



**Sara Awan
Liz Richardson**

**Barefoot Basic Skills Work
and Intensive Learning:
Two experimental basic skills
projects**

CASEREport 16

April 2001

ISSN 1465-3001

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Barefoot Basic Skills Work and Intensive Learning:

Two Experimental Basic Skills Projects

Sara Awan and Liz Richardson
LSE Housing, 2001

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Summary of Findings

Background

- In 1999, Trafford Hall, home of the National Tenants Resource Centre, ran a 1 year pilot project, funded by the Adult and Community Learning Fund, to test out two innovative approaches to tackling basic skills problems.
- The two approaches were: Barefoot Basic Skills Worker training, a community training and small grant package to help residents and workers in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to develop and support basic skills projects; and Learning Space, a short intensive residential course for learners with basic skills worries. The target groups were: for Barefoot training, community volunteers and leaders, and frontline staff in social welfare and voluntary organisations; for Learning Space events, individuals with a basic skills need not accessing support. For both, the aim was to attract a mix of men and women, a range of ages, and people from different regions.

The Trafford Hall Experiment in Context

- The Trafford Hall pilot programmes were small-scale, focused on community level action and intensive residential learning. The results of the pilot project were relevant to the broader context of the proposals made in the Moser report, 'A Fresh Start', for a comprehensive national strategy to close basic skills gaps.
- The outcomes of the Barefoot Worker training showed that community action contributed to opportunities for learning, raised the profile of the basic skills agenda, developed community outreach, and helped to tackle immediate issues such as the effects of functional illiteracy on people's lives. The activities of the Barefoot workers also linked to the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal which recommends adults skills development and community self help.
- The outcomes of Learning Space showed that the model helped reach new learners, supported existing learners, helped develop new teaching styles, increased diversity of opportunity in provision. The pilot experienced problems in finding ways to assess and accredit learning gains.
- Both models have the potential for replicability. The Barefoot Worker training package is available to run locally via the Open College Network.

The Courses

- Both programmes were substantially re-designed over the course of the pilot. The main changes were to make the training more practical, hands-on and action focused. Feedback from participants helped to achieve this.
- Overall, 87% of participants on the Barefoot course, and 92% of Learning Space participants rated the courses as good or excellent. The residential setting helped build communication and confidence.

Attendance

- In total, 188 participants attended the pilot training programmes. This was 87% of the target number of participants. Recruitment was a challenge given the time-scale and newness of the idea. Trafford Hall ran a total of 16 weekend events.

- The pilots reached the target group for BBSW, which were community activists and frontline staff in low-income neighbourhoods. Learning Space attracted more people already receiving basic skills support than expected; they were looking for additional help. Three quarters of Learning Space participants were not in paid employment, and half has additional/special needs. Both programmes attracted a good mix of men and women, and of different ages. The majority of participants on both programmes were from the North West, where marketing efforts were most closely focused. In addition, a third of the Barefoot workers came from a mix of 6 other regions of England.
- 54 participants on the Barefoot programme (around half of the total) continued the course after the taster event. This was the target. The taster induction weekends were introduced specially to allow for this expected drop out rate. Around half did not continue because of problems with the training e.g. not relevant, too basic. Around half dropped out for personal or work reasons.
- Nearly all the Barefoot workers came as members of community, voluntary and social care organisations.

Course Outcomes - Barefoot Basic Skills Workers

- All the Barefoot workers who completed the course said they had developed better awareness of basic skill issues as a result of the training. A third learnt new ideas for teaching resources.
- 8-10 months after the training, we tracked around three-quarters of the Barefoot workers who completed the course, and around half of those participants who only attended the taster event. 87% of the respondents who completed the course said that they had been able to take small practical follow up action as a result of the training. Only 21% of the non-completers had done so.
- We looked at 39 individuals, representing 28 different organisations that had taken follow up action after the course. Just over a third of these follow up actions were to push the basic skills agenda in their locality. Around a quarter of the actions were to integrate basic skills support into existing work with residents. A quarter of the outcomes were about providing new basic skills supports.
- There were some key barriers to the Barefoot workers developing local action. These were: lack of support from the workers' organisations; lack of time to develop new work; an insufficiently practical focus in the training; difficulties motivating learners. Some of the Barefoot workers who wanted to volunteer within colleges were blocked from doing so.
- 80% of the participants who completed the Barefoot course passed the Certificate in Basic Skills Awareness, accredited by Merseyside Open College Network.

Course Outcomes - Learning Space

- 74% of the Learning Space participants achieved one or more of their learning goals during the weekend. In addition, the majority of participants said Learning Space had boosted their confidence to learn.
- We tracked two thirds of the participants 8-10 months after the events.
- Around a fifth of the Learning Space participants not already receiving help with basic skills were able to continue with self-directed learning after the event. Another 10% had started a basic skills course as a result of attending. Just under a

fifth of respondents not receiving help before the course tried and failed to enrol in college after Learning Space, as it was an inappropriate environment for them.

- Of the participants who were already in college provision, two thirds said it had helped 'pep up' their existing studies.
- 2 people could not identify any benefits from the course.
- Some participants who wanted to use Learning Space as a springboard to further learning were blocked by lack of access to follow up appropriate provision locally.

Outcomes for the Partners and the Next Stage

- Both the partner delivery organisations have been positively affected by the pilot. For example, Trafford Hall is now trying to integrate basic skills issues into its work across the board such as 'SMOG' tests, which check the readability of its publications. The experience has helped strengthen Trafford Hall's separately funded Family Learning work. West Cheshire College has developed its understanding of the community field and its ways of working with communities.
- The pilot project has led to a second year of programmes. Both types of course have been re-shaped based on the feedback from the first year.

BACKGROUND

Trafford Hall, home of the National Tenants Resource Centre, is a residential training and conference centre based near Chester. Trafford Hall supports community-based projects and professionals working in areas of social exclusion. The organisation received funding from the Adult and Community Learning Fund in 1999 to develop and deliver two types of residential basic skills training courses, called 'Learning Space' and the 'Barefoot Basic Skills Worker' training (BBSW). For both courses Trafford Hall recruited West Cheshire College of Further Education to develop a detailed programme, the content, materials and training methods and to deliver the programme. LSE Housing, part of the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, was funded by the Basic Skills Agency to evaluate these courses using action research methods.

The Barefoot Basic Skills Worker course aimed to attract community participants, including people living and working in low-income neighbourhoods.

The name derives from the simple yet effective method of community learning, which has been adopted in developing countries. The essence of this is to skill up committed volunteers from a community, and equip them with the tool to dispense learning in their own communities. A community that they understand.

(Trafford Hall bid to
Adult and Community
Learning Fund)

The Barefoot Basic Skills Worker model was drawn from the 'Barefoot Doctor' approach, which has been used as a way of successfully delivering medical advice and help in developing countries. The broad aim of the course was to give participants tools to tackle basic skills issues within their communities and help others. The initial aims were to focus the training on how to teach basic skills and how to set up small-scale, locally appropriate, community projects in the participants' areas. Three courses were planned for 1999. Each course involved three weekends at Trafford Hall. Participants would attend an induction weekend as a taster of the rest of the course. The induction weekends were intended to provide participants with a flavour of the course, to enable them to improve their skills level and to achieve a unit of accreditation and/or an assessment towards further qualification. At the end of the taster participants would decide if they wished to train further. People who decided to continue could complete the course by attending a further two weekends. Trafford Hall anticipated that around 20 participants would attend each induction and that around half of those would go on to complete the course. Those participants who continued to the following two weekends would work towards an accredited certificate. After the training, participants were eligible to apply to the Trafford Hall Barefoot Fund for a grant of up to £500 to support their neighbourhood level basic skills work or project.

The second type of residential course that Trafford Hall designed and ran was called Learning Space. This event was aimed at individuals who themselves had a basic skills need. It aimed to offer intensive basic skills teaching and support directly to

people who came from disadvantaged communities, and who may be unable to access local provision, or be too inhibited to do so. The expected outcomes of the training were significant learning gains for participants as a result of the event, on the lines of intensive courses that teach people to drive in a week. Trafford Hall also hoped to help participants retain and develop those gains after they returned home, through self-directed learning or access to further training. Trafford Hall planned a total of four stand alone weekend courses and aimed to provide for 25 people each weekend. Trafford Hall aimed to accredit the programme.

Both courses were ultimately aimed at tackling basic skills gaps, but from different starting points. The two training packages differed in their aims, target audience and expected outputs. They stood separately from each other, although links were made where possible. The LSE evaluation covered the two types of training course, and we present our findings from both training packages in this report. We did not aim to compare the two programmes.

Both of these training programmes offered an innovative approach. The Adult and Community Learning Fund funded this small-scale experiment in tackling poor adult basic skills, using a community development start point, as a pilot project to test the potential and results. The aim of the evaluation was to see if and how the experimental approaches worked, suggest improvements, and look at if they could be more widely replicated. LSE Housing tracked the development and implementation of the pilot project. This report sets out the findings from one year's monitoring of 16 courses, the course participants, and their follow up action outcomes. We used a mix of methods including: observation of events; use of attendance data collected by Trafford Hall; participation in project development meetings; self-completion questionnaires by participants; a postal survey; semi-structured interviews with participants by phone and face-face.

PART 1. THE TRAFFORD HALL EXPERIMENT IN CONTEXT

The report, 'A Fresh Start', was published in 1999. 'A Fresh Start' was based on findings of the Working Group on Adult Basic Skills chaired by Sir Claus Moser. The Moser report brought home the huge amount of catching up that needs to be done to improve levels of basic skills nationally. It proposed a clear, comprehensive and radical national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy. It presented some ambitious targets for expansion and change in basic skills provision and for improvements in adult literacy and numeracy levels. The challenges the report poses for learners, frontline staff, colleges and policy makers remain daunting and essential.

'A Fresh Start' covers a comprehensive strategy that ranges from mass media awareness campaigns to work place study opportunities, and national, regional and local actions. The experimental programmes at Trafford Hall focused on community level action and on intensive residential learning - just small parts of the wider picture. Even so, this experience and the results of the Trafford Hall pilot project support many of the issues and recommendations raised in the Moser report.

The key relevant themes from 'A Fresh Start' are:

- *Reaching new learners and supporting and retaining existing learners*
- *Increasing diversity of opportunities for learning*
- *Improving quality of teaching, assessment and accreditation*
- *Raising the profile of basic skills for organisations and individuals*
- *Developing community level outreach*
- *Developing community led initiatives.*

1.1 Barefoot Basic Skills Worker Training

- *Increasing diversity of opportunity and developing community-based programmes*

'A Fresh Start' strongly recommends that basic skills provision is broadened out to provide a more flexible range of ways people can get help to learn. The Barefoot workers have helped do this in three main ways:

- by integrating basic skills support into their existing social care work such as work with homeless people
- by giving informal one to one support to individuals (friends, family and neighbours) in community settings and/or supporting learners within college provision
- by setting up new community-based and/or led projects. These included a homework club for young carers and basic skills classes in community settings. The pilot project contributed small amounts of grant funding to 3 of the 6 new projects the Barefoot workers developed through the Trafford Hall Barefoot Fund.

In addition, 15% of the participants went on to train for a basic skills teaching certificate or a PostGraduate Certificate in Education.

However, workers in voluntary and social care organisations who wanted to take positive practical action were often blocked from making change locally by a lack of support from senior managers in their organisations. Frontline staff, such as hostel workers, were also concerned about finding time to integrate basic skills work into their existing functions. This suggested that local actions by paid workers needed additional support from the top of those organisations - both senior managers and voluntary committees.

- *Raising the profile of basic skills, community outreach and referral*

Basic skills issues are gaining ground in the political agenda, but much more needs to be done. Following the Barefoot training, 13% of the Barefoot Worker training participants we contacted had worked at ground level to promote awareness of basic skills issues. 'A Fresh Start' also recommends that community and voluntary organisations help in local outreach. The Barefoot workers are making an impact in their local communities by publicising existing provision and encouraging new learners into study.

- *Tackling immediate problems*

Alongside the development of a radically new national strategy, there is a continuing immediate need to alleviate some of the negative effects of functional illiteracy and lack of functional numeracy on people's daily lives. The Trafford Hall Barefoot workers have taken concrete immediate steps to do this, through actions like making written communication such as tenancy agreements for accommodation more accessible. Trafford Hall is now trying itself to build in a 'pro-basic skills' approach to all of its wider community training programmes and information resource work.

- *The role of training*

The Barefoot workers have taken local action to tackle basic skills issues such as raising awareness, helping friends and setting up new projects. The findings of the pilot suggest that people who can and do implement action in their communities are also attracted to training. 83% of the participants who completed the course took local action. Only 23% of the non-completers did. The quality of the BBSW training had a significant impact on the participants' ability to implement ideas back in their neighbourhoods. The quality of training varied between individual events. The quality of training improved over the course of the pilot as the results of the evaluation were fed back in to the delivery. Where training courses went well and had a practical focus, participants reported that training had given them greater awareness, new ideas for teaching resources, other transferable skills such as group work. All these helped them to develop local action. Where training quality was more variable, participants felt frustrated and blocked from developing local action. Just over a third of respondents felt that a lack of practical focus in the initial training

had hampered their efforts to do something. The pilot project was altered over the course of several events to reflect this feedback.

