Sustaining networks

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How regeneration partnerships learn and develop

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Introduction

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) published *The Learning Curve* in October 2002. The introduction to this report states that:

> *The Learning Curve* is designed to equip everyone involved in neighbourhood renewal with the skills and knowledge they need. It contains the latest thinking on both the learning requirements and the knowledge base for neighbourhood renewal.

This study examines the strategy and proposals contained in *The Learning Curve* in the light of research carried out into the networks already used by regeneration partnerships for training, information and support.

At the time of the research, there were some 700 regeneration partnerships and organisations involved in community regeneration. Each of the partnerships has varying use of, and access to, information; and varying knowledge of what constitutes better practice and of where to find problem-solving support.

There are a wide number of sources of information available to such partnerships but it is apparent not only that these vary in their direct usefulness and in their accessibility but that their usage by partnerships remains very partial. An important aspect is the gap between the provision of such services and the knowledge at local level of what services exist and of their value.

This is one background against which *The Learning Curve* can be assessed. However, this report is not designed simply to criticise a new strategy for learning and development which by its nature and its stage of evolution is necessarily aspirational. Rather, this study is designed to raise some practical points related to the implementation of *The Learning Curve*.

The publication of *The Learning Curve* is just one of a linked series of actions designed to improve the skills, knowledge and practice of neighbourhood renewal. For example, steps have been taken, with

varying degrees of urgency, to establish regional centres of excellence whilst the web-based service renewal.net has provided a much needed easily accessible source of information on effective practice. The work of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the strengthening Government Offices for the Regions (GORs) has itself led to an increasing emphasis at the regional level on sharing and disseminating better practice and on improving skills and practice in regeneration and in capacity building for community involvement. This report is designed to be of value to those involved in establishing or running all such initiatives.

The interviews

Two regions were chosen for the interviews for this study – the South East and Yorkshire and Humberside. Apart from their location in different parts of England, the regions were selected on the basis of their comparative economic performance; the fact that at the time the two regions were at roughly comparable stages in the evolution of networks for partnership support; and the fact that each of the two regions had roughly the same overall number of partnerships of all sorts.

The two regions had a total of nearly 300 partnerships. The sample of partnerships to be interviewed was selected on the basis of the following criteria in order to provide a valid sample of relevant partnerships in these regions:

- type of partnership

- size of partnership

- urban/rural split

- location in relation to larger urban centres

- clustering

- type of lead organisation.

Based on these criteria, the following partnerships were interviewed:

Yorkshire and Humberside
Paul Rogers: Scarborough Borough Council
Evelyn Milne: Sheffield City Council
John Woodside: Barnsley Borough Council
Rob Clegg: North Halifax Partnership
Jennifer Lynn: West Central Halifax Partnership
Phil Barnes: Leeds City Council
Janet Skirrow: Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe Partnership
Dave Clarson: Manor and Castle Trust
John Hocking: York City Council
Christine Bainton: ex York Regeneration Partnership

South East
Martin Dennison: Portsmouth & SE Hampshire Partnership
Mark Shipperlee: Worthing Community Partnership
Grant Thornton: Reading Borough Council
Claire Demuth: Brighton and Hove City Council
Jim Simpson: Community Development and Training Partnership
Margaret Morton: The Sheerwater and Maybury Partnership
Mike Haynes: Hastings Borough Council
Melanie Nock: The Bexhill Regeneration Partnership
Teresa Gittings: Network for the Regeneration of Communities in South East England

In addition, the following interviews at regional level were undertaken:

Geoff Needham: Yorkshire Forward
Alison Biddulph: Government Office for Yorkshire and Humberside
Pat Tempany: Senior Regeneration Manager, SEEDA

The interviews were undertaken in a semi-structured way in that a list of questions was sent in advance to participants and these issues were all covered at the interview. The interview itself, however, focused on some issues in greater depth than others and raised additional issues according to the interests and views of the interviewee.

The issues that are discussed below were not predetermined but form a grouping of themes that emerged from the 22 interviews. The grouping is therefore subjective but is considered to reflect the major concerns of the interviewees.

As with all interviews of this nature, the interviewer was reliant on the interviewee for a perception of both what was important and, indeed, for a version of the truth. For example, in one case, the interviewee, who considered that a partnership had not operated as a partnership in that case, was asked whether other members of the board would share that view. It was apparent that other members of the board would consider the partnership to have been a success in their terms.

Given this, care has been taken to try not to imply that the findings from the interviews are universal truths that can be applied to all the 1,000 or so partnerships in England. The sample is, after all, only 2 per cent on this basis. The findings are, however, valid in terms of a record of the perceptions of senior practitioners involved in a range of partnerships in the two case study regions.

Findings from the interviews

The findings from the interviews are set out under four main themes with a number of subheadings:

- Partnerships
  - Importance of differences in the size and type of partnership
  - Resources
  - Sources of information

- Networks
  - Existing networks
  - Reasons for establishing/requiring networks
  - Imposed or owned networks

- External agencies
  - Regional Development Agencies
  - Government Offices for the Regions
  - Universities

- Training
  - The value of training
  - Training budgets and plans
  - Types of training achieved
  - Types of training/skills required
  - Accreditation.

