



Report on the provision of Essential Skills and ICT within Rugby Borough

Researched by Adrian Cox
on behalf of
The CHOICES Network

Spring 2007

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(1) Introduction

CHOICES is a network of organisations who are committed to supporting learning for adults (16+) and families. The network was established by Warwick District Area Community Learning Partnership (ACLP) in 2004 to develop a more cohesive and inclusive approach to learning provision across the district. The focus of the network is to increase access to learning related to Essential Skills (ES) i.e. literacy, language, numeracy and basic Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

CHOICES has a membership scheme for organisations who can join at different levels according to whether they offer information and advice, 'taster' sessions, or full learning opportunities. Training is provided for staff and volunteers of member organisations, enabling them to more effectively support people who may have essential skills needs, in order to help them access information, advice, and learning. CHOICES also has a membership and incentive scheme for learners. At the time of writing, the network is operating in Central and South Warwickshire.

The CHOICES Network received funding in 2006 to perform research into the current provision of ES, ICT and Family Language, Literacy and Numeracy (FLLN) in Rugby Borough. The funding was provided by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) under the WAPAF (Wider Adult Participation Action Fund) initiative. The funding allowed for the appointment of a part time Project Worker to undertake the research between September 2006 and March 2007.

The aim of the research was to start to explore the potential of the CHOICES model in Rugby. The research phase echoed the initial research undertaken in Warwick district. Specifically, the research aimed to:

- map current ES/ICT provision
- assess the strength of provision in 4 key areas: commitment, infrastructure, delivery and evaluation
- identify the potential of the CHOICES model in enhancing existing services

(2) Demographics of Rugby Borough

Rugby initially developed as a market centre on the main routes from Leicester to Oxford and Nuneaton to Coventry. It also developed as a railway junction due to its location. The borough centres on Rugby town and has a largely rural hinterland with over 500 farms and small holdings surrounding it. Rugby has grown to be a centre of manufacturing and logistics with companies like Alstom and Rugby Cement having headquarters located in the town. Until recently Peugeot, often associated with Coventry but located within Rugby Borough, had its UK plant located in Ryton, however that plant has recently closed with the loss of 4000 Jobs.

The population of Rugby Borough, at the 2001 Census, was 87,453. Population estimates since then calculate that Rugby now has 91,600 residents. This growth is attributed to housing development and an influx of migrant workers from countries that have recently joined the European Union.

Four areas of Rugby Borough are highlighted on the indices of deprivation. These are the wards of Benn, Newbold, Overslade and Brownsover. While no particular attention was to be paid to these areas within the research, some awareness was to be practised.

(3) Process

The research took the form of an audit exploring learning provision relating to ES and ICT within the community. A questionnaire used in previous research in Warwick District was used, with some small adaptations reflecting learning from the previous audit. The initial process in this task was to locate the key players in Rugby Borough that deliver ES/ICT courses. This information was gathered from a number of sources, including the community information database on the WCC web site and conversations with a variety of knowledgeable people. 41 organisations were identified and invited to participate in the research (appendix 1)...

Schools and employers were deliberately excluded from this process, primarily for reasons of capacity. However it is important to note that both have a big part to play in 16+ education in the future.

The methodology used was an interview and questionnaire (copy available on request). The organisations were contacted initially by letter, introduced to CHOICES and invited to participate in our research. The letter contained a deadline and after this had passed, the organisations were contacted by phone and e-mail and again invited to participate. 10 organisations took part.

Limitations of method used

- This research method used has its limitations; it involves one person's view of their organisation. This may differ from another person's view. To offset this, the person interviewed had to be in a significant position within the group.
- The audit process took place at the start of the school year which is known to be the busiest period in the academic calendar; at a different time of year the view and response may have been different.
- Some organisations were resistant to the process and were reluctant to take part. The reasons for this can only be guessed at; this made the audit more difficult than it should have been.

(4) Findings

The participants can be broken down into three categories.

Providers whose sole purpose is to deliver learning to recognised standards. One responder fits into this category

Facilitators who provide venues or facilitate contact with potential learners but rely on others to deliver the learning. Four responders fit this category

Organisations who provide and facilitate. Five responders fit into this category

All bar one of the responders based their services within Rugby Town.

Learning provision

Of the responders, below is a breakdown of the numbers that currently provide, and offer discrete and embedded programmes. The difference in figures regarding current, discrete and embedded comes from some organisations offering programmes but not offering in a discrete or embedded form.

	Current	Discrete	Embedded
Essential Skills Literacy	5	3	3
Essential Skills Numeracy	5	3	3
ICT	5	3	3
Family Learning	1	1	1

As can be seen, provision across the spectrum is quite strong. Family learning provision is only catered for by one community organisation. Surprisingly only one other organisation indicated that they would be interested in pursuing FLLN if funding was available.

Self evaluation

Each participant was asked to score their organisation on a variety of statements relating to their ES learning. The statements were grouped in four areas: commitment, infrastructure, delivery and evaluation.