The training delivered skills benefits to participants through:

- learning by doing e.g. using teaching and group work tools
- sharing ideas and experience
- practical hands-on focus
- expert information and advice
- creating space to think and momentum to act

- *Linking to the social exclusion agenda*

The work of the Barefoot workers crosses between the national strategy for basic skills and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). The SEU proposes adult skills development as part of economic development, and community self-help as part of reviving communities. Increasing community participation and action is a key plank in regenerating low-income neighbourhoods, and has a role to play in improving basic skills. The positive action outcomes of the pilot add value to both these agendas.

1.2 Learning Space

- *Reaching new learners, retaining existing learners and diversity of opportunity*

'A Fresh Start' highlights the need to reach 500,000 new learners every year from 2002 if we are to halve the number of functionally illiterate adults by 2010. In order to do this, people need to be offered study opportunities that are attractive to them, and fit with their lifestyles. For many, the conventional college based basic skills course one evening a week doesn't fit easily with their care and work responsibilities. The commitment to a weekly class may be too long term for nervous first time learners. For others, they may not want to attend in a college setting. There is also a problem in retaining learners who are already attending college, partly because of the slow pace of progress. For all these reasons, one proposal is to provide more intensive study programmes, 'including weekend and residential and non-residential summer schools'.

Learning Space tackled these issues from a new angle because it: appealed to new learners; delivered stand alone learning gains for people in moderate need; helped people continue self directed learning; strengthened existing learners commitment; and provided a springboard to learning for those with a higher level of need. The Government's Social Exclusion Unit's has produced a National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. It recommends 'first rung' courses to tempt people back into learning. The Learning Space model could provide this type of skills development in low-income neighbourhoods.

It appealed to new and existing learners because it was intensive and because it was residential. This gave learners time away from home and the distractions that reduce people's ability and energy to learn. It was a short-term commitment that promised

results. New learners came because they wanted to start but couldn't face going to college, and because they liked the idea of getting away for a few days at the same time as learning. People already getting help with basic skills were also attracted to the weekend course to complement their college work and sustain their motivation. A third of respondents already receiving basic skills support said that the course had helped with their college work or increased their confidence with this.

The programme attracted more learners already on adult education courses than expected. This reflected the learners' commitment to make more progress more quickly than their more conventional study structures allowed. It also reflected the colleges' support for a residential basic skills programme, for example the colleges actively promoted the event to their students.

The programme ran over two and a half days. It delivered small but concrete learning gains to participants. 97% of those who attended Learning Space said they felt it had been of benefit. 74% achieved one or more of their learning goals during Learning Space. In addition, participants told us they had grown in confidence, had been able to relax, and had made friends.

In the longer term, 17% of the participants not in college were able to continue with self-teaching using the strategies they learnt on the course once they got home. Another 10% said the Learning Space had given them the kick-start to enrol in a local basic skills course.

Learning Space provides stand alone help for people who need to brush up their skills and those who are able to continue with self directed learning. The BSA estimates that around 60% of those with basic skills needs have only moderate or slight difficulties. For others who need or want more structured help, Learning Space is not an alternative but a complement, or a springboard into follow up learning. However, the problems with mainstream provision identified in the Moser report, such as the patchiness and rigidity of provision, worked against our efforts to provide a complementary service. Just under a fifth of the participants who were not receiving support before the event tried to continue learning when they got home, but could not find appropriate provision.

- *Improving quality of teaching, assessment and accreditation*

The Moser report points to the poor quality and lack of knowledge about effective teaching, lack of appropriate accreditation and assessment as barriers to developing basic skills provision.

Learning Space used an innovative format from the start - short term and residential. In contrast, initially the content and teaching style of the pilot programme were more conventional. All the partners worked hard over the course of the pilot to adjust the content of the residential to give participants maximum benefit. Teaching in the new setting of continuous, residential learning for a short period demanded a significant shift in approach - more 'training', less 'teaching', more variety in teaching methods, more interactive teaching, clearer learning goals, higher expectations of learners,

snappier delivery and more practice time. The residential format pushed the college partners to rethink the effectiveness of their teaching tools. The pilot helped link the tutors to the wider agenda. They felt their job has been made easier more generally through gaining an awareness of the national context.

Learning Space experienced problems in assessing learners' basic skills gains. This issue is highlighted in the Moser report, but the pilot did not manage to resolve these issues. LSE and Trafford Hall were committed to assessing learners' basic skills gains and/or losses, as well as tracking the personal benefits in confidence and motivation. We tried a variety of tools, none of which were able to pick up on the fine grain of their learning outcomes precisely enough, in the short time span. LSE and Trafford Hall also met objections from other practitioners about the idea of testing learners more generally. These objections focused on the idea that testing would be off-putting to new learners, particularly coming at the beginning of their learning programme. Trafford Hall tried to use the pilot project to overcome these worries. Although the pilot did not develop new assessment tools, the experience showed that benefits to learners are enhanced if they have clear goals and can measure their achievements. We welcome the development of fast track adaptable assessment tests by the BSA.

The organisers of Learning Space hoped to accredit the programme, but did not manage to do this in the pilot. This was partly because of the lack of accreditation methods suitable for this 'quick fire' intensive course. The second year of Learning Space is accredited.

1.3 Replicability

- *General issues*

A core element in both Learning Space and the Barefoot worker programmes was the residential venue. A residential programme means there are no worries about getting back home to the children at the end of the day or about preparing meals. Everyone has time to concentrate fully on learning. It has the additional benefit of giving people from low-income neighbourhoods the chance to have a break away in a pleasant environment. Being away from home made Learning Space participants feel less exposed over basic skills difficulties.

Both programmes were national and drew in participants from across different regions of England. This provided a chance for participants to socialise and exchange experiences with others in the same situation and gain support from peers. This networking and sharing of experience could equally happen on a non-residential programme. Depending on the size of area covered, travel time may mean that a residential programme is the most appropriate option.

Both programmes included a fun and varied programme from which people took away real and practical learning tools. Both gave participants recognition and credit for their work.

- *Guideline costs*

The Trafford Hall programmes cost between £60-130/day per person for accommodation and training costs for a group of twenty people. The usual cost is around £75/person for 24 hours for community and voluntary participants. This cost is based on £50/person/day for residential accommodation and training facilities, and £25/person/day for training input. A 5 day Learning Space programme would cost around £375/person. A 6 day Barefoot programme would cost around £450/person. These costs do not include the cost of marketing and administrating the event. They do not include the cost of the staff time needed to develop and organise the event, or the cost of the small grant fund.

- *Barefoot Basic Skills Worker Training - catalysing community-based learning*

The Barefoot Basic Skills Worker model is itself based on the Trafford Hall Gatsby Project. This training and small grant programme covers a range of fields such as crime prevention, developing community enterprises and youth work. Trafford Hall was keen to see how well the community self-help approach would adapt to basic skills provision. Our finding was that participants were able to develop a wider range of small actions than was anticipated, and that these inputs took a more fluid form than the stand alone small community led projects that had originally been aimed at developing.

The key elements of the BBSW model are:

- A quality, consistent training team, with experience of both basic skills and community development
- A hands-on, 'how-to' action planning approach to the training
- A suitable venue, day or residential
- Good marketing to, and recruitment of small community and voluntary groups
- Resource support for training and venue costs, preferably with additional follow up grants or information about where to go next.

Trafford Hall were able to organise this programme as a national centre with experience of running and organising this type of programme for community groups and voluntary organisations. The national role brings some unique benefits, reaching a wide mix of participants, allowing the sharing of experience, and raising the profile of the work.

To add to this unique residential and national role, Trafford Hall is developing ways of rolling out training programmes locally and regionally. It is hoped that the role of Trafford Hall in developing wider networks and bringing people together can remain as a complementary part of this local and regional work. Based on the results of this evaluation, Trafford Hall worked closely with West Cheshire College of Further Education at the beginning of Year 2 to develop a modified programme. The Barefoot Basic Skills Worker Programme now contains 3 accredited units that can be gained by participants during the course. Each of the units is clearly focused on a practical aspect of supporting basic skills that can be readily applied in communities. The key points of the revised programme are:

- The length of the programme remains the same but the units studied are now Basic Skills Awareness, Practical Strategies for Supporting Learners, Practical Project Planning in the Context of Basic Skills.
- In order to accommodate motivated Barefoot workers whose own basic skills may need some uplift, the course is run at Level 1 and Level 2 Mersey Open College Network thus ensuring that everyone who attends can gain some form of accreditation and recognition for their effort.
- All participants who complete the course receive a Kitbag of basic skills tools to take away with them worth £50 and can apply for a small grant of up to £500 to pump prime a local basic skills project.
- Groups of people from the same organisation are encouraged to attend together so that the impact on their return is greater than if just one person attended.

The new modified Barefoot worker training package provides a template that local groups and further education institutions across the country can use to deliver Barefoot Basic Skills Worker training. This training package is available via the Open College Network.

- *Learning Space*

Overall, this model is most suitable for those with low to moderate basic skills needs as a stand-alone tool, with some continued self-directed learning. It also can be useful as a refresher for those already receiving support. However, for those with higher needs the length and level of the programme is not adequate as a stand-alone tool. It can work as a springboard into learning for those who need more in depth and longer term help, if the follow up provision is available locally.

The Learning Space model has 5 key elements:

- Residential and intensive with a mix of people
- Friendly, fun, motivating, confidence building
- Achievable and specific learning targets
- Lively and relevant materials
- Follow up support and/or follow up self directed learning
- Resource support for tutors and learners

The attitude of the basic skills tutors/trainers delivering the event is key. They must agree with the principle of assessment for learners; the possibilities of short term learning gains; and in the benefits of gently pushing learners. The venue is also crucial, where people can feel at home and at ease. Residential events like this require intensive administration and organisation, by someone who has experience of organising. With the right inputs, Learning Space could be replicated regionally or locally. Learning Space relies on individually tailored teaching, rather than a set curriculum, and so is more difficult to provide as an accredited package in the same way as the Barefoot Worker training course. Other organisations wishing to draw on the model and tools that Trafford Hall and West Cheshire College have developed can access advice or consultancy help through Trafford Hall.

1.4 The Role of Colleges and Existing Provision in Relation to the

Trafford Hall Work

The underlying rationale for the pilot project was to develop alternative forms of basic skills provision to existing, predominantly college based, short classes. The reason for this was the relative failure of most existing methods to reach the majority of those in need, retain them, and demonstrate quick returns.

For the community training courses, the aims as they developed were to stimulate community groups and frontline staff to develop new pieces of work that were community based, community led, and preferably community run. This could be both stand-alone projects or integrated into other work. The primary aim was not to develop individual volunteers to work within existing colleges. This would not have either increased the number and type of opportunities for learning, or reached more people, or improved the quality of teaching.

For the intensive residential courses, the aims were to deliver actual basic skills gains for participants in the time given, and provide a follow up learning plan if necessary that met the person's needs. The primary aim was not to help get people into college courses. This would not have overcome the problems of the lack of access and attractiveness of courses, high drop out rates and the slow rate of progress of less intensive learning approaches, such as the 2 hours a week/evening class model.

Neither type of programme was able to operate self sufficiently from the FE sector. It is not possible, or desirable, for alternatives to develop without linking to the infrastructure already in place. For example, Trafford Hall needed the expertise of West Cheshire to run the training; some of the community projects used trained and experienced teachers provided by FE colleges; people on Learning Space who needed higher levels of support needed more structured follow up help from institutions like colleges with the right know-how. But, the gaps in the scope and quality of the existing infrastructure, and differences in approach that we experienced both strengthened the case for alternative programmes like the Trafford Hall pilot, and placed blocks on alternatives developing because they rely on input from adult education services to work. Alternative approaches can complement the mainstream, but getting the mainstream right is the big challenge. The pilot proved how indispensable colleges were but how much they needed to change. This experiment demonstrated that exposure of the mainstream to alternatives, to communities, and to intensive ways of working can positively influence their approach.

PART 2. THE COURSES

2.1 Aims and Objectives of the Courses

Barefoot Basic Skills Worker Training

Trafford Hall's aim throughout the pilot programme was to stimulate and encourage community action on basic skills problems. The initial objective was to run a community training programme that would skill people up to be able to organise and/or deliver a 10 week basic skills programme locally. To do this, the Trafford Hall training programme needed to cover both basic skills teaching/support skills, as well as more general project development and management skills. Trafford Hall specified that the trainers should use tried and tested participatory training methods to help participants to develop these skills.

The pilot programme was a new approach. It was unclear at the beginning whether this approach would attract community participants, and would deliver community outcomes. The aim of the pilot period was to road test the idea and adapt or discard it depending on results.