The conclusions to be drawn from the analysis given below and their implications for the implementation of *The Learning Curve* are set out in the final section.

Partnerships

Importance of differences in the size and type of partnership

It is very clear that the approaches taken to learning and networking and the need for support are conditioned by the size and type of partnership involved. The partnerships interviewed varied enormously according to the characteristics of size, leadership, degree of community involvement

and degree of innovation shown. Many interviewees stressed that their own partnership was different – if not unique – in constitution, approach, structures, remit and staffing from other partnerships and this made effective networking difficult as there is a problem of finding other authorities in a similar position. This shows the potential value of developing policies and approaches that are sensitive to the different groupings of partnerships and of assessing successes and failures against the performance of similar partnerships rather than against some national 'norm'. The suggestion was also put forward that any programme of meetings should be applicable to different levels of practitioner.

Size

There is a greater difference than might be imagined between the large and small partnerships. The size of a partnership can be measured in a number of different ways: by Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding; by matching funding; by number of projects run; by physical area or population encompassed. In the case of this study, however, it is considered that the number of core staff is particularly relevant. It is difficult to define the 'core' with any accuracy as this term will be used in different ways by different partnerships. It was decided, therefore, to allow interviewees to define their own core. On this basis, the range of staffing of partnerships interviewed included one person working 26 days a year, through a part-time worker doing 20 hours a week, to between some 16 and 20 core staff.

Leadership

Partnerships interviewed included those run by local authorities 'in house'; those run at arm's length but as part of a local authority; those run as free-standing partnerships but using the local authority as the accountable body; and, in just two cases interviewed, community-based partnerships which acted as their own accountable body.

There were clear differences between the large metropolitan local authority-led partnerships and other partnerships. The economies of scale that can be achieved in the larger cities allow local authorities and related partnerships to use their own resources for training and networking and to tap into networks and sources of funding that others cannot. The economies of scale can be seen in terms of physical

proximity for access to face-to-face advice or sources of information, in the ability to tap into central administrative, supply and training functions and the use of an authority's expertise and networks. The gap between the largest and the smallest partnership in terms of resources and approach is enormous.

Degree of community involvement
All the partnerships interviewed had some degree of community involvement and all stressed the key importance of this. However, very few partnerships interviewed could be characterised as being community-led. Degrees of community involvement included:

- local authority-led partnerships where there was no board but where the intention was that community representatives should lead the action groups set up to tackle the key issues

- a public/private partnership where community representation was not established until 14 months after the project had started

- a partnership where the public, business and community sectors each had an equal number of seats on the board but where no two sectors could overrule the third

- a community-based and community-led partnership where members of the board and of staff were drawn as far as possible from the local community.

Such differing models had a variety of implications for training, advice and support, a number of which are covered in later sections of this report. However, it is worth stressing at this point that a number of interviewees were keen to dispel the myth that professionals provided the source of expertise and community representatives were simply recipients of such expertise.

Degree of innovation shown
Those partnerships that had tried to extend their practice through undertaking groundbreaking work saw themselves willingly or unwillingly in the role of imparter, rather than gainer, of knowledge. This had implications, first, for the value of both training events and networks in

that such partnerships commented that they had little to learn from other groups who were less well advanced than them. This can apply even to events run by national groupings of partnerships which encompass bodies of different sizes and, particularly, of differing degrees of progression.

The second implication is for the amount of time that such partnerships spend, and will increasingly spend, in giving advice, support and information to other partnerships and to, for example, students on regeneration courses. There was no unwillingness expressed to fulfil this role at present but one such partnership raised the important question of the current lack of resourcing to undertake this role. The reverse of the coin was that at least one partnership had set up a consultancy to disseminate, and to benefit from, its acquired expertise. This model has now been used by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in setting up Residents for Regeneration encouraging the development of residents' consultancies.

The potential exists for innovative partnerships to extend their remit in passing on knowledge and experience – if properly resourced to do so – by focusing more on generic issues such as 'mainstreaming', the workings of local strategic partnerships (LSPs) and approaches to training itself.

Culture
The culture of an organisation is hard to determine through interviews. However, it was clear in some notable cases that the approach to learning, networking and support was conditioned by the attitude of senior figures within the partnership – either on the staff or on the board. This could reflect the wider political environment in which an individual partnership works. In some cases the culture can come from outside the partnership itself, with one independent partnership citing the approach taken by local authority officers with whom they worked as one reason for good partnership working.

Resources

There are two key resources involved in networking, training and support for partnerships – time and finance. Of these two, the more precious appeared to be time. Nearly all the interviewees mentioned the lack of time to undertake training, to search for information and, even, to put in place skilling strategies.

The 5 per cent element of the SRB grant that can be used for set-up and administration was the most frequently mentioned source of funding for training activities. A number of partnerships had, however, encouraged projects to build in a bid for training, including, in a couple of cases, training for main partnership board members. Only two interviewees suggested that financial resources were insufficient with a suggestion that the 5 per cent should be increased in future regimes.

