusive. The Department should also **redirect subsidies from training** and vocational courses for employers, which should be normal business expenses like machine tools, office equipment or health and safety, in order to increase spending on self directed learning which enhances the quality of life and well-being of society.

Contemporary Urban Centres offer stimulating venues for the arts, learning and social enterprise. By celebrating, exploring and engaging with the latent talent of the dispossessed, Novas Scarman aims to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion. The vibrant buildings in Liverpool, London and elsewhere offer new opportunities to local communities.

For more details go to: www.novasscarman.org/contemporary-urban-centres

8. As a starting point for a national and local discussion, we propose the following areas as a guide, in order of priority for funding:
- a) people who have had least access to learning and are on low incomes, including older people;
 - b) learning that contributes to **poverty reduction**.
 - c) **family learning and parenting education**, on the basis that social and personal returns are highest and learning within families is the foundation for learning throughout life.
 - d) learning for **environmental sustainability** and reduction in green house gases, extending and building on Every Action Counts, on the basis that these are the two most critical issues for society in the 21st century;
 - e) learning for **health and well-being**
 - f) learning for **community development and social cohesion**;
 - g) learning for **practical politics and citizenship** to enable people to have a more effective say in decisions that affect their lives;
 - h) understanding and use of **new technologies**, including the internet and computers
 - i) learning that enhances **enjoyment and quality of life**.

Local areas and providers may use their judgement to interpret these priorities in ways that suit their area and also set their own priorities in response to local needs, demand and opportunities.

Local areas are encouraged to ensure that a full range of subjects and types of learning are available for all, by using a mixture of concessionary fees and subsidies.

9. We also propose that all publicly funded services should have a general '**duty to support community learning**' by offering spare capacity (buildings, facilities and staff) at or below cost to adult and community learning providers through local learning commissioners.
10. We look forward to seeing these principles incorporated in a **White Paper for Adult and Community Learning**, jointly supported by DCSF, CLG, DEFRA, DfID, DoH, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, OTS and the Prime Minister.

Conclusion

How, where and when people want to learn is unpredictable. Many people who did not get on at school and have struggled in adult life do not think learning is for them. If we can respond to someone's interest in anything and encourage them to do a workshop or a short course about almost anything, we can help them develop their self-confidence and desire to learn.

We urge the government to give local authorities a statutory duty to secure adequate, accessible and affordable opportunities for *all* adults to enjoy learning, and to provide a flexible, accountable and independent system of funding so that community learning providers like ourselves and members of the Community Sector Coalition can create ever more opportunities for people to discover the joy of learning.

Novas Scarman Group

People creating a better world



Andrew Moran, customer at Arlington House training in New Media, who has since gone on into full time employment

Learning with Novas Scarman

Novas Scarman works with some of the most disadvantaged groups in society – people who are homeless, struggling with alcohol, drug addiction, domestic violence and other challenges. These are our customers.

Customer and staff involvement is integral to the Novas group. The Learning and Development Team manage many aspects of that involvement. We offer our customers a wide range of opportunities to help them back into training, education and employment. The NEW programme is a combination of three routes into employment. Each customer is eligible to undertake any part of the programme and enters at the same assessment level where their needs and skills are assessed which results in a specific, tailor made training action plan being drawn up for them to work towards.

The three stands include:

- Learning Programmes that are delivered internally or externally that consist of various courses designed to help the customer's employability
- Employment Tasters that comprise of observational work shadowing work experience, which is participative, and volunteering that is a longer duration and consists of both
- Traineeships, this third route offers customers the chance to become part of the existing staff establishment whilst also undertaking an NVQ in the area of the social enterprise that they are working in.

Each route allows the participant ownership of their learning and progression whilst giving them experience and opportunities to develop. We allow the skills and experience of our customer base to prosper and offer them a platform to express themselves in numerous ways including displaying their artwork or giving them opportunities to train, gain valuable experience and work in the various sector's.

Customers can choose to attend courses from the staff brochure and external training including free literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, the arts and personal development.

What Novas staff say about the programmes that we deliver

Paul Cosgrove was referred to the Novas Employment Works programme after coming out of prison. He completed literacy and IT courses before being accepted on a 12-month support and development traineeship. He is now a qualified Support and Development Worker at a scheme working specifically with ex-offenders.

"I feel that everyday I learn new things and feel that I still have lots and lots to learn."



Michelle Paton, Probation RISE Worker, has set up a support group for Novas Scarman Customers, as well as people within the local community. "Reflections" is a self-help group, facilitated by Michelle and another colleague, and looks at why people feel the need to over eat or under eat. The programme runs on Thursday mornings at the Alima Centre in Liverpool. Specific sessions focus on alternative therapies and healthy eating, and those involved have a chance to try their hand at dance and keep fit.

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The advertisement features a hand holding a blue box labeled 'BOX CLEVER ENTERPRISE' and 'FRAGRANT FLORIST STREET NEWSLETTER'. In the background, several other boxes are visible, some open, showing various images and text.