Three things happened over the course of the pilot period:

- It emerged that the original objective of helping participants develop 10 week local basic skills projects was too prescriptive. Trafford Hall and LSE agreed to adapt this objective to helping participants to develop a variety of practical community led actions, preferably developing a stand alone community project, as alternatives and/or complements to college based provision.
- It emerged that the training package designed and delivered by West Cheshire College to meet these objectives needed adaptations and additions. The training package used was the Certificate of Awareness, accredited by the Merseyside Open College Network (MOCN). West Cheshire College designed the qualification, which focuses on developing an awareness of basic skills issues such as the scale of the problem and how it effects people who face it. This package was effective at delivering on its stated aims of increasing awareness. However, this did not match up to either Trafford Hall's requirements for the course, or the participants' expectations and training needs. It did not help people to become basic skills 'teachers' or give one to one support as promised by the publicity and as many participants wanted. Plus, the course lacked the follow through action component needed to transform heightened awareness into local solutions.
- From these specific problems, it became clear that there was a lack of agreement between the partner organisations over the principles the project was based on. Those principle were: that community input into developing alternative basic skills provision to colleges was a good thing; and that lay people could help provide basic skills supports (but not teaching). There was a lack of emphasis on the possibilities for community input into project development and management,

where the community were not doing the actual teaching. All the partners agreed that the pilot should not focus on training people up to be voluntary helpers within colleges - but what else could lay people do that could help?

- It emerged that although the trainers' basic skills credentials were good, they lacked experience in community training as specified in the trainer contract, and lacked experience of community development.

LSE, Trafford Hall and West Cheshire College worked hard over the course of the pilot to thrash out these disagreements over principles, aims and objectives and implementation. The courses were changed and improved as the pilot developed. The Awareness Certificate was adapted to include some action planning, more community context and more practical ways people could directly help learners. The trainers grew in experience and skill in training delivery. These lessons have been integrated into the second year of the programme. This is described in the final section of this report.

The feedback from participants, collated over whole pilot before and after course changes, reflects these issues and changes. We can also see the initial problems with the pilot reflected in the immediate and longer-term outcomes of the programme. For example, the outcomes of the training are focused on increased personal awareness of basic skills issues, rather community project outcomes.

Learning Space

The Learning Space programme developed in a similar way. The original aim was to replicate a 'learn to drive in a week' style intensive course. The aim was to help participants to gain specific, measurable, basic skills competencies in a short space of time. To do this, the training programme needed to have clear individual learning plans and goal setting, targeted teaching, high expectations of learners, and measurement of achievements. Again, this programme was new and untried. It was not clear in advance if this approach could deliver learning gains. The aim of the pilot period was to try out the framework and adapt or discard ideas depending on results.

Two things happened over the pilot period:

- It emerged that there was some disagreement between Trafford Hall/LSE and West Cheshire College about the validity of this approach, and whether it was possible or desirable to push learners in this way. The trainers' view was that the programme could help learners to develop life skills and boost confidence rather than actual learning gains, and that learners should not be 'tested' as this would damage their confidence.
- The initial training package designed and delivered by West Cheshire College reflected this confusion. It focused on large group work, assertiveness and personal social skills. It did not include individual goal setting or assessment. It did not focus on follow up learning plans.

As with the Barefoot Worker training course, LSE, Trafford Hall and West Cheshire College worked hard to thrash out these issues. After the partners had reaffirmed the

original aims and principles, the training was tweaked and adapted to deliver more of these aims. Unfortunately, the problem of finding suitable accreditation and assessment tools still remained after the need for them had been agreed.

2.2 Other Organisational and Delivery Issues

The proposed programme aimed to deliver a high volume of courses with little time in between. This made it more difficult to integrate feedback and make alterations during the pilot.

Another difficulty in developing the pilot was that the West Cheshire College staff were employed part time. Despite their immense dedication and commitment to the programme, their work contracts and lack of time allocated for development made it difficult to do the additional development work necessary. In the early stages of the pilot, there was as a consequence a lack of co-ordination between team members, and inadequate time for preparation and negotiation with Trafford Hall. The trainers were being paid on an hourly basis rather than the more usual all-inclusive training day rate. This meant that they were less likely to stay on site for the whole course, and in social time. There were many changes of tutor over a weekend (up to 7 different people in the first courses) with no single person clearly in charge of leading and adapting the flow and content of each training course. The changes in personnel and lack of presence on site in social time meant that there were fewer opportunities for participants to develop a relationship with the trainers and have individual and social time with them. In the later stages of the pilot we agreed a small, dedicated team for each training course, with a team leader. This resolved these problems.

2.3 Content of the Courses

2.3.1 BBSW content and feedback

In order to obtain the MOCN Certificate of Awareness, participants were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the problems caused by limited basic skills;
- demonstrate an awareness of the day to day need for basic skills;
- describe basic skills provision in the UK;
- demonstrate an understanding of diagnostic assessment materials;
- demonstrate that materials identified in a case study accommodate the basic skills needs of the learners;
- evaluate their own learning strategies; and
- submit logbook evidence illustrating their evaluation of materials around them to use with people learning basic skills.

83% of participants attending induction events and 90% of those who completed described the content as quite relevant/good to very relevant/excellent.

83% of participants who attended the BBSW induction events commented that the course had met their expectations. Examples of reasons given for the course not

meeting people's expectations were finding the publicity misleading, and expecting a teaching qualification by the end.

- Examples of BBSW sessions

Publicity

The publicity session aimed to encourage participants to recognise what makes publicity accessible to people with basic skills needs and to develop creative ideas for publicity. The session began with tutors mentioning the Basic Skills Agency and the magazine they produce. The tutors laid out a range of publicity materials and the participants had to sort them according to whether they were accessible or non-accessible. Each participant then picked one piece of publicity and made a detailed analysis of its accessibility according to factors such as print size and images used. Finally, the participants worked as teams to put together a novel piece of publicity such as a radio advertisement or a poster.

Group Work

Group discussions were interspersed throughout the programme and focussed on issues related to basic skills awareness such as:

- What do you understand by basic skills?
- How will basic skills awareness help you in your work, community or personally?
- What are the barriers – personal, physical, institutional and practical - to learning, faced by people with basic skills needs.

Exercises on community context

Exercises were set for participants as individuals and for participants to work on as teams in large and small groups. For example, participants filled in questionnaires about basic skills provision in their local area, analysed national statistics reflecting the nature of basic skills needs and were helped to develop individual learning plans for a person known to them who had a basic skills need.

- Examples of positive feedback from participants

The positive feedback on each session was a mix of comments on the specific content of the session, the specific skills development the exercises encouraged, and the general participatory, hand-on training approach. Comments gathered from participants by self-completion questionnaire at the end of the training included:

Publicity

- [This session was an] *opportunity for creativity*
- *We had a chance to bring in the needs of our workplace and target the advert to our users which highlighted certain needs and issues that we hadn't considered before*
- *Learn by doing*
- [I liked] *team work – sharing ideas*

- [I learnt about] *putting materials together quickly with limited means*

Group work

- [The session] *developed my own confidence*
- *Encourages the learning of new ideas and ways of looking at things that you might not think of*
- *Nice to hear the views of others which in turn gives more ideas to consider*
- *Learn from others*
- [I liked] *networking*

Exercises on community context

- *The practical exercises made you really think about the practical difficulties of lack of basic skills and ways of approaching the help aspect and also attracting people to groups*
- *I enjoyed looking at how a session would actually be approached, what methods and materials are useful etc. I also found it eye opening to hear about the obstacles to learning from examples. I found the personal anecdotes and personal examples of practicalities most interesting.*
- *24 hr worksheet – realisation of the basic skills we take for granted*
- [I liked] *practical tasks – I am a practical person!*
- *Creating Worksheets – gave me a greater insight into how instructions and information could be presented for somebody with extreme difficulties*
- [I liked] *particularly teaching strategies*
- [I liked] *breaking down tasks*
- *Get to know each other shield exercise (Participants drew a shield split it into four and drew picture in each segment to represent their best quality, a hobby, moment of fame and what they do for their community)– new way to tackle basic skills. I will use it as resource*
- *Role Plays – fun way to convey ideas in a nutshell*
- *Developed empathy and understanding of person with basic skills needs*
- *A chance to get targeted advice*

- Participants' suggestions for ways to improve the content of BBSW

Two themes emerge from the participants' feedback during the course about ways the course content could be improved. This feedback was used to change the training over the period of pilot.

More emphasis on the community context

31 comments were made across all BBSW weekends indicating that participants would have liked more emphasis to be placed on their community contexts/workplace, specifically comments and suggestions included:

- *Because I am not in a position to give 1:1 tutoring, in my job as a housing officer;*
- *More life skills;*
- *More practical;*
- *It was assumed no one knew anything about basic skills. There were general assumptions about what we know;*

- *Participants should bring evidence of situations in own community setting for advice;*
- *Contacts in participant's local area so we can help out;*
- *Include a guest speaker;*
- *As I do not work in a learning environment or face to face with people with basic learning needs I felt more practical work such as creating materials and displays would have helped me personally;*
- *I would like more participation from participants using their own experience and real life situations;*
- *Use an ice breaker to allow people to talk about their context and agenda;*
and
- *Include a tutorial session.*

More emphasis on practical teaching methods

14 comments were made across induction events and follow on weekends indicating ways in which more emphasis should be laid on practical teaching methods, specifically:

- *More time to look at resources;*
- *More on teaching methods;*
- *More resources;*
- *More on presenting materials and the skills needed to do this;*
- *How to teach the alphabet and the forming of letters;*
- *Examples for workbooks on spelling, maths and writing. This may not be relevant for everyone but the army has limited resources available so fresh ideas are needed at the unit level; and*
- *More emphasis on numeracy.*

- **Accreditation**

The BBSW induction programme was not accredited as Trafford Hall had originally hoped. Participants who completed three weekends worked towards a Basic Skills Certificate of Awareness accredited by Merseyside Open College Network [MOCN] at Level 2. If they failed to achieve that they could be awarded a college certificate dependant on merit. Participants were awarded the MOCN Certificate on the basis of a portfolio that they put together during the remaining weekends and in their own time.

2.3.2 Learning space content and feedback

Unlike the Barefoot Worker training package, the Learning Space programme was individually tailored for each participant, to suit his or her needs. Individual learning plans and appropriate learning tools were negotiated with participants using:

- i. Background information collected by Trafford Hall, by telephone, pre-course;
- ii. Strengths and weaknesses questionnaire which tutors completed with participants to identify skills participants would like to improve; &
- iii. A goal setting exercise (used from the second event onwards).

Each participant chose a set of activities for their individual learning plan from a menu. Individual learning plans included:

- Practising days of the week, matching words to pictures, practising skills required for using a till and writing a word beginning with each letter of the alphabet, doing a wordsearch;
 - Writing a letter to a friend, writing a letter of application for a job, one to one work with a tutor writing messages which she spoke, filling in cheques and paying in slips;
 - Practising writing own address, copying sentences, practising the alphabet, matching signs to words, writing a word to illustrate a picture;
 - Exercises to practice punctuation and capitals;
 - Working through numeracy exercises;
 - Wordsearches, writing poems and messages for greetings cards which participant could take home to use, work on homophones;
 - Practising informal letter writing;
 - Work on spelling, days of week and months of year;
 - Practising spelling and writing a letter;
 - Work on punctuation; &
 - Work on formal letter writing and report writing.
- Working with others

All participants took part in:

- i. a warm up exercise where participant got to know each other;
- ii. a treasure hunt to facilitate and improve teamwork, communication skills, following instructions and sequencing events, within an informal and enjoyable context.

Most participants also did some paired work and took part in an informal team quiz in the evening.

- Positive feedback from participants about Learning Space

TABLE 1. What participants liked about Learning Space.

	No. of respondents mentioning
Suited me/had the right things in it	20
Helped me work with others	15
Computer work	9
A sustained period of learning	5
Specific learning techniques	5
Total responses	54

From 64 respondents, in response to open ended questions

Working with others

15 participants commented that the activities on the course helped them to work with others.

I enjoyed it because it's not like a classroom. It's different to college. There, they all do the same things. Here we can all do our individual thing. Also, here you can get help from the other learners, from the table itself if they've been there and done it. At college you can't look at the person next to you and you have to ask the teacher rather than get help from classmates.

Male, aged 28 in basic skills provision

Computer work

9 participants particularly enjoyed the opportunity to have a go on laptop computers. One participant commented that he liked working on the computers as it reinforced his existing learning – both IT skills and using IT for basic skills. For some participants this was their first opportunity to use a computer.

Sustained period of learning

5 participants identified the sustained period of learning the course offered as of particular benefit.

I didn't know what to expect. It woke me up about it. I think oh I'll do it tomorrow but tomorrow never comes. If I had transport I would go to college. I liked the 20 words to learn to spell task, knowing the task means you're halfway there its knowing how to start off. It was a good idea it closed your life down I went there for the weekend and saturated myself in it which was good. It was like a holiday. I'd like to go for a week

70 year old retired male without qualifications

Learning techniques

5 participants identified specific learning techniques which tutors showed to them as aspects of the course they particularly enjoyed. For example:

- one participant liked the 'look, say, cover' method of learning how to spell words
- another participant liked the idea about carrying an old address book where you write your commonly miss-spelt words so you can look them up by the first letter and liked the worksheets on their/they're/there "*because it tells you the rules for how to use them*".
- one participant had been working on his punctuation (commas, full stops, and capitals) and his spelling. He made progress with this "even though I'm getting to those stages at college". For example the tutor had given him a sheet of the rules for using capitals which "*put it straight*".
- another commented "*I'm a little bit more confident now.*". He has learnt techniques over the weekend such as how to sound out letters in a word when reading

- One participant came to improve her spelling to use in letter writing. She had a “*breakthrough*” during the weekend with her spelling using one of the techniques the tutors suggested – to photograph the word in your head. “*I saw it for the first time ever!*”

- Participants’ suggestions for ways to improve the content of learning space

Need more practice time	10
Need for reinforcement of what learnt	9

10 participants on Learning Space felt that they did not have sufficient time during one weekend to practice what they had learnt. 9 said that they would have liked the chance for reinforcement of what they had learnt.