However, it is not considered that this should be taken as meaning that financial resources are adequate – more that pressure of work and a lack of commitment in some cases by some board members and, to a lesser extent, practitioners were more pressing obstacles than finance. The pressures on time had very real implications for training. One practitioner had to give up a master's degree in regeneration because of the difficulties in doing coursework outside the day a week allocated to the degree.

It is also relevant to note that no interviewees complained about a lack of information – simply the time to access it and the availability of systems to make this process as straightforward as possible. Indeed, one interviewee pointed out that the new technologies employed by the RDAs and the then Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) allow training and learning materials to be more readily available. However, this was not matched by a related encouragement for partnerships to have the time and space to learn from these materials.

This has clear implications for the approach taken by partnerships to training which will be considered in the conclusions and recommendations at the end of this report.

Sources of information

The networks discussed below provide key sources of information. Two other sources need to be mentioned at this stage – websites and exchange visits.

There was mixed use of websites. A number of interviewees used the websites run by the DTLR and the RDAs and used regen.net to access and download information. For at least one very small partnership, the Internet was the one significant source of information and the practitioner could not have operated without it. However, at the other extreme one partnership stated that they knew that the RDA has a website but they had never accessed it. Reasons given for not using the Web included that it was difficult to know where to start with all the information available; that the partnership had only recently gained the equipment to do this; and that, given the pressure on time, accessing the Web was a luxury.

Some interviewees expressed the need for a single quality website which could provide straightforward access to a range of information. renewal.net, which was opened after the completion of these interviews, can now be seen to be providing the sort of portal that a number of the interviewees wanted and it should be stressed that the comments made on website provision were made in advance of this being available. However, the value of this site still needs to be properly assessed.

Many of those who did not use the Internet felt that they really should and would benefit from it. However, one interviewee referred to the increasing use of email to send information such as drafts of very bulky reports and notices of meetings (sometimes at the last minute) and considered this to be a too undisciplined method of information exchange. In this case, the interviewee felt that such an undisciplined use of email was growing and could not be prevented.

The other source is exchange visits, with a number of partnerships in both regions arranging visits to other schemes. These were facilitated through a variety of sources including the RDA contact person and through a board member knowing somebody on another partnership. Interviewees found these to be extremely valuable in that they mixed

person-to-person contact with a focus on a live project. In many cases, contacts were established through visits that were used subsequently for advice and sharing concerns. It is clear that the value of such visits is proportionate to the amount of organisation put into them, with the need for a clear understanding of the purpose of the visit for both groups which is then reflected in the programme and nature of the visit.

Networks

The range of existing networks

One core aim of the interviews was to 'map' the networks that already exist. This was not, however, at all clear-cut in either region studied. It had been imagined that the series of interviews would build up a picture of a series of overlapping networks within each of the two study regions with certain key nodes and a number of identifiable links to national bodies and networks. However, the variety of approaches to networking, and of the networks and contacts cited, meant that this proposed mapping exercise could not be as structured as had been planned nor was the outcome identifiable in terms of a map of networks.

The approach taken in the interviews to this issue was not to prompt the interviewee with named networks but simply to encourage them to list their contacts and networks. However, in the case of the networks run (or not run) by the RDAs in both regions, there was such a variety of understanding of the nature of these that some prompting did take place in the interview. The issue of the role and perception of the RDAs is covered more fully below.

The networks and contacts that were mentioned in the interviews have been divided into three types – formal, semi-formal and informal.

Formal networks
Formal networks are defined for this purpose as those set up by others which the partnership felt eligible to join. The degree of involvement varied enormously but those cited in the interviews included:

- National (issue-based)
  - Action for Market Towns
  - Coalfield Communities
  - Core Cities Network
  - Countryside Agency
  - Development Trusts Association
  - National Network of Regeneration Partnerships
  - New Commitment to Regeneration Pathfinder authorities
  - UK Urban Network (partnerships funded under the EC's Urban Programme)

- National (training networks)
  - English Standards Board for Community Work Training
  - Federation of Community Work Training Groups

- Regional
  - the RDAs' own regional network
  - Regional Action and Involvement South East (RAISE)

- Subregional
  - Sussex Coastal Renaissance Partnership (East Sussex CC)
  - SWAP Training and Learning Skills Network (Southampton University)
  - Yorkshire Coast Partnership

- Local (council)
  - Sheffield City Council: Forum for the Future and Forum for Community Organisations

- Local (voluntary)
  - Reading Voluntary Action
  - Voluntary Action Sheffield.

Semi-formal networks
Semi-formal networks were those created either by the partnership or by others in a similar position. For example, SRB partnerships in Calderdale meet every two months with the council which is their accountable body. Sometimes these semi-formal networks are set up for a specific purpose. Those quoted were created initially to undertake a bid for European funding, with such networks being cited in both regions, and second as benchmarking groups for best value work, which were only cited in the South East.

Informal networks

Informal networks are those which the individual practitioner or board member will use in order to seek advice and support but which lie outside the formal and semi-informal networks covered above. It is more useful for this study to focus on the methods of building up informal networks rather than the actual individual bodies or people involved in them.