To preserve confidentiality, data about individual participants is not included in the research included in this report. However, some conclusions from the data can be drawn.

- All groups scored highly in the areas of commitment, infrastructure and evaluation. The only area of real fluctuation was delivery; however these scores were reflective of the relevant group's *ability* to deliver rather than their desire.
- Most groups had some sort of Quality Assurance (QA) framework in place, mostly PQASSO, IIP and one organisation specifically mentioning the MATRIX. A few cited internal QA processes.
- Partnership work featured heavily in the data collected. All bar one of responders reported in the infrastructure section of the questionnaire that partnership work was part of their setup. These partnerships were both formal and informal and crossed over

between the respective organisations. One organisation was in partnership with Warwick University.

- The facilitator responders all indicated that they were happy to refer potential learners onto providers with only one group not performing any referrals at all.
- Informal information and advice featured in some responses. The “person on the street” coming in was directed; however there is no record as to the appropriateness or outcome of this process.
- There were no restrictions on target groups. One group reported that their facility had become an informal meeting place for migrants from Eastern Europe.
- Community based projects seemed to always have funding issues that prevented them from moving forward.
- 50% of organisations reported that they provided an information and advice service. Two reported that they were providing and developing a service which indicates that they see this as an important advancement area. Finally two groups reported that they did not provide any advice and guidance at all. These groups were in the category of facilitators.

(5) Conclusions

From the data gathered and the small number of groups interviewed it is difficult to draw any hard conclusions. The participants can be described as amongst the major provision players within the borough however this list is by no means complete. Discussions with participants, along with the wider engagement processes, suggest that there may also be issues within the Borough in relation to ‘gate keeping’ i.e. an over-reliance on key individuals, which in turn can impact on opportunities for development. However all interested participants responded positively to the CHOICES model, seeing it as a progressive method to engage learners.

(6) Recommendations

- CHOICES should establish themselves in Rugby Borough. The model as it stands will work as it includes the IAG element which is not well established in the Borough. Transfer between providers will add more power to the establishment.
- Further research to be undertaken to establish more information regarding lesser known providers. It is likely that the research method will need to be altered. The interview/questionnaire method seemed to be treated suspiciously by responders who declined to partake.
- Rural Rugby Borough is underrepresented in this research. This area needs to be investigated more.
- There was only one responder that can be described as representing ethnic minorities. To ensure that the area of difference and diversity is addressed, more ethnic groups need to be engaged.
- CHOICES need to be active within the Adult and Community Learning Partnership for the Borough. This activity will keep the profile of CHOICES high.
- CHOICES needs to regularly attend the meetings of the Rugby Adult Education Forum. This meeting offers excellent networking opportunities. Participants are given the chance to do presentations to the forum allowing the CHOICES profile to be raised.
- Any CHOICES employees should have office space located in the Borough and be permanently based there.
- If the CHOICES model is developed in Rugby, at least two members within each CHOICES member organisation should act as representatives for CHOICES. This way if one leaves, the group still has trained CHOICES representation. The offer of OCN accredited training may help to persuade members to allow two persons for this task.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and support offered by the following people:

All of the people who participated in the research
The CHOICES team
Janet Neale, Warwickshire County Council

Appendix 1

Listed below are organisations contacted during the audit. Those organisations highlighted on the list were the ones who partook in the research. Those not highlighted either did not respond or had no interest in partaking.

Benn Partnership Centre

Bilton Church House

Binley Woods Church Hall

Brinklow United Reform Church

CVS House

Dunchurch Village Hall

Harris School

Long Lawford Memorial Hall

Marton Village Hall

Overslade Community Centre

Rugby IT Centre

Princes Trust

Shilton Village Hall

Stretton on Dunsmore Village Hall

Wolston Community Centre

Wolvey Village Hall

Amazon Initiatives

Warks Learning and Behaviour Support Services

Time out for parents

Rugby Early Years Forum

Amnesty International

Trauma Care Rugby

Rugby Parents Centre

Homestart NE Warks

Business Resource Centre

Rethink

New Bilton Community Association

Rugby Disability Forum

Council for Disabled People - Cov and Warks

Rugby Library

Percival Guild House

Surestart Rugby

ACL

Warwickshire College

Warwickshire Association of Youth Clubs

Connexions

Rugby Parents Centre

Warwickshire Rural Community Council

ETW



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Overslade Community Centre

Rugby IT Centre
Princes Trust

Shilton Village Hall
Stretton on Dunsmore Village Hall
Wolston Community Centre
Wolvey Village Hall

Amazon Initiatives

Warks Learning and Behaviour Support Services

Time out for parents
Rugby Early Years Forum
Amnesty International
Trauma Care Rugby
Rugby Parents Centre
Homestart NE Warks
Business Resource Centre

Rethink

New Bilton Community Association
Rugby Disability Forum
Council for Disabled People - Cov and Warks

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