- Accreditation

Trafford Hall had originally hoped to accredit Learning Space. The trainers from West Cheshire College felt that one weekend was insufficient time to cover enough material with groups of participants having such diverse basic skills levels to lead to an accredited certificate. All participants on Learning Space received a certificate of attendance.

2.4 Delivery of the Courses

2.4.1 BBSW delivery and feedback

- Feedback from participants

Feedback from participants shows that they were satisfied with delivery of the training overall. On average: 85% of participants rated the teaching of the courses as good to excellent; 83% of participants rated the pace and style of the course as about right and 86% of participants found the materials on the course accessible. The factors that participants across courses identified positively were that the tutors were helpful, supportive and responsive and that their approach was relaxed. Participants commented positively on the variety of teaching methods and the use of small and large group work. However, there were a substantial number of specific critical comments about the delivery of the courses.

- Participants' suggestions for ways to improve the delivery of BBSW

TABLE 2 Ways in which delivery of BBSW course could be improved

	No. of responses
Accessibility of materials	22
Pace & style of courses	17
Accreditation process	15
Structure of the whole course	7
Total	61 responses

36% of those responses were suggesting that the materials could be more accessible.

Suggestions made during induction events included:

- *A folder of handouts/booklet given at beginning, containing all the information as a training pack, so you know where it all goes;*
- *A workbook for the whole course would have enabled students to anticipate what would be involved, flag up concerns and get ahead with any research they wanted to do;*
- *More visual aids;*
- *Include IT;*
- *Group presentations;*
- *Bin the Video (the tutors did cut out the video); and*
- *Additional worksheets to reflect on afterwards.*

Suggestions made by a third of those who completed the training course included:

- *Number handouts; and*
- *Give handouts in an appropriate sequence at the start of the course.*

28% of comments related to the pace and general style of the courses.

None of the participants said that they had found the pace of the training too fast. 15% of participants on the induction events described them as slow and repetitive. 10% of participants who completed the training found the pace too slow. They would have preferred shorter, more intensive days. Eight people suggested that better time management would enable the course to be condensed. 12 participants who completed the course described the delivery as disjointed and inconsistent as a result of:

- *Too many tutors;*
- *Tutors not working well together as a team;*
- *Some tutors were very motivated others were vague; and*
- *Rushed.*

The tutors did respond to these comments, for example by speeding up the pace, and reduced the numbers of tutors working on the programme.

29% of those who completed BBSW (constituting 25% of total suggestions made) found the accreditation process difficult to follow.

Suggestions included:

- *Clarify aims objectives requirements including purpose of portfolio at the start*
- *Relate sessions to criteria as taught and needed for portfolio*

One participant did not think that accrediting the course and the consequent work involved were relevant to her needs.

“I felt it was more important to some tutors to get us a qualification and therefore a lot of time was spent doing that filling in work. I thought there would be more time spent on practice - working 1:1 in small groups like Learning Space. Ideally I would have liked to have basic skills link in each area where Barefoots could offer their services”

13% of participants who completed the course (11% of total suggestions made) felt that the course as a whole lacked structure.

Suggestions included:

- *Use a more logical structure; and*
- *Deal with the same subjects in one session.*

2.4.2 Learning Space delivery and feedback

- Feedback from participants

92% of participants on Learning Space rated the delivery of the courses as good to excellent overall. Participants identified similar positive aspects as with the Barefoot training, that the tutors were helpful, supportive and responsive. In addition, participants on Learning Space characterised the tutors as sensitive, not condescending, adaptable and good at pacing work at an individuals level.

61% of participants found the pace of the course about right. However, 18% found it too fast/advanced, and 12% found the pace too basic/slow.

- Participants' suggestions for ways to improve the delivery of Learning Space

Very few participants identified specific ways of improving the delivery of the course.

Three participants on Learning Space commented that there were insufficient numbers of tutors. The tutors themselves found that it was difficult to give as much 1:1 support as they would have ideally liked to. This was partly because two tutors were needed to staff the computer session, which left only one tutor with the rest of the group. In addition, at the start of the pilot the tutors found it difficult to manage the high level of additional needs that participants had. In later events people with additional support needs were encouraged to bring support workers and/or friends.

- Learning Space Participants who left early

4 participants left Learning Space early because they were not enjoying the weekend. Reasons participants gave for not enjoying the weekend included:

- Participants going through drug/alcohol rehabilitation and finding a weekend learning too intensive. The support worker accompanying these participants felt this had had a negative effect on their self-esteem. He suggested that it would be useful if Trafford Hall produced guidelines for those referring. Guidelines were drawn up for later events.
- Health reasons.
- One young man felt isolated. He attended with people from a training course he was on. He did not class these as his friends and would have preferred to attend with a friend.

PART 3. WHO CAME

3.1 Administration of the Courses

- Recruitment and promotion

Trafford Hall promoted the course through existing and new links including:

- A mailing to all people and organisations on the Trafford Hall existing database;
- An advertisement in the Health Visitor Journal;
- Information to a Trafford Hall community advisory group;
- Information to Councils for Voluntary Services. This included direct information to Directors of Councils for Voluntary Services in Birmingham, Manchester, London, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The National Association of Council for Voluntary Services (NACVS) included an article about the courses in one of their newsletters;
- Sending out information about the courses to 1200 organisations on the National Housing Federation's mailing list; and
- Promotion of the courses through individual contacts and opportunistic links.

In total 3000 invites, 1000 flyers, 1500 posters and 1000 booking cards were sent out.

- Selection of participants

Both programmes were open to anyone who was keen and interested in attending. Selection was based on self-assessment. The publicity highlighted the audience that the courses were aimed at - new (or other) learners for Learning Space, and active community volunteers and frontline workers for Barefoot workers. In addition, the structure of the Barefoot worker course, with a taster induction weekend helped people decide how relevant and appropriate the programme was for them. This was done mostly on a self-selection basis, with some informal assessment and assistance from the tutors. Self-selection was used because participants' personal motivation is key to the success of programmes of this type.

- Charges

In line with accepted good practice in basic skills provision, Learning Space was free to individual learners. The grant from Adult and Community Learning Fund covered the cost of accommodation, meals, use of the training facilities, all materials, and tutor support. Learners had to pay their own travel costs to the venue. A high number of people who booked to attend Learning Space did not show up. A nominal charge may help reduce the number of dropouts. A nominal charge reflects and reinforces personal motivation to a relatively big commitment such as a residential training course.

For the Barefoot Workers courses, participants came as members of organisations. Using the experience of running previous community training programmes, Trafford Hall made a nominal charge of £5.00 to participants for the course. Participants (or

their organisations) had to cover their own travel costs. In addition, Trafford Hall asked for a refundable deposit of £50 for each training place, or a letter of guarantee. This was done to minimise the amount of non-attendance that can be common on community training and conference events of this type.

- Childcare

4 participants brought their children with them, and 10 children came in total. They were cared for within a crèche. Trafford Hall provided educational activities for children as well as entertainment and care. This also helped prompt adults in wanting to continue learning together with children on return from Learning Space.

3.2 Attendance

In total, 188 participants attended Learning Space or BBSW during 1999. This was 87% of the target Trafford Hall set for attendance across all courses. 16 weekend courses were delivered. This included 6 BBSW events, 12 BBSW follow on events and 4 Learning Space events.

TABLE 3. Numbers attending events

	Number	% of target
BBSW Induction	114	95%
BBSW Complete course	54	90%
Learning Space	74	74%

BBSW had 10% of places unused on the full programme. Learning Space had 25% of places unused. Recruitment and bookings were organised by Trafford Hall. Trafford Hall found it difficult to translate need for the programme, and many enthusiastic expressions of interest, into actual attendance. The difficulties with attendance numbers were partly due to an underestimation of the scale of organisational input needed by Trafford Hall, and partly because of the difficulties in reaching both learners and active community members. Trafford Hall found that personal contact, proactive marketing and direct outreach were the most effective ways of attracting people onto the courses. Some people who booked places on courses did not turn up. We discussed this further in Section 3.1 on Charges

3.2.1 How participants heard about the course and why they came

- BBSW

The majority of participants (88%) who attended the Barefoot training course belonged to a voluntary, community or other social care organisation. Those participants heard about the course through that organisation (see Section 3.3.2 on characteristics of participants for more detail on the nature of these organisations).

The publicised aims of the course were to help community volunteers and workers to take direct action to tackle basic skills problems in their neighbourhoods. Participants came who wanted to do something to help on basic skills, in response to the publicity. Some of those attending were already familiar with Trafford Hall's community training course.

- Learning Space

TABLE 4. How Learning Space participants heard about the course

	Total	%
Housing route	23	36%
College	18	28%
Other organisations	8	13%
Friend/relative	5	8%
Previous contact with Trafford Hall	3	5%
Non response	7	11%

Learning Space participants came as individuals, not as representatives of an organisation, and so were potentially more difficult for a national organisation to reach. Attendees heard about the course through a diverse range of channels. Around a third of participants heard about the course and were referred to it through their tenant group or through an organisation providing support and accommodation to participants either because they were homeless, going through drug or alcohol rehabilitation, or had mental health problems. Other organisations that referred people to the programme include job-training schemes a dyslexic support service and a local information centre. One local college referred participants to the course. Four participants who attended the Learning Space course thought that it was a committee skills course.

Conversations with people who referred individuals to the Learning Space courses suggest that participants needed significant encouragement to attend. Community workers said that they identified people with basic skills problems to refer who also had additional needs such as low levels of confidence, or people who would particularly appreciate the chance to get away. One worker referred to the event as '*an unusual opportunity for those caught in a poverty trap*'. Personal contact with potential learners by intermediary support workers was an effective way of reaching participants for Trafford Hall. In one case a referrer attended the course to check its suitability. 10 people also came on the course with a friend or support person.

Telephone follow up indicates that knowledge of the Learning Space opportunity was spread by word of mouth and that, in addition to referral by organisations, there was some self referral.

Participants on both Learning Space and the Barefoot worker courses identified the subsidised cost as a big incentive to attend. Some participants also had their travel

expenses paid by their organisations. They said that they could not have attended without this financial support.

3.3 Participants

3.3.1 Where participants came from

Three fifths of BBSW participants (61%) and four fifths of Learning Space participants (83%) came from the North West region. Other BBSW participants were spread relatively equally across 6 other regions of England, including 12% from London and the South East. Nearly all of the remaining Learning Space participants were from Yorkshire. Learning Space is for individuals who want to learn, and so was more likely to attract people within easy travelling distance of the venue. The Barefoot Worker courses were aimed at community activists and others who are more prepared and more familiar with the idea of travelling longer distances to residential conference and training events.

3.3.2 Types of organisation - Barefoot workers

For the Barefoot worker training courses, we were particularly interested in what sorts of people and organisations wanted to help others with basic skills in their neighbourhoods. We classified participants attending BBSW according to whether or not they belonged to a community or voluntary organisation, and whether they were a paid employee or a volunteer.

- Representation of different types of organisations

Most participants attracted to BBSW came from within organisations. A small proportion of participants (12% of people on induction events, 4% of completers) who attended did not belong to any organisation, for example, student teachers.

A wide range of organisations was represented. We classified the organisations from which participants came into 4 groups:

TABLE 5. Range of organisations represented on Barefoot training

	as % of all belonging to an organisation	as % of all induction participants
Social care voluntary organisations	38%	33%
Resident groups/Small-scale community orgs.	34%	30%
Local government services	24%	21%
Medium scale community organisations	4%	4%
No organisation	N/A	12%

The majority of participants attending BBSW came from social care voluntary organisations. This category includes a range of organisations. For example: hostels and projects for the homeless; voluntary youth organisations; organisations working with people going through drug or alcohol rehabilitation; charities supporting people with hearing impairments or mental health problems; organisations providing employment training. The majority of those working as employees within these organisations worked directly with people with basic skills needs. A few participants worked within such organisations in an administrative role within which they are involved in developing new projects and bidding for new funding. 30% of all participants on induction weekends came from resident groups or small community organisations. 21% of all participants on induction events were from organisations that have secure funding and form part of local government services. For example one participant was a registered care officer for a health authority and another is a support worker for the mentally ill. 4% of participants came from medium sized community groups. For example two participants came from a community business trust and four worked within community centres as volunteers.

- Paid attendees and volunteers

Participants belonging to organisations were split roughly equally, across induction events and the whole course, between people attending in a paid capacity and people attending as volunteers.

TABLE 6. BBSW participants by volunteer or paid staff member

	Inductions - number	Inductions %	Complete course - number	Complete course %
Paid member of organisation	52	46%	25	46%
Volunteer within organisation	48	42%	27	50%
Not a member of any organisation	14	12%	2	4%
Total	114	100%	54	100%

Paid employees were in the majority across all categories except residents' groups/small community organisations. Within this category volunteers constituted 88% of participants at induction events and 94% of those within this category who completed.