The methods cited include:

- using former work colleagues

- contacting people mentioned in the press

- searching the Internet and following up people referred to

- contacting people who gave conference papers either that the interviewee had heard or which were reported in the press

- contacting delegates met at conferences and other training events

- contacting people met at RDA network meetings

- using informal networks already established through other activities, e.g. a part-time worker's other consultancy activities, membership of boards or working groups of other partnerships

- contacting people met on previous organised visits to another partnership

- asking the RDA to suggest a contact on a particular issue or area of practice

- actively finding out who is undertaking a particular area of work: for example, one partnership tracked down a project in London which involved a community nursery

- seeking out other partnerships that are at the same stage of evolution: for example, those community-based partnerships that have accountable body status appear to rely on each other for information and support

- using contacts established through networks used in previous employment.

There was some comment on geographical issues related to networks. The difficulty of only using local networks was recognised in that this could provide a very particular picture of current practice and responses to issues. Additionally, and interestingly, the need was seen to network outside the region to gain advice in order not to 'wash dirty linen in public' in one's own network. It was felt that, if advice was sought locally, then the fact that a partnership was encountering problems or needed support would be fed back to other local partnerships. More physical geographical influences were mentioned including the fact that, within the South East, South Coast partnerships perceived that connections were good within their own subregion but not with the rest of the region.

Whilst not understating the need for local networking, the factors covered above demonstrate the need for a significant amount of training to be undertaken on an 'arm's length' basis from partnerships: both to allow participants to step back from the concerns of day-to-day practice and to reflect on the local factors that formed and constrained this practice.

As is shown in the example given below, in a few cases partnerships had been established specifically to act as networks themselves with the aim of capacity building amongst their chosen constituency and to improve practice in a particular field. One other example was interviewed, the Community Development and Training Partnership, and other examples are known to exist in both regions, notably Regional Action and Involvement South East (RAISE) and a Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Forum.

Some of the networks used appear to embody lessons that can be transferred to the future establishment of other networks. A good model is provided by the UK Urban Network for partnerships, funded under the EC's Urban Fund, which was initiated and is organised by those groups themselves. It was based in Liverpool and was run with one paid worker. Relevant interviewees considered it to be successful because all the groups in it were dependent on the same funding regime and facing the same issues. It ran down as the Urban Programme came to an end but it did run quarterly conferences which brought together representatives from the European Commission, the then Department of the

Environment, Transport and the Regions, the Government Offices for the Regions, local authorities and community groups. It was empowering as it allowed all groups direct access to those who made the decisions on funding and how the money could be used. Other benefits of particular networks that have been cited include the fact that one was run by, and attracted, people who had practical knowledge, and that another national body had its own regional networks that could be tapped into from other parts of the country.

Case study 1

South East Small Towns Partnership

The South East Small Towns Partnership was funded under SRB round 6 and covers the whole of the South East. Its genesis lay in the fact that the Sussex Rural Community Council was already lobbying on a number of issues relating to smaller towns in its area. In discussions with the South East England Economic Development Agency (SEEDA) about possible funding, the RDA suggested that SRB6 demanded some form of urban focus and that a regionwide initiative was needed.

The objectives of the partnership are:

- to raise the profile of market and small towns in the South East in regard to regional issues

- to develop joint working and to share best practice guidance amongst small towns

- to undertake joint programmes of action

- to make joint funding applications to achieve regeneration in such towns through such sources as InterReg, the Countryside Agency and SEEDA.

It has one partnership board with a representative from each of the counties in the region and from Action for Market Towns, SEEDA and the Countryside Agency. It has established SRCC Trading Ltd as the accountable body. It has one staff member at SRCC and one part-time member of staff at SRCC Trading Ltd to deal with administration and a nominated member of staff within each county area.

The partnership has established a network for all trainers involved in the project whether from Rural Community Councils, local authorities or independent trainers, in order to achieve consistency and good practice amongst the trainers.

The system that has been set up is seen as being a two-way process with ideas and information siphoning up as well as cascading down – not just allocating money to projects in the region but seeking ideas and priorities back from the network.

Reasons for establishing/requiring networks

Interviewees saw four main but distinct roles for networks. These were:

i   Sharing

Aiding and improving practice through the exchange of practice and the opportunity to share experiences, although one interviewee felt that people wanted to sort things out in their own way and were content to reinvent the wheel.

ii   Learning

Network meetings were seen as an opportunity to hear about current policies and practice from key players, notably the RDA and the then DTLR.

iii   Feeding back/lobbying

Partnerships need to get together as a 'union' to present a consistent view on, for example, changes in capital versus revenue funding or the appraisal regime. This would not only benefit partnerships but also, it was argued, benefit RDAs in having a better thought-out and concerted response. In some cases this had happened on individual issues and one partnership had lobbied on the delays in the approval of delivery plans through its own network and through their chair who is on the Regional Assembly. This raises the key question of the need for a network to be independent from the RDA.

iv   Support

Interviewees, particularly those working alone or in small partnerships, saw the need for personal contacts, for meeting like people and for breaking out from the isolation of their job. A number volunteered the opinion that theirs was an isolated job and that they benefited from face-to-face contact. The idea of interlinking networks was raised with membership of one network giving access to other wider groupings.