TABLE 7. BBSW participants by organisation and status

Organisation	Paid worker	Volunteer worker	Total
Social care voluntary org.	11	9	20
Residents' group	3	15	18
Local government	9	3	12
Medium community	2	0	2
Total	25	27	52

- Who completed the course

The BBSW programme was designed to give people a 'taster' of the course before they committed themselves to doing the whole qualification. Trafford Hall anticipated that around half of the people who attended induction weekends would want to continue, or feel it was appropriate. This did happen in practice. 54 out of the 114 participants attending BBSW induction 'taster' events continued onto the follow on weekends. No one who wanted to continue with the training was prevented from doing so. We wanted to know whether participants were more or less likely to complete the course depending upon whether they belonged to an organisation and if so what sort of organisation.

TABLE 8. No. of participants by type of organisation who completed the course

Organisation	Induction only	Completion	% who completed
Local Government	23	12	52%
Social Care voluntary org.	37	19	51%
Medium community	4	2	50%
Residents' group	34	16	47%
Individuals – No org.	14	11	79%

The proportion of participants who did not complete is about the same (i.e. 50% non-completion) across all organisations. However a greater percentage (79%) of participants who did not belong to any organisation did not complete the course.

We found that there were marked differences between events in the proportion of people who decided to continue. The proportion of people who dropped out ranged from 23% to 90% between different taster events. This was partly a result of the differences in the quality and content between events. For example, those taster events with a high drop out rate were also rated by participants as slow and repetitive.

People decided not to continue with the qualification because of reasons to do with the training, and partly because of reasons outside of Trafford Hall's control. We talked to 45% of those who did not continue the training (27 people). 13 people focused on problems with the training or organisation of the course. 14 people focused on personal or work reasons for dropping out.

TABLE 9. Why people did not continue training

Reason given for not continuing	Number of people
<i>About the training</i>	
• Course covered old ground	4
• Pace too much/under-confident	3
• Content Irrelevant to work or interests	3
• Unable to organise childcare	1
• Couldn't afford travel/too far away	2
<i>About the participants</i>	
• Work reasons	5
• Personal reasons	4
• Didn't want to attend alone and friend could not attend	3
• Illness	2
Total	27

3.3.3 Types of people - Learning Space

Participants attending Learning Space were grouped by age, gender, employment status, whether or not they were in existing basic skills provision, basic skills needs and additional needs.

- Age

The ratio of men to women attending Learning Space was 5:4. Over half (56%) of participants were under 35 years old. 80% were between 16 and 45 years of age.

TABLE 10. Age range of participants attending Learning Space

Age range	Number of people	%
16-25	13	22%
26-35	20	34%
36-45	14	24%
46-55	6	10%
56-65	5	8%
66+	1	2%
Total	59	100%

- Economic activity

Three-quarters of Learning Space participants were not in paid employment. The remaining quarter were working full or part time, or on a training scheme. In addition, 12 participants, for example some of those out of work, did voluntary work.

TABLE 11. Learning Space participants - economic activity

	Number	%
Off sick/unemployed	42	71%
Working full or part time	11	19%
On training scheme	3	5%
Retired	3	5%
Total	59	100%

- Existing basic skills supports

Three fifths (58%) of Learning Space participants were not receiving support with basic skills or in other forms of education.. Around a third were already in basic skills classes or other supports before they came on Learning Space.

TABLE 12. Basic skills provision being accessed by Learning Space participants

Provision	Number	%
Not in provision	34	58%
In basic skills college provision	18	30.5%
In other education/training	5	8.5%
In other basic skills provision	2	3%
Total	59	100%

95% (61 out of 74) of all those attending had a basic skills need as assessed by the tutors. 10 of the 74 participants were friends and supporters that participants brought with them and so were not assessed. Half of all of the 64 learners had additional needs. 25% of all learners had a mental health problem. 16% (10 people) of all learners had multiple additional needs, such as people with a learning difficulty and mental health problems.

- Learning Space participants with additional needs (from 64 learners only)

Half of all of the 64 learners had additional needs. 25% of all learners had a mental health problem. 16% (10 people) of all learners had multiple additional needs, such as people with a learning difficulty and mental health problems.

TABLE 13. Additional needs of Learning Space participants

Additional need	Number of learners	%
Mental health problem only	13	20%
On probation	5	8%
Dyslexia	5	8%
Learning difficulty	4	6%
Mental health problem plus other illness	3	5%
Other illness/disability	2	3%
Total	32	50%

PART 4. IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

4.1 Immediate Outcomes for BBSW courses

The outcomes reported by participants immediately after the BBSW course were:

- an increased awareness of basic skills issues. All participants who completed the course said they had gained this;
- new ideas for teaching resources. A third mentioned this as a benefit of the training;
- other transferable skills. A small number (4%) highlighted this.

In addition, 11% of participants who attended the whole BBSW course described increased confidence in themselves as a result of the Barefoot experience.

- Increased awareness of basic skills issues

Written feedback from participants included:

An understanding of the nature of basic skills needs

- *One thing that stood out for me was at work we teach basic life skills. But our client group needs basic skills in order to be able to understand instructions etc. We must address this.*
- *[I gained] an understanding of the range of difficulties facing people with learning skills and that these are experienced in different situations in every day tasks and to varying degrees.*
- *[I gained] an awareness of the range and complexity of the difficulties and barriers to learning experienced by a person with poor basic skills.*
- *[I gained] greater awareness of the far reaching affects of lack of basic skills.*
- *There is more to basic skills than I realised.*
- *[I learnt] how many skills I take for granted.*

Empathy and understanding in relation to a person with basic skills needs

I learnt.....

- *to stop and think and weigh up a situation before voicing.*
- *not to prejudge others abilities.*
- *tolerance to others needs.*
- *developed a sense of empathy/understanding.*

The numbers in need and their demographic characteristics

I learned about...

- *the scale of the numbers in need.*
- *Basic Skills Agency facts and figures.*

Some appreciation of the various ways they could help people with basic skills needs

I learned about.....

- *the value of passing on information.*
- *overcoming barriers to learning.*
- *some interesting ways of assessing peoples basic skills needs how to address these needs in a helpful constructive way and enough general information about what to expect from the course.*
- *identifying basic skills needs.*
- *identifying the problem and possible supports available.*
- *The importance of making literature accessible.*
- *producing more accessible materials.*
- *How to approach people about developing their basic skills.*
- *Knowledge about provision available within my area.*

- New ideas for teaching resources

Participants who said that they had gained new ideas for teaching resources referred to an appreciation of :

- *The number of day to day situations that can be used as a learning resource.*
- *How to design a worksheet. To look at solutions to problems from different angles.*
- *How to make learning fun.*
- *Practical ways of overcoming barriers i.e. need to focus on individual their strengths and needs.*
- *Work plan, breaking things down into manageable chunks, planning in detail to develop learning materials.*
- *Making resources accessible.*

- Other transferable skills

Participants who described developing transferable skills/knowledge through attending the induction commented positively on the following aspects of training:

- *Group work – breaking barriers.*
- *Better understanding of group dynamics – useful for facilitating.*
- *Using the shield exercise as a warmer activity.*
- *What I have been doing with students is OK but I do need a qualification.*
- *The benefit of multifunctional activities.*

A few participants felt that the Barefoot experience had enhanced their skills as a trainer/group facilitator.

- Accreditation

80% of participants achieved the full MOCN accredited Certificate in Basic Skills Awareness. 10 participants (19%) achieved a college certificate but did not achieve the certificate accredited with the Merseyside Open College Network. One participant did not achieve any certificate despite a high level of ongoing support from

the tutors. The tutors reported that a small number of people discussed joining a basic skills course for themselves. They knew of one participant who had done this.

4.2 Immediate Outcomes for Learning Space courses

- Learning outcomes

We looked at 64 learners across all four learning Space events (not including the 10 supporters). 73% of participants achieved one or more of their learning goals during Learning Space. 47% achieved all of the goals that they had set themselves during the weekend.

TABLE 14. Number of learners and goals achieved over 4 Learning Space events

	Event 1	Event 2	Event 3	Event 4	Total
Achieved all goals	0	11	12	7	30
Achieved one of goals	6	1	0	10	17
Did not achieve any goals	2	2	0	0	4
Non response	5	6	0	2	13
Total	13	20	12	19	64

These achievements varied across the programme as Trafford Hall, LSE and West Cheshire College worked together to tighten up the programme and approach. Overall a much higher proportion of participants achieved one or all of their goals in the three later events than in the first event. There was no structured goal setting with participants during the first Learning Space weekend. Later Learning Space events laid more emphasis on individually tailored goal setting. The tutors worked with each participant to set specific, measurable and achievable targets. These learning targets were used as a benchmark against which participants could measure their gains. The specific areas for improvement that participants identified included:

- learning spelling strategies
- brushing up on addition for shopping bills
- improving handwriting
- building confidence in form filling.

In addition, participants highlighted more general areas in which they wanted support such as 'to feel confident with maths'.

- Additional outcomes

TABLE 15. Other benefits of learning space

Reported benefit	No. of people mentioning
Increased confidence	24
A holiday/relaxed atmosphere	14
Made friends	13
Total	51

Learning Space participants commonly attributed increased confidence to the experience

Nearly half of the Learning Space participants indicated that attending the course had increased their confidence. Some were more confident in the particular skills they had practised. Comments included:

I am generally confident but I was nervous before I came here. I feel great now and want to start a computer course.

35 year old woman, not in college

I would like to follow it up with an NVQ Level 1 in childcare – The tutor said I should do. She made me feel confident and believe in myself

40 year old mother, not in college

One participant commented that she liked receiving certificates:

Like when I got my weight-watchers certificate it boosted my confidence.

14 participants found the weekend relaxing.

The weekend has been perfect. A chance to relax. I would like to repeat. Being at your ease is the biggest part of learning. When I did a bookkeeping course the tutor put me off - she stood at the front at it was very formal. Here it has been an informal and friendly atmosphere– brilliant!

45 year old male, not in college

13 participants made friends during the weekend. Follow up indicates that some participants maintained these friendships through telephone calls and writing to each other.

Meeting the other people on the course I realised how much my English had improved and how much more confident I was. I helped people whilst I was there and that made me feel that I wasn't useless and that I was a capable I though bloomin hell wow. I was helping one girl out and then another girl came along and asked me for my opinion. I also helped people with their Math. College isn't a lot of hours. I came away from the weekend knowing people I was involved with better than I know people at college.

34 year old woman in basic skills provision

PART 5. LONGER TERM OUTCOMES

5.1 Longer Term Outcomes for BBSW courses

At the end of the training course, all participants described being more confident and motivated to support others with their basic skills than before the training. We looked at whether they had been able to translate this new confidence and motivation into live action back on the ground. We contacted 63 out of all 114 BBSW participants around 8-10 months after the training. This group included a mix of people who dropped out after the taster events, and people who had completed the course. Overall, three fifths (62%) of the respondents had taken action to tackle basic skills issues in their neighbourhoods as a result of the course. The proportion of people who had taken follow up action was greater for those who had completed the course. The proportion of people who completed the course and took action was 83%.

39 different people, representing 28 different organisations, had taken practical local action to tackle basic skills problems. Participants reported a total of 69 outcomes. The number of outcomes reported by each participant ranged from one to six different actions. All of these actions were felt by participants to be as a result of the course. We classified these outcomes into one of four categories:

- Advancing the basic skills agenda
- Adding value to existing work
- New work
- Personal development

Just over a third of the reported outcomes (25 out of 69 outcomes) related to advancing the basic skills agenda. This included actions such as making written documents more accessible. 17 outcomes related to providing new basic skills supports. 17 out of the 70 outcomes related to adding value to existing basic skills work. 10 outcomes were related to personal development for the Barefoot workers, such as starting a basic skills teaching qualification.

TABLE 16. Action outcomes from Barefoot worker training courses

	Number of outcomes
Advancing the Basic Skills Agenda	
• Made written communication more accessible	7
• Signposted people to appropriate basic skills support	6
• Promoted an understanding of basic skills needs amongst others	8
• Addressed basic skills needs within other non-basic skills work	4
<i>Sub total</i>	25
New Work	
• Provided 1:1 support to people who otherwise were not receiving support	11
• Set up new projects	6
<i>Sub total</i>	17
Adding Value to Existing Basic Skills Work/Provision	
• Provided 1:1 support within existing basic skills provision	12
• Training complemented existing work	5
<i>Sub total</i>	17
Personal Development	
• Started City & Guilds Course in basic skills teacher training	8
• Started a PGCE	2
<i>Sub total</i>	10
<hr/>	
TOTAL	69

- Advancing the basic skills agenda

Made written communication more accessible

7 Barefoot workers made the written information that they use within work more accessible. For example, housing association, residents groups and a youth organisation changed leaflets, and/or annual reports to make them more accessible to readers. All used the SMOG test to check readability (SMOG is a way of checking things like the length and complexity of sentences and paragraphs). Participants have changed the content of materials they use within training activities or work generally. For example, one participant changed the worksheets she uses within her youth work. Another participant who works in housing now writes letters to tenants using simple texts, has simplified the content, and made the type face and presentation of Licence Agreements more accessible.