There were a number of views on what types of network would be most effective. The distinction was raised between active and passive networks – networks that sought to move agendas forward and promote and guide change and those that served as an exchange network for information and practice. The view was also expressed that it was

informal networks set up by practitioners themselves that best delivered what practitioners needed rather than networks set up by others with their own agendas which were imposed on networks. It is worth considering, however, whether the best networks are those that combine the best attributes of informal, self-generated networks with the servicing and professional support often associated with externally established networks.

Imposed or owned networks

There was some resistance to having networks imposed on partnerships and, in the case of Yorkshire and Humberside, a resistance by the GOR itself to being seen to be doing this. The view was expressed, for example, that LSPs had been imposed on the existing system. Discussion on imposed or owned partnerships extended to the proposals for regional centres of excellence (RCEs). Views were expressed that RCEs would make sense if they emerged from, and were part of, the partnerships' own informal network. More directly, it was considered that they should be supportive of partnerships and, therefore, not based in the Government Office or the RDA.

It is worth reflecting, at this point, that the concern was expressed more in terms of having a model of provision imposed than a resistance to structures for training which were at arm's length to the partnerships.

A significant number of partnerships either had not heard of, were not interested in or did not see the relevance of the proposal for regional centres of excellence in the context of this study. Not one interviewee raised the subject voluntarily and, therefore, views on this were sought specifically by the interviewer. This may have biased the outcome but the great majority of the partnerships interviewed to date supported the idea that there should be one easily accessible source of information and contacts on regeneration. One specific task could be to provide a database on new government initiatives and sources of funding.

Interviewees saw the benefits of the proposed regional centres of excellence in this context and saw the need for an RCE to set itself up specifically as the first port of call for the range of needs for information,

advice and training. This was seen as a benefit by one partnership which already undertook a large amount of voluntary training of, and provision of advice to, other partnerships. It hoped that the RCE might resource this activity.

External agencies

Regional Development Agencies

The role of the RDA exercised a large number of the interviewees in both regions. The interviews took place in a period when a number of changes were taking place with the announcements of (i) the 'single pot' for the RDAs and the concomitant end to the SRB; (ii) the division of responsibilities between RDAs and GORs with neighbourhood renewal and LSPs going to the GORs; (iii) changes in the funding regime in one RDA to favour capital rather than revenue expenditure; and (iv) changes in the appraisal criteria and, in the case of the South East, some severe delays in approving projects submitted by partnerships.

In this context, it was not surprising that there should be a largely negative reaction to the RDAs expressed in the interviews. It is also true that some interviewees will take the opportunity to express frustrations to a third party rather than highlighting the more positive aspects of the relationship. There were some partnerships that did use the RDA as a valuable and valued resource and praised their regional agency for its support in specific circumstances – for example in helping one partnership to gain accountable body status. However, the following paragraphs do reflect the overall tenor of the responses.

In both regions there was a very varied knowledge of the networks and training that were provided by RDAs. In Yorkshire and Humberside, for example, the RDA claimed to have four subregional networks. One partnership interviewed had not heard of this and another stated that its relevant network did not meet. Other reactions included the perception that their network was just a talking shop and that to operate properly the RDA should employ someone dedicated to the task. At least one of the RDAs agreed with this. The issues of frequency and regularity of network meetings were raised in both regions and it was clear that

meetings that were irregular, that had become less frequent, that were seen as being one-way processes and that did not have clear agendas were seen to demonstrate a lack of commitment on behalf of the RDAs towards the partnerships in the region. A view was expressed that the RDA has a role in networking, not in training.

This apparent frustration with the RDAs was exacerbated by the fact that partnerships saw real value in regular, properly run meetings. This included the opportunity to look at other projects and discuss practice with those in other partnerships, to meet RDA and other regional staff and, if necessary, to lobby the RDA.

The RDA role that appeared to impinge most on the partnerships interviewed was that of the 'controller' of resources rather than the promoter of better practice. In fulfilling this role, a number of interviewees perceived that the RDA was giving mixed messages – the RDA and the partnerships themselves were meant to be entrepreneurial and innovatory, breaking the rules if necessary to achieve benefits for their client groups, but the RDA not only was seen by many to be a bureaucratic organisation rather than an entrepreneurial one but was itself the guardian of many of the rules that partnerships felt needed challenging. More than one partnership made the point that partnerships more reflected a private sector model in their willingness to accept risk and that the RDAs followed traditional public sector practice in being risk averse.

A number of approaches were suggested through which the RDA would be seen to be a more supportive body. First, one interviewee suggested that the process of funding and evaluation of partnerships could be turned on its head. Obtaining funding would be a less bureaucratic and uncertain process and the monitoring that subsequently took place would be focused on obtaining, disseminating and encouraging better practice. A tough interventionist regime would be reserved for those projects that ran the risk of failing.

The relationship between RDAs and partnerships could be placed on a more co-operative basis with both sides recognising and supporting the strengths of the other and with a willingness to move forward in a way

that is built on trust and which reinforces mutual learning and removes unnecessary bureaucracy and evaluation.

It was suggested that RDAs should extend their view of what constituted a valid output from a project to include such matters as social and educational development.

One of the keys to a more positive relationship between a partnership and the RDA was the relationship between individual RDA staff members and the partnership. A number of positive comments were recorded about the value of having a contact officer but these were tempered by individual comments that the contact officer kept being changed and, from another partnership, that, if the contact officer was ill or away, no one else could deal with queries.

> **Case study 2**
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> **Active partners**
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> *Active Partners: Benchmarking Community Participation in Regeneration* was published by Yorkshire Forward in March 2000. The report was prepared by Communities and Organisations – Growth and Support (COGS) and funded by the RDA and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
>
> It provides 12 benchmarks for community participation in regeneration. These can be used by partnerships for developing and implementing a community strategy, for reviewing its progress and for setting new goals.
>
> The benchmarks range from 'Communities have access to and control over resources' to 'Programme and project procedures are clear and accessible'. Each benchmark has a number of key considerations to be taken into account in the process of self-assessment and a series of suggestions for good practice.
>
> This report demonstrates clearly one of the key roles that the RDA can play in acting as provider of guidance and disseminator of effective practice.

The relationship with GORs

In comparison with the RDAs, there was very little contact with the GORs. This was not because of antipathy – indeed, some interviewees expressed a desire for the GORs still to be in charge of the SRB – but because there was little perceived need for it at the time of the interviews. The role of the GOR became even more indistinct for those partnerships who were in areas which were not eligible for funding under

the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. This may now change with the new allocations of responsibility for regional policy and development within central government.

There was a significant lack of understanding amongst partnerships as to how the changes in the allocations of responsibilities between the GOR and the RDA would affect the operation of the partnership. One perceived implication of this change that was raised was that the RDA and the Government Office would have to work much more closely together.

Universities

A significant number of partnerships had no formal links with universities in their area or region. A number did commission research but not training from universities and others did have more formal links through university representation on the partnership board. In one partnership interviewed, the university was a partner in the SRB bid. In another case the main link was through one university's Construction Department which provided advice on development. However, nearly all interviewees saw the potential for closer relationships with universities, in one case because it was a major employer in the area, and expressed the desire to have closer links. The barriers to achieving this were often financial, with difficulties over a lack of a budget for research and limited resources for training.

Training

The value of training

Not one of the interviewees questioned the value of training and the questions asked did not seek to obtain a list of the benefits of training as this was thought to be unnecessary. However, in the course of interviews some values of training were raised which are not always recognised. Notably, there is the value in simply getting a staff group, or more importantly a board, to spend time together to achieve a common purpose. This builds relationships and trust as well as improving skills. One interviewee saw a particular importance in the role of training in

integrating the horizontal structures of a partnership – from decision makers through managers and front-line workers to the community. This was seen to be particularly important at the inception of a partnership, with one partnership stating that the board had moved straight to consideration of the management of the project before having taken any time to establish a common vision for it.

The point was also raised that exposure to training leads to a form of 'ripple effect', with people going away from training with a greater awareness and demanding that their own partnerships fund such training and development work.

Two final points need to be made on the value of training. The first is that this activity should not take place either for its own sake or in isolation from the other processes of partnership. The example was given of members of a board who had spent time in workshops on the social, economic and demographic make-up of the wards in the partnership area. However, the allocation of resources within the area was not eventually carried out on the basis of any such evaluation but more reactively in response to bids that were made.

Second, there is the need for some mechanism to retain the 'capital' of skills and knowledge that has been built up in an area – particularly by the community representatives on the board. In one partnership, four out of the ten community representatives had never been involved in their area before in such a way and the fear was expressed that the information and skills gained by them would be lost if continuation mechanisms were not put in place.

Training budgets and plans

Responses to the questions about training budgets and strategies were very mixed. Practice varies greatly. The source of funding for training most often cited was the 5 per cent allowance for management built into the SRB allocation. However, a number of partnerships pointed out that the amount derived from this was barely sufficient to employ a member of staff, let alone provide any training budget. Others made it clear that

whilst there was some budget for staff training, there was none for the training of board members. In one case at least, board member training drew on the same limited budget as that for staff training. A number of partnerships did not have a training budget at all. The amounts available to those that did varied significantly from one large authority which allocated £945 per person per year, through an allocation of £300 per person per year to £2,000 per year for the whole staff.

The differences between partnerships located within a local government structure and those that were free-standing were clear. In general, staff working within local government not only were more likely to have a training allocation but could also benefit from programmes of in-house training run by other parts of the local authority. The difference was also seen with regard to training plans. Few partnerships had such documents but those with a local authority background were more likely to identify particular training needs systematically through an established staff appraisal process – although there was no evidence that this process produced needs specifically related to regeneration. One partnership stated that it was moving away from a 'liberal' approach to training towards a staff appraisal system.

A few partnerships interviewed had either set up projects related to staff and board member training or had encouraged projects to build in training elements when making bids. One partnership commented that the projects were better at training their staff and community representatives than was their sponsoring authority – a local council. In one specific case, one of the partners – the Joseph Rowntree Foundation – had provided a dedicated sum for training and development for the community group representatives on the partnership board.

Types of training achieved

There was a very wide variety in approaches to training and to the types of training achieved. The list below records specific training events mentioned during the interviews. They do not cover the totality of training but it is sufficient to show the range of types of training.