Sign-posted new learners to provision

6 participants have sign-posted people with a basic skills need to appropriate basic skills provision. For example, a participant who works in a hostel made a link with her local college so that she can refer hostel users. Two of the

Barefoot workers sign-posted participants to the Learning Space course and accompanied them to it. One of these participants referred people he met within his voluntary work at a drug rehabilitation centre, the other advised her three sisters. Another participant suggested to a neighbour that he attend a basic skills course. That neighbour is now in education and considering doing GCSE's. In all these cases, respondents told us that this work had been possible because of the homework session on the course. During the homework session on the course participants were required to investigate and document basic skills provision within their local area. During this exercise many participants forged useful links with basic skills providers.

Promoted basic skills awareness amongst others

8 participants have promoted awareness amongst others. Two participants described raising the issues covered in the course in staff meetings to provoke a change of attitudes amongst other staff. Two participants belonged to an adult education political discussion group. These participants arranged for another Barefoot worker to come to the group to tell them about the course. These participants have been awarded a Trafford Hall Barefoot Fund grant of £500 to enable the whole group to attend a BBSW taster session at Trafford Hall. This has since led onto the development of a new community based basic skills class. One participant attended a seminar and was able to feedback to the seminar organisers that the materials would not have been accessible to people with basic skills needs. Two people gave presentations about the BBSW training to organisations within their local area.

Addressed basic skills needs as a separate issue within work

4 participants reported addressing basic skills issues as a secondary issue within their work. For example a hostel project worker explained:

Because of my awareness I think about it more now. I only tend to work with people for a short time, but it is one of the things I bring into a conversation when talking about a move-on plan. I wasn't raising the issue in move-on plans before.

Another participant who works in customer services for a housing association explained that she is more understanding to tenants within her role. A support worker with the homeless now helps clients to fill in forms. She was not aware of this need before the training.

- New work

Provided 1:1 support to people who were not receiving support

11 Barefoot workers provided 1:1 support with basic skills to people who were receiving support with basic skills. Half of those are supporting non-work acquaintances such as neighbours, family and friends and half are supporting people they meet through work such as colleagues or users of a service that they provide. For example, a woman who works at a Citizens' Advice Bureau supported someone she met through this work.

Set up new projects

6 Barefoot workers set up new basic skills projects. The projects were:

- Basic skills courses within a new adult resource centre.
- A basic skills course within a community support group
- Support for young carers with their homework organised by volunteers
- Basic skills teaching and support as part of Life skills education in a voluntary run youth club
- A basic skills course for women in a refuge
- On site basic skills training within a hostel

The Trafford Hall Barefoot Fund made contributions to 3 of the 6 projects.

The following chart shows details of 5 of the 6 new projects (the sixth was developed too late to be included in the research).

PROJECT	1	2	3	4	5
Targeted learners	Residents on council estate	Community members	Young Carers	Women in refuge	Young Hostel residents
Numbers	Depends on uptake	12	16	Depends on uptake	Depends on uptake
Frequency of sessions	To be arranged	-Two pms/week for adults - Saturday for families	One hour fortnightly	To be arranged	To be arranged
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trafford Hall grant • SRB • BNFL donated computers • Council support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host organisation • Trafford Hall grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host organisation • Trafford Hall grant • Ernest Cooke Trust • The Rainford Trust • Local HE College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Organisation • Local HE College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Organisation • Local HE College received European Funding
Tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community worker • Barefoot supporting • Hope for volunteers 	Two Barefoots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local college • Barefoot supporting • 8 volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local college • Barefoots supporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local college • Barefoots supporting
Other supporting organisations	None	Local HE College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services • Volunteer Bureau • Respite organisation • Other homework clubs/young carer organisations 	None	None
Recruiting participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self referral • CAB • Basic skills teacher /community worker 	Existing links within organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing links within organisation. • Schools 	Existing links within organisation	Existing links within organisation
Venue	Defunct nursery school - £400,000 modernisation paid for by council	Social community organisation facilities	Parent organisation facilities	Refuge	Hostel

Chart showing detail of 5 new projects set up by Barefoot workers

- Adding value to existing basic skills work/provision

1:1 support within existing basic skills provision

12 participants added value to existing basic skills provision by providing 1:1 support. Some Barefoot workers did this within community outreach settings such as community centres and schools. The others supported learners within college classes. Those who are providing support within colleges were then able to attend a basic skills teacher-training course free of charge.

Training complemented existing work

5 participants were already planning to provide or were providing basic skills support to people. They felt that attending the course had complemented this existing work or development.

For example, one Barefoot worker provides training to around 120 hearing impaired people with mental health problems. This participant did not have any formal qualifications in teaching, and had been concerned about whether he was delivering good quality basic skills support. The researcher observed that he seemed to be lacking in support and isolated within his role. He explained that through attending the Barefoot Course he realised that he had been working with his clients in the right way and that this made him feel more comfortable within his role. He received £500 from the Trafford Hall Barefoot Fund for resources in basic I.T skills.

- Personal development

Two participants reported starting a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. 8 Barefoot workers began training to be basic skills teachers. In all cases participants explained to the researcher that attending the course gave them the confidence and motivation to do this.

5.2 Role of the Trafford Hall Barefoot Fund

In total, just under £2,500 was awarded to Barefoot workers from the Trafford Hall Barefoot Fund. The maximum amount that each Barefoot worker could apply for was £500. The money went towards 3 of the 6 new projects, one piece of work to complement existing activity, and one piece of work to raise awareness. The other new projects received funding from elsewhere.

The grant money was for: further residential training; learning resources (books, CD-ROM's and worksheets); stationery and materials to run projects; and volunteer expenses.

5.3 Barriers to Barefoot Worker Action

BBSW participants identified the barriers to taking follow up action after the training. Some of these barriers related to the environment in which the Barefoot workers were operating. Other barriers related to the quality and content of the training course.

5.3.1 Barriers to Action - Environment

The key barriers identified by Barefoot workers that related to their environment were: lack of time; and a lack of support within the participants' organisation.

- Lack of time

6 participants reported a lack of time. All participants who reported this barrier were paid employees within organisations.

- Lack of Support

8 participants highlighted a lack of support in developing basic skills provision. For example, one participant working as a care officer for a health authority felt that there was scope to support people with their basic skills within her existing work. However, she could not formalise the inclusion of this within her work because her manager was disinterested. Another participant working in customer services for a housing association felt that the small size of the organisation meant it did not prioritise community development. Five Barefoot workers felt that they were not a position within their organisation to set up any basic skills provision without the backing of a more senior person. The five were: two hostel support workers; a care assistant in a children's home; a volunteer for a charity supporting single parents; and a play worker in a community centre. Two individuals explained that the local college was not of a good standard so they could not find local trainers.

5.3.2 Barriers to Action - Training

We tracked 63 different participants in total out of the 114 people who came on any part of the BBSW programmes. We used postal questionnaire and/or telephone interviews. We found a marked difference in whether or not training participants took action between people who completed the course, and people who dropped out after the induction event. 34 out of the 41 people we contacted who completed the training (83% of respondents) told us that they had taken follow up action to tackle basic skills issues as a result of the training. In contrast to the participants who completed the course, only 5 out of the 22 people we contacted who attended the induction events only (23% of respondents) had taken follow up action.

TABLE 17 Comparison of numbers taking action between people who completed the course or dropped out

	Acted	No action	Total respondents
Induction only	5	17	22
Complete course	34	7	41
Total	39	24	63

This suggests both that training adds to people's ability and desire to take action, and that people who already want to take action also want to access training. It suggests that the more active volunteers are also the ones more likely to complete training. The importance of the role of training in supporting community level action can also be seen where the training content and delivery was not up to scratch. Where the training programme lacked a practical action planning focus, it did not maximise the participants' ability to do something back in their neighbourhoods. This is partly why Trafford Hall placed such emphasis on training quality in the pilot. It also highlights the importance of LSE Housing's dual research and development role in monitoring and evaluating the programme as it evolved. Changes were made to the BBSW training package over the period of the pilot in response to issues as they emerged.

The main barriers to action identified by Barefoot workers that related to the training were:

- an inadequate community focus
- lack of practical teaching ideas
- lack of advice about overcoming difficulties in developing projects
- problems with the qualification and its value

The training has been re-shaped in the second year, based on feedback from the evaluation, to resolve these issues.

- Inadequate focus on participants' community contexts during the course

10 participants felt that insufficient attention was given during the course to participants' own community contexts. One participant explained that:

Being Asian I wanted to target people with ESOL difficulties but we didn't do that much on that on the course, we just did a bit on it at the end".

Customer Services worker for Housing Association

Three participants said that they would have liked support in making links with relevant organisations within their communities and they suggested that the homework be more specific, for example, that they should actually make a link with a basic skills tutor.

- Insufficient attention on the course to practical teaching methods

7 Barefoot workers highlighted insufficient practical teaching ideas and practical teaching. They explained that through their existing work they are currently in contact with people with basic skills needs and would like to support them with their basic skills.

I did not get enough practical ideas to actually sit down and work with someone. I might sit in on the basic skills course at college to see how they do it. It would have been nice to have a practical session using each other as pupils. What we covered could have been covered in two weekends with the third as a practical.

Youth support worker

I hoped for enhanced skills in teaching basic skills but I did not get that. What the course did was highlight the sorts of difficulties faced by people with a basic skill need, for example, using a calendar or a clock or managing their time. But I still do not personally feel equipped to teach. I feel like I am groping in the dark. I wasn't looking for a qualification, I wanted practical skills to use in working with people.

Day Centre Manger

I really enjoyed it actually. But at the time I felt part of it wasn't really appropriate for my needs. It would have been handy to identify specific things that I could use in my workplace so that I could help people practically with their learning.

Hostel worker

We wanted to provide support ourselves and the course did not equip us.

Youth hostel workers

One participant found the publicity on the course misleading:

I thought it was a teaching certificate, now I will have to find time to do the City & Guilds.

- Lack of advice about overcoming difficulties in developing projects

6 participants experienced difficulties motivating people to learn, and overcoming other problems such as stigma, lack of premises, getting funding and insurance. They felt that the training had not helped them to overcome this. One participant who worked in a hostel said:

I would have liked to learn how to encourage people to learn, how to handle somebody appropriately, and get them to think about working on their basic skills. I would have liked to do one to ones but there has not been any take up. There are services in this area but how do you motivate people to attend?

Two other participants who attended from a hostel for young people explained:

We work with homeless and socially disadvantaged people aged between 16 and 25. One of the young men we have at the moment is severely dyslexic. The local library has three laptops and a basic skills worker. We identified a number of individuals who needed help. We hoped that by including the lap tops the sessions would be less stigmatising. But [the potential learners] were not prepared to do it in that way because people would see. These individuals lack confidence and there is a great stigma attached to having a basic skills need.

These Barefoot workers had found lack of premises an additional obstacle in trying to overcome the problem of stigma:

[So] we thought about operating a closed workshop from the day centre for a couple of hours a week. We would have to close the day centre to facilitate this. We work in a hectic environment; we have one room and that is the day centre.

3 participants explained that they would have liked more practical information such as information about funding, insurance and training routes and opportunities within basic skills. One participant works in a refuge and commented

People in the refuge may not want to access formal support/public classes. If I could find a way of taking laptops to them that would be a start.

- Lack of recognition of the certificate by other colleges

Three participants found that colleges within their local area did not value the MOCN certificate.

I wanted to provide 1:1 in my local area I approached XXXX College, that's my local college, about doing some voluntary work there. I said I have a Basic Skills Awareness certificate. They said that doesn't mean anything, we wouldn't want you to work with our clients. I only wanted to help but they said no.

5.4 Examples of Barefoot Workers

- Together Everybody Achieves More (TEAM)

One Barefoot training participant, employed by the local education authority in community education, was working with a residents' group. Together, the residents and Community Education received a development grant of £10,000 from Adult and Community Learning Fund for learning and empowerment. The money was spent on a project to increase awareness for active citizenship. The Barefoot training participant said that the content, direction and delivery of that work, and their work for the future, had been influenced by BBSW. For example, between 10 and 12 residents received support with their literacy as part of Together Everybody Achieves More (TEAM). TEAM consisted of 8 sessions and focussed upon the ways in which residents could become more active citizens and encourage others to become more active. One of these sessions looked at how to get the message across using publicity and newsletters and the need to make these accessible. The participant explained that this session draws heavily on the BBSW publicity session. The participant explained:

We produced 50,000 leaflets. The content of the leaflets was inspired by BBSW. We are very proud of the leaflet and couldn't have done it if we hadn't attended BBSW. The basic skills of these residents are not advanced. The workshops have helped these residents to develop their confidence. It has given people an idea of who they are, what they can achieve and how they might do it.

The participant said that the tutors who worked on TEAM noted that they needed certain skills to work effectively with the residents. The participant said that this was something BBSW had highlighted. As part of her work for the LEA she helped the college to identify the different styles of working with the local community. She said:

BBSW has given me the confidence to negotiate with the college in this respect. The course gave me an increased awareness. I thought I had a good understanding of the needs of the community. But I hadn't realised how many skills I have and how many skills I use which I didn't even realise I was using. I have increased confidence in teasing out the issues and have come away with a kit bag – which enables me to take the fear out of it all. This identification will be part of a broader review to help LEA to make plans for future.

- Young Carers Homework Club

As a result of completing the Barefoot Basic Skills Worker course and gaining a small grant of £500 from the Trafford Hall Barefoot Fund to support his project, a volunteer from St John Ambulance in Chester has established an evening Homework Club for Young Carers aged 8 – 16 years old. Through research on the numbers of young carers in the area, he noted the lack of educational support for them, and the fact that they fare badly in standard tests because of their caring responsibilities. Many of these young carers are supporting a parent or family member with severe illnesses or disabilities such as depression, ME, physical disabilities. Many of them have severe basic skills needs because they have missed out on essential learning during their crucial early years.

The volunteer was the catalyst for contacting the schools, the young carers, their parents, Social Services and the Basic Skills department of West Cheshire College to bring those services together in a scheme to support young carers with their education.

Sessions are now twice a month with up to 30 young carers attending regularly. The grant made through the BBSW programme was to help with transport costs for the young carers to and from their homes, to make the sessions possible. Sessions include curriculum-related basic skills support but also help with literacy and numeracy that is crucial to their caring role e.g. reading and understanding dosage levels on prescriptions and measuring the right amount of medication.

Now that the young carers feel more confident about attending and are making progress, there are plans to open up the sessions to include the cared-for person and to involve them in the learning probably via basic skills and I.T. sessions. This is a project that has reached and affected young carers and their families very positively and could break the isolation and increase the confidence of the cared-for person.

5.5 Common 'Success' Factors in the Development of New Projects

The common 'success' factors in the development of new projects were:

- Links with basic skills learners;
- Understanding the specific needs of project users;
- Links with basic skills tutors.

- Links with basic skills learners

All organisations delivering new projects had a venue available to them and all but one had existing links with participants with a basic skills need. The new adult resource centre that is developing basic skills course is in the process of attracting participants to the course.

- Understanding the specific needs of project users

All the Barefoot workers identified and understood the nature of the basic skills needs of those people they worked with. For example, the participant who is organising a basic skills course in a adult resource centre has known the area for a long time, and understands the difficulties in attracting people in need to provision. Whilst the centre hopes that people will self-refer, the participant was concerned about difficulties attracting participants and therefore they have employed a tutor who will promote encourage and publicise the courses in addition to delivering them.

Two BBSW participants are organising a basic skills course for a community support group. These participants also work as volunteers on a confidence and job skills course within the organisation. Basic skills are dealt with on this course but as a secondary issue. People tend to be referred to a local college for more focussed basic skill support. However the participants wanted to provide an alternative to college. They noticed that some people did not want to travel to college and found college threatening. The course will run two evenings a week for people aged 16 and over and on Saturday mornings for families. Up to 12 people will attend the courses.

The participant organising the work with young carers has an understanding of their needs through work he does with them in a voluntary capacity. He also researched the needs of young carers generally by talking to other support groups for young carers and conducting a literature review.

- Links with Basic Skills tutors

Four of the projects have involved the delivery organisations linking up with their local colleges to provide the basic skills sessions with Barefoot workers volunteering in a supporting role. One of these organisations has linked up with the local volunteer bureau and aims to encourage and skill up a further eight volunteers to work on the course. Another organisation employed a basic skills trainer separately.

The fifth project is being delivered by two Barefoot workers, both of whom are training to be basic skills tutors. They described developing confidence and practical experience through volunteering on existing basic skills courses.

5.6 Longer Term Outcomes for Learning Space courses

We tracked 40 out of the 64 learners around 8-10 months after they had attended the Learning Space events. Overall, 25 of the 40 respondents (62%) had gained longer-term benefits from the event. We have separated the outcomes for those who were not receiving help with basic skills before the weekend, and those people who were already accessing basic skills supports before the course.

- Outcomes for learners not receiving help before attending Learning Space

Continued self directed learning

7 participants continued using strategies learnt on the course once they got home. The reasons they gave for choosing self-directed learning rather than going to college included:

- lack of time or transport to attend college.
- being constrained by caring responsibilities.
- preference for that learning style. Two participants, both retired, preferred to practice at home alone. Both these participants said that they wanted to attend another Learning Space event.

Started a basic skills course or other education

4 participants had begun a basic skills course. All these participants identified their experience on Learning Space as having given them the kick-start to enrol. One participant had started another adult education class. One participant started a course but dropped out. He explained that he did not have time to pursue his other hobbies and his rehabilitation and take on a full time course.

- Outcomes for learners already receiving help before attending Learning Space

Complemented existing studies

10 participants who were already in college said that Learning Space helped them with their existing studies. For some this seemed to be because of the sustained period of learning.

I have learnt more in a day than in a couple of hours each week at college. I have got a lot more in. When I go to college I just get into it and then it is time to go home again. I need locking in a room until I come out clever. I would come again and for longer.

50 year old grandfather, off work due to illness

Others were able to work on specific areas that were appropriate to their needs and level. One participant was receiving basic skills support at the rehabilitation centre where he lives. He explained that the course helped him “get up to speed”

with the rest of the group and gave him confidence in a desktop publishing course that he had just started.

Another participant commented that “*work at college was getting too hard and above, me this has suited me*”.

Lasting benefits for self-esteem

4 participants in college said that the experience of attending Learning Space increased their confidence over the longer term. Their feedback suggests this is a result of mixing with people with similar needs:

Everyone was very friendly. It's a useful way to gain more confidence and mix in with other people, we all helped each other. I would go back if I could. Why can't people go again?

31 year old, single mum

It's good to get away and study and be with others who are studying. I lived there for the weekend so I could talk through my problems at any time. It was fantastic there were teenagers and from my point of view they took me in as part of the family. We helped each other. The group work was fun. I didn't feel that I was being dominated by others who were better than me. There was one woman who was 60 who I helped because I was a bit more advanced. For once in my life I felt that I had a place in society without being looked down on. I would love to go again. It made me feel good and more confident that I was capable and not just taking but giving for a change.

65 year old dyslexic woman, works part time in a community centre

No longer term benefit

2 participants could not identify any benefit the course had given to them. One of these participants had thought the course was a family learning event and another thought the course was too low-level for her generally.

5.7 Barriers to Learning

- Problems accessing support

7 participants wanted to continue learning within some sort of supported environment but could not access any support. This barrier was experienced by participants with learning disabilities and/or mental illness for whom college was described as threatening and unsuitable.

- Lack of follow up support

4 participants had not tried to continue learning, partly because they were unsure where next to go for help. They felt that they would have benefited from sign posting

to suitable provision after the course to help them focus. Two of these participants attended with their sister, she commented:

The course gave them hope as a first step and they have looked in the paper but it's difficult to travel to get to places. They need follow up support as a next step to get them into something. Not whilst they are on the course because they are on a high but they need it when they get back home, either on the phone or in their area so they can chat about it when they are in a real rather than a false situation. They would like to return to Trafford Hall.

5.8 Examples of Learning Space Participants

- Participant 1

Participant 1 is a 21 year old man. He has three City and Guilds qualifications, one is in engineering and another is in AutoCAD. He is working towards an NVQ Level 3 in Youth and Community Work. As part of this he attends college twice a week and has a placement on a project three times a week. In addition to this he does voluntary work at a Youth Club. He heard about Learning Space through the Youth Club. He wanted to get some basic skills support to help with his college work. He said:

I have to do written assignments on the course. I wanted techniques to learn how to spell and in particular where to put full stops and commas. The people on the course will check through my work and say you need a full stop there or a comma there, but they don't have the expertise to teach me the techniques of how to do it.

Immediate outcomes

What he liked about Learning Space:

- Particular learning strategies appropriate to his needs.
- A neutral environment
- *The course was very useful, it has helped with my assignments. Now I know where to put full stops.*
- *School was a bad experience for me. I don't want to talk about that. I did think about getting help before but I went to a college in XXX and found the teacher very patronising. I felt like they were on a power trip. So the neutral environment at Trafford Hall was good.*

Longer term outcomes

This participant did not feel he needed more support

I don't feel that I need more help now. I got on top of it at Trafford Hall. Since coming back through doing my own work on the assignments I have practised the techniques of splitting the word up and spelling it out and I have been using the computer more.

- Participant 2

This participant is 34 years old. He does not have any qualifications. He has learning disabilities and has mental health problems. He lives in supported housing and is currently not in work. The manager of his housing scheme picked up a leaflet about Learning Space from the local doctors' surgery. She persuaded him and two others from the housing scheme to attend Learning Space. This participant said that he was not nervous about attending but his two companions said that they were very worried about it. Participant 2 said that he wanted to learn to read and write. He said that he cannot write a full sentence unless he copies it. During Learning Space he worked on:

- Practising days of the week;
- Matching words to picture;
- Practising the alphabet ;
- Writing his name and address; and
- Writing sentences about Elvis Presley.

Immediate outcomes

What he liked about Learning Space

- This participant particularly enjoyed the work he did which was about Elvis. He has guitar lessons and Elvis is his favourite rock star. He said that he needs to improve his basic skills in order to develop his guitar playing.
- He also enjoyed the break.
- This participant teamed up with his friends from the housing scheme and some other participants whose basic skills were more advanced than theirs for the evening quiz. They won the quiz together. They explained that they had never won anything before.

Longer term outcomes

The manager of the learner's supported housing scheme explained:

He came back and he had loved it. It boosted his confidence. But there's nothing for them when they get back. He has a bad reputation at XXXX college. He thinks he's laughed at in college. He's happier on his own ground. College is not appropriate for people with learning difficulties. I did ring the local college but they don't do adult literacy in the home. We need volunteer support for X – someone to sit here with him in an open space otherwise his motivation will go. All residents here have a homeworker but they are funded by housing so they can't do literacy etc. They are funded strictly for housing related activities. They also have a care worker. They do washing cleaning and budgeting and are provided by Social Services agencies. They don't really give them basic skills support, rather they do things for them.

It proved difficult to link this participant up with volunteer support, such as a Barefoot worker.

- Participant 3

Participant 3 is a 43 year old man. He works for a company that makes cleaning products. He has no formal educational qualifications. At school they were streamed into A/B/C sets.

The teachers never bothered with us in the C set. We were the tough class, the teachers didn't want to teach us. I got in with the wrong crowd. At the time I thought it was great but it was the worse turn I've ever done because I didn't learn. The C set did P.E. and we used to be smoking outside thinking, 'look at those suckers'.

He wants to improve his basic skills in order to go up the career ladder.

I've seen people who started with me and they're management now. The work has changed so now all the machines are computerised at work, you used to just press a green button. Now it's keypad with a memory bank. So I get caught out if you have to put words into the keypad.

He decided to do something about his basic skills when he went to see the nurse at work.

She gave me a form to fill in, and I had a panic attack.

He has mild dyslexia and heard about the course through a dyslexic centre in Liverpool. This participant explained that he may not have attended if the course was not free. He came to improve his English and spelling.

If I could sort it out I'd be a lot better at forms and be less nervous.

During the course he used a card with letters on and practised sounding out words.

Immediate outcomes

- *I'm a little bit more confident now. I enjoyed it very much. People made me very welcome.*
- He said that he had learnt things over the weekend, for example, how to sound out letters in a word when reading, he explained: *I didn't do all that – a – b – c – when I was at school.*
- *They drew my attention to the fact that I write in capitals. I wasn't aware of that.*
- The tutors have been “*very helpful all the way through*”.
- Attending Learning Space encouraged him to get more support:

I am going to work with the nurse at work and the Dyslexic centre man to sort something out for my learning programme. The local college is willing and the company does bring them into work. The next twelve months are going to be the hardest of my life, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Longer term outcomes

- *I went to Trafford Hall to see what sort of problems I had. We found that I have problems with word pronunciations so when I went back to work I*

had something to say. I got back in touch via work with the dyslexic centre and she confirmed the problem with pronunciation.

- He has had 2 assessments and is joining a basic skills class. He plans to go back and join a basic skills class.
- *I would prefer to have a one to one, that is what the tutor at Trafford Hall said I need and if I was in a class I'd sit back a bit and let them do the talking.*
- *It gave me confidence they got us talking to different people about ourselves. I was in my shell you see. The girls at Trafford Hall brought us out and said never hide the problem, and if I can do it there with those, I can do it with other people. They've given me a belief in myself that I can do something. There is 3 on my line at work. I have now told the other two. Now at work in team meetings I don't sit at the back. I've come out of my shell. I'm not perfect with me writing yet but I have told a lot more people now that I have a problem*

- Participant 4

Participant 4 is a 31 year old single mother of three children. At the time of the course she was doing RSA English and Maths at Level 1. Her son has behavioural problems and has been seeing a psychologist. Her daughter has problems with speech and hearing. The pressures from her children's special needs, her relationship breakdown have all created stress for her. She has also been experienced problems with neighbour nuisance. She has found it difficult to sustain attending college. She has failed her English RSA once. She felt that this was because of a lack of adequate teaching at college. She came on the course because she wanted to get a break from the kids, and to get away from her neighbour problems:

My social worker said it would be a good idea to have a break.