- In-house training
  - organising day training and information sessions on, for example, report writing and media training which were open to the community
  - project workers' meetings devoted to discussing training plans
  - providing staff with time to write a manual on a particular procedure
  - pairing/shadowing as part of the Investors in People process
  - in-house briefings for staff by external speakers
  - staff themselves do seminars on specific subjects to share information
  - staff cascade the information gained from training events that they have attended
  - all staff going through advanced appraisal training
  - bringing in consultants and in-house resources to undertake training on appraisal

- Self-directed training
  - looked at the then DETR's White Book and Green Book
  - used SRB handbook
  - visiting websites

- Training specifically for board members
  - organising seminars and conferences in early days for board members to train them on the mechanics of the system and on the responsibility of trustees
  - try to give board members two or three four-day events a year
  - facilitating away days on roles and responsibilities and on SRB6
  - training done largely through normal meetings because of the other commitments of the board members and difficulty in getting them together for training
  - facilitating away days on how system operates, financial matters and decision making
  - going to conferences and events
  - a board member acting as an 'appraisal buddy' to two staff project appraisers
  - paid part of board member's MSc (she is now running a New Deal for Communities elsewhere in the country)

- board members sit on committees of other organisations and use the training potential of this
- community board members had had an 'away weekend' to discuss the forward strategy
- board members attending GO project appraisal training
- running half-day training for board members with external facilitators on, for example, forward strategies
- individual board members go on individually relevant training sessions, for example the representative of the local Neighbourhood Watch went on Home Office training

- RDA-organised
  - network meetings
  - SEEDA appraisal training day
  - seminar on Community Development Trusts – run by a Development Trusts Association secondee to SEEDA

- Externally organised
  - Surrey University modular programme
  - the University of the West of England appraisal training course
  - attending conferences
  - the National Regeneration Convention
  - 'training consists of the odd conference'
  - attending seminars
  - one member of staff on an accountancy course

- Use of external providers/facilitators
  - Civic Trust Regeneration team
  - local voluntary sector
  - local authority
  - training in forward strategies through Common Purpose
  - community work training company runs courses on an introduction to community work skills and on intermediate community work skills which are accredited through the Open College.

Case study 3

Training in North Halifax Partnership

North Halifax Partnership was established in November 1998 to prepare an SRB bid. It covers three wards and focuses on education, training and employment for this area. It received £4.1m under the SRB with £613,000 being spent in the first year of which 6 per cent (£37,000) was for administration and management. It is a community-based partnership with seven of the 20 board members, including the chair, being local residents. It has two staff, one of whom is on secondment from Calderdale MBC.

In 2000/01 it spent £1,336 on staff training and £2,682 on training for board members. The following training was provided:

- All the board members and the two members of staff attended a two-day partnership conference on review and evaluation.

- Four board members and one member of staff went to the National Regeneration Convention in Liverpool.

- Two board members attended the RDA's 'Active Partners' conference.

- Three board members attended the 'Active Partners' training day run by COGS (see case study 2).

- Two board members and two staff members attended a one-day SRB appraisal training event.

- One board member attended the Euronetz Community Regeneration Conference.

- One board member attended the CLES (Centre for Local Economic Strategies) annual conference.

- One board member attended a three-day course at Glasgow University on 'Evaluating Regeneration Initiatives'.

- Three board members are attending sessional sessions at the Bright Sparks project on Book Keeping and Fund Raising Skills.

- One member of staff, who is a local resident, is undertaking a BA Business Management Degree at Leeds Metropolitan University.

- One member of staff attended a European Social Fund seminar.

- One member of staff attended two one-day conferences of the Calderdale Learning Partnership.

The final type of training mentioned was the training that partnership workers provided for the community. This is not the subject of this research but some key examples are listed below where they demonstrate an acceptance of the role of partnerships in providing others with the skills in the processes and practices of regeneration

which they themselves have acquired. This is one key aspect of community empowerment – the 'letting go' of skills to enable others to access resources and skills. This could be extended to the idea of 'participative appraisal', with community members as appraisers and with the community setting the measures by which a project should be judged. One interviewee put forward the idea of supporting 'community development apprentices' from communities within partnership areas.

Examples of the overall approach of skilling communities included:

- programme managers getting local people involved in the appraisal process

- project development officers being briefed to tell people how to fill in SRB forms etc.

- project officers running workshops on how to apply for SRB funding and on claims training for approved projects

- the SRB funding a Community Projects Officer who has a role in working with communities

- an SRB project to deliver management training to communities.

Types of training/skills required

It was clear that there was the desire for more training to be undertaken and, indeed, some embarrassment on the part of some interviewees that this was not being achieved. One of the key issues here was resources, which are considered in the final section.

A number of specific needs were cited in interviews. These are set out below. However, these should not be taken at their face value as being any sort of definitive list of training needs or, indeed, of the type of skills that interviewees considered to be important in regeneration practitioners. Three points are apparent from the interviews.

First, and importantly, it is apparent from the interviews that the priorities expressed for training are often those driven by the requirements of the RDA's appraisal and evaluation process and the pressure for high

quality administrative processes in, for example, sending in claims and returns. More than one interviewee bemoaned the fact that they had to focus more on these activities than on delivering regeneration.