Immediate Outcomes

- This participant enjoyed the break. It was the first time she had been away from the children in ten years.
- *In comprehension Learning Space showed me how to answer the question properly*
- *I had a lot of personal problems last year and had a downer – a breakdown from April to August last year. Learning Space gave me the spirit to lift myself out. I was able to make friends share their problems, we could relate to each other, air views and discuss things We all enjoyed it*

Longer term outcomes

- *Comprehension – since Christmas I have been getting a B before that I was getting a D I do practice exam papers and have been getting 9 and 10 out of 10. Before I was struggling, doing it the long way round trying to plan out essays instead of writing in a short and concise way*

Additional comments

- *It could have been longer say about a week you just get used to it then you have to pack up and go again when you are just getting use to the people*
- *I'd like to go again and take my children next time I think it would do their confidence good. Last time I wasn't sure how they'd be eldest one misbehaves a lot in public.*
- *Finance is a problem – I'm a one parent family on IS I could only go if its free*

• Participant 5

This participant is a 22 year old single parent. She does not have any formal education qualifications. She is currently on probation and is not receiving basic skills support.

Immediate outcomes

- *I really enjoyed it. People were very helpful. I have no self esteem whatsoever – I stood up and spoke at Trafford Hall. I did it because we were all in the same boat. So it gave me a lot of confidence. I had been working at standing up and speaking out at a women's group through probation so at Trafford Hall I actually stood up and did it.*

Longer term outcomes

- Starting a computer course at college
- This participant is still practising Maths times tables but had not done this before she went to Trafford Hall.
- *It made me realise what I need to know like shopping usually I get to the till and don't have enough money but I can do it now*

Additional comments

- *Its just a shame its not longer I would have gone for a week –or 5 days Mon – Fri*
- *It were great I loved it so did my little boy. He even built a den. The other boy was 9 they played together and me and his mum became friends*
- *I have written to one girl in Manchester and see three people who live near here as a result of going*

PART 6. OUTCOMES FOR THE PARTNERS AND THE NEXT STAGE

6.1 Outcomes for Trafford Hall

Trafford Hall has changed its publicity for courses and other written materials in order to make them accessible to people with basic skills needs. For example, they have used the SMOG test to construct the wording on publicity for a new capacity building programme at the Centre. Trafford Hall staffs' basic skills awareness has risen dramatically. Basic Skills support is integrated into its 'Young Movers' residential programmes for young people aged 11-16 years old. Trafford Hall now has access to West Cheshire College as a learning resource, to its bank of tutors and their expertise.

The training programme development worker at Trafford Hall has been helping other organisations with their basic skills strategies and assisting organisations replicate the BBSW model. This work has included:

- Assisting a charitable trust to put together a bid to put for a writers' workshop for tenants. The bid was successful and the workshop took place at Trafford Hall;
- Assisting an education service to replicate the BBSW model by providing them with details of the BBSW programme;
- Advising an education service in another area generally by advising on their basic skills strategy;
- Providing an adapted BBSW programme to meet the needs of regional representatives of a charity that supports single parents.

6.2 Outcomes for West Cheshire College

West Cheshire College has gained increased understanding and knowledge about the housing and community field. This will enable them to submit rounder bids for intended community outreach programmes.

West Cheshire College, in conjunction with Trafford Hall, aim to play a role in working with Further Education Colleges across the country to open them up to effective ways of working with communities. There is also a role for them to play in helping other colleges to invest in and to trust communities in order to reach the 'hard to reach' groups and improve opportunities and access to appropriate education. There is much mistrust of Educational Institutions by communities and the basic skills programmes described here are tangible ways that the Further Education sector can engage with and empower communities.

6.3 The Next Stage

The pilot allowed for experimentation and change. Both BBSW and Learning Space underwent substantial alterations over the first year pilot period. The partner organisations also worked hard to agree first principles and methods of delivery that met the agreed aims and objectives. Trafford Hall, West Cheshire College and LSE have now developed a second year programme based on this experience.

The key features of the Year 2 programmes are:

BBSW

- An accredited training package with three clear elements - basic skills awareness, practical teaching/support skills, community action planning.
- Targeted at community activists and community liaison workers.
- More targeted recruitment in areas of basic skills need.
- Lively training with a variety of participatory learning tools, with back-up written materials.
- A hands-on action orientated approach.
- Use of case studies and real life examples of what communities' can successfully do to tackle problems.
- More practice doing hands-on teaching/skills support.
- A dedicated team of trainers, preferably no more than 3 in total.
- Training run over three residential 2 day events with NO taster event but more pre-screening.
- Clearer publicity so people can decide if the course is for them before they attend.
- Follow on grants.
- Discretionary help with travel costs.

Learning Space

- An accredited programme of 5 days in total - split over two residential events.
- Pre-screening and assessment to tailor the programme.
- Follow up learning and work at home in between the events.
- A dedicated team of tutors.
- High expectation of learners and individual goal setting.
- More targeted teaching methods.
- Quick assessment tools and measurement of success.
- More linking of learners to follow up learning action plans.
- Clearer guidelines for people attending in a support capacity.
- Discretionary help with travel costs.

6.4 Conclusions

The Basic Skills Agency says that "nothing short of a national crusade" is needed to kickstart effective action to tackle basic skills problems. We need all organisations in touch with adults with basic skills problems to help promote the basic skills agenda, and help to link people to learning supports. We need to reach learners, potential learners, providers and potential providers of basic skills supports. The hidden nature of basic skills problems makes it extremely hard to reach people. The challenges in reaching learners are to get them hooked on learning, and then be able to give people the right learning tools that fit their lives and deliver literacy and numeracy skills. Intensive inputs are needed to help them catch up. The challenges in inspiring providers are to develop new imaginative forms of learning which deliver learning gains more quickly.

The chain from adult with basic skills needs, to supports, is easily broken. The experience of the Trafford Hall pilot project illustrated so many of these breaks. For example, it is indicative that Trafford Hall, an education centre for people from low-income areas, was previously unaware of the scale and implications of the problem. It had not previously organised specific basic skills work, or integrated basic skills into its mainstream work before this project. The build up to the Moser report played a role in pushing the organisation to act.

But winning a community support organisation like Trafford Hall to the basic skills mission was only the first step. The next challenge for Trafford Hall was to find a practical way to play a role. It took Trafford Hall a concentrated effort to recruit learners, although it was easier to find people who wanted to offer help to learners. The chance to go away from home, to a country house venue overnight, for a period of concentrated learning was both a bonus and a barrier to attracting people onto the programmes. It offered the opportunity to do something fresh in new surroundings, but it also required commitment and organisation to attend.

Trafford Hall wanted to implement two new models of learning:

- Learning Space - direct provision of residential intensive learning
- Barefoot Basic Skills Workers – training for locally based community organisations and community volunteers to develop new forms of help and support for learners.

The next challenge was to find training and learning packages to do this. There were no existing learning packages Trafford Hall could draw on. Trafford Hall's existing pool of training providers had experience of providing intensive interactive learning and skills development to community participants on issues such as tackling crime, youth and environmental problems. But, they lacked in depth knowledge of basic skills.

To overcome this problem, Trafford Hall formed a partnership with West Cheshire College. The College had specialist basic skills knowledge and teaching experience, but lacked extensive community development and community training experience. Neither had the College taught basic skills in such a concentrated way before.

Trafford Hall and West Cheshire College worked together successfully to develop the new models. The pilot programmes meant that both organisations learnt about new approaches for the first time.

But the issue was not simply lack of experience. There were many fundamental concerns to overcome - about both the Barefoot Worker and the Learning Space models. The concerns were about whether the training stretched learners sufficiently, about whether to set targets and assess progress, about whether lay people could play a role in basic skills provision. Much of the pilot year was spent on refining the experimental programmes into shape. The outcome was: faster teaching and more demands on learners; self-set learning goals and individual learning programmes; a 'community volunteer' role for Barefoot participants. There are now two new training packages available; the Barefoot Worker package is accredited via the Open College network.

The outcomes of the pilot programmes were both positive and negative. Learning Space gave an initial boost to motivation and some quick wins for people able to achieve their learning goals. Self-directed learning at home was a popular follow up option. The model is designed to provide stand-alone help for people who need to brush up their skills and those who are able to continue with self directed learning. The BSA estimates that around 60% of those with basic skills needs have only moderate or slight difficulties. For others who need or want more structured help, Learning Space is not an alternative but a complement to the support they already receive that maintains motivation, or a springboard into follow up learning. Learning Space attracted some people already receiving help. Learning Space underlines the need to help people who are already making steps, such as those already in adult education. Learning Space demonstrated that there are new ways of learning and teaching basic skills. But, Learning Space could not compensate for gaps in provision for those with higher levels of need.

The Barefoot Worker programme shows that there are people who are concerned about basic skills problem in voluntary organisations and in communities. It demonstrates a role for community based and community led organisations in promoting and signposting people to basic skills help. But the Barefoot workers found that it was no good trying to be a bridge between learners and existing provision when existing supports were unsuitable. Community action on basic skills is not just about the same providers locating the same classes in a different venue. It is about using different organisations, like community groups, to reach new learners. Community organisations had the advantages that they were already in touch with potential learners, and they could integrate basic skills work into other services they already provided. Many of the Barefoot workers provided one to one supports to individual learners - people who knew and trusted them. But, the Barefoot workers were frustrated by their inability to provide quality teaching inputs to the people they reached. This is why much of the community action taken by the Barefoot workers was in partnership with adult education services who provide a teaching input.

The numbers of participants involved in the pilot programme were small – 54 Barefoot workers attended the full programme, and 64 learners took part in Learning Space. The follow up action was solid but modest - helping one neighbour, changing

written materials, learning to spell. A considerable amount of effort went into producing those gains. That is in the nature of basic skills progress – painfully small steps through small scale programmes and intensive individual inputs and effort.

The outcomes of the pilot project illustrate two key points.

Firstly, the Trafford Hall work is significant in terms of the national issues facing people concerned about basic skills. 'A Fresh Start', the 1999 report of the Working group on adult basic skills, chaired by Sir Claus Moser, proposed a comprehensive, radical, national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy that ranges from mass media awareness campaigns to work place study opportunities, and national, regional and local actions. The experimental programmes at Trafford Hall focused on community level action and on intensive residential learning - just small contributions to the wider picture. Even so, this experience and the results of the Trafford Hall pilot project support many of the issues and recommendations raised in the Moser report. Several key ideas and approaches from 'A Fresh Start' apply to the Trafford hall experiment:

- Reaching new learners and supporting and retaining existing learners
- Increasing diversity of opportunities for learning
- Improving quality of teaching, assessment and accreditation
- Raising the profile of basic skills for organisations and individuals
- Developing community level outreach
- Developing community led initiatives.

The pilot project did reach new learners and help colleges to retain existing learners. It did increase diversity of opportunities for learning. It also struggled with the real difficulties of improving quality of teaching, assessment and accreditation. It did raise the profile of basic skills for organisations and individuals. It did develop community level outreach and community led initiatives. It also linked to the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal agenda, which proposes adult skills development and community self help as part of reviving communities. It did all these things in small but practical and tangible ways. We need a multiplicity of inputs like these if we are to tackle basic skills problems. The pilot project shows how difficult and necessary small steps towards solutions are.

Secondly, the outcomes of the Trafford Hall pilot project illustrate the underlying dilemma of such programmes. The dilemma is that the mainstream infrastructure of adult education is not delivering the basic skills improvements that as a society we would like. The Basic Skills Agency has identified the problems with conventional adult education approaches:

- they do not attract enough participants,
- they have trouble retaining learners
- they do not deliver gains quickly enough
- the quality of teaching and assessment is variable.

But, alternatives to the mainstream like those developed through these programmes are not a replacement; neither can non-traditional forms of provision operate independently. There are limits to what community volunteers can do, and a national

residential learning programme must have links to ongoing local supports. Neither the Barefoot Worker nor Learning Space programmes were able to operate self sufficiently and independently from the Further Education sector.

It is not possible, or desirable, for alternatives to develop without linking to the infrastructure already in place. For example, Trafford Hall needed the expertise of West Cheshire to run the training. Some of the community projects used trained and experienced teachers provided by FE colleges. People on Learning Space who needed higher levels of support needed more structured follow up help from colleges with the right know-how. But, participants and the organisers found serious gaps in the scope and quality of the existing infrastructure. The differences in approach that the pilot highlighted, such as whether colleges are the only organisations that can play a role, both strengthened the case for alternative programmes like the Trafford Hall pilot, and placed blocks on alternatives developing because they rely on adult education services being willing to help.

Alternative approaches can complement the mainstream, but getting the mainstream right is the big challenge. The pilot proved how indispensable colleges were but how much they needed to change. The Trafford Hall experiment demonstrated that exposure of the mainstream to alternatives, to communities, and to intensive ways of working can positively influence their approach. The pilot work did find ways of helping attract people to learning, to develop new bases for learning, of helping retain them and maintain motivation, of helping speed up learning. But much more needs to be done to change mainstream ways of working, and to engage more actively with potential learners through many 'micro' routes.

The Trafford Hall pilot shows that the advantages of developing programmes outside the mainstream are:

- They spread awareness amongst potential learners and potential referral agencies
- They encourage organisations outside the adult education sector to take basic skills seriously
- They increase diversity and access to provision
- They help integrate basic skills supports onto other frontline services
- They support colleges work by recruiting and referring new learners, sparking and maintaining motivation
- They encourage colleges to adapt and develop new approaches.

The pilot has shown how small moves can be made on the fringes, and how exposure to the fringe can help the mainstream adapt. For these reasons, small-scale incremental programmes of this sort should be developed, alongside more radical moves to change cultures. We need many different routes to learning and a multiplicity of efforts to develop the comprehensive national strategy 'A Fresh Start' recommends and the scale of the problem demands.