Second, interviewees often did not consider the generic needs of the professionals within their project teams when discussing training needs and often trusted the professionals in the team to have been trained in their own professional skills. For this reason they concentrated on training in the processes and practices of partnership rather than on wider professional skills – whether these be community development officers or property professionals, health visitors or town planners.

One lesson that can be learnt from this is that professional training needs to look at the paths that graduates take into regeneration and to design the content of courses with this in mind. Two possible approaches are possible – to maintain professional training with core skills in the knowledge that these are to feed into more specialised training in regeneration later or to combine professional core skills with regeneration education through, for example, combined degrees.

Bearing in mind the foregoing caveats the specific training needs cited were:

- preparation of applications

- forward strategies

- evaluation techniques

- community consultation by commercial groups

- partnership development

- project appraisal

- value for money

- financial accounting

- housing law

- briefings on e.g. European funding sources and neighbourhood renewal

- business planning skills

- training generic programme managers

- induction and initial basic information for board members

- asset-based development

- risk management

- entrepreneurship

- project management

- working with communities

- using data

- partnership structures and relationships.

The list above does not include generic induction training for regeneration and neighbourhood renewal practitioners because, as stated above, interviewees were more concerned at this point with immediate needs thrown up by day-to-day practice. However, it is clear both from this list and the interviews that there is the need for a more comprehensive approach to induction and to the updating of knowledge with more integrated subjects being addressed such as urban deprivation, neighbourhood management and the interrelationship between national, regional and local policies and structures.

There are particular issues surrounding the training of board members with a number of partnerships stating that board members do not receive training. A particular focus in a range of the interviews was the need to have training sessions for board members early on in the process. The benefits of this were seen as being threefold. First, there is the need to impart information about SRB, the partnership, its ways of working, the roles and responsibilities of board members and such issues as appraisal and evaluation. Second, such early sessions provided the opportunity for board members to evolve a shared vision for the partnership. Cases were cited where members soon became 'bogged down' in funding decisions before they had time to establish the overall strategy. This reinforces the need both for the induction process outlined above and for this to be provided as part of an overall strategy

for learning and training within a partnership – applying both to board members and to practitioners.

Finally, the act of training itself – particularly if it was held away from the partnership – could have the effect of helping to form a more cohesive board. In one case, expert seminars were organised for all board members but only the community representatives attended. It was felt that this reduced cohesion as ideas that had been discussed in the workshops were not shared by other board members and, thus, not progressed.

A number of interviewees expressed the view that partnerships themselves and, in particular, the community itself provided a resource to provide training for other partnerships, groups and individuals. One general theme behind this was that the voluntary sector was seen by some as being better at partnership, with the view expressed on more than one occasion that local authority officers can see partnership working as a threat.

Accreditation

A number of the interviewees stressed that there was an increasing desire by those undergoing training for that experience to be 'accredited' in some form. Those partnerships that did have active programmes of training for staff and for board members felt that this would be even more useful if the training events could build up in some way to provide something more than simply the experience of attending seminars and conferences. In straightforward terms, this could be done by sending people on courses which already provided some form of certification – the example of bookkeeping courses for board members was cited. More broadly, examples were given of, for instance, the Surrey University modular programme and the University of West of England training in appraisal. The idea of having personal learning plans was raised and it was suggested that board members may look towards degrees in a few years' time.

Conclusions and implications for the implementation of *The Learning Curve*

The previous section identified a number of themes that have emerged from the interviews. This section draws together key issues and conclusions and sets out recommendations derived from these with a particular focus on lessons for the implementation of *The Learning Curve*.

The conclusions and implications are addressed to the main players directly involved in delivering the neighbourhood renewal agenda. These are:

- the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department of Trade and Industry

- Regional Development Agencies

- the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

- Government Offices for the Regions

- local authorities

- partnerships themselves.

Bodies to which the recommendations are addressed are identified in each recommendation.

Whilst the conclusions are framed with the above groups in mind, it is hoped that other bodies and groups concerned less directly but equally importantly with learning and skilling for neighbourhood renewal will take note of the conclusions and recommendations in this report and provide further support for those working on neighbourhood renewal. Such bodies include:

- the Local Government Association and the Improvement and Development Agency

- the Cabinet Office

- professional institutes and other bodies concerned with professional agendas

- universities and colleges

- training providers and accreditors

- Learning and Skills Councils.

In this section the work 'partnership' is used extensively. It is recognised that the types of partnership that formed the subject of the interviews in this report are gradually ceasing to exist as SRB programmes end and the 'single pot' regime becomes fully operational. Other types of partnership, notably local strategic partnerships, are now being formed. However, the word 'partnership' in the conclusions and recommendations is not designed to refer only to LSPs but is used as a generic term to encompass projects and initiatives that are being funded and will be funded to take an inclusive, holistic and neighbourhood-based approach to regeneration.

As an aid to evaluating the conclusions and recommendations, the actions from *The Learning Curve* are set out below. The conclusions and recommendations, below, focus on these actions but refer to the whole content of that report.

Actions to build knowledge

Action 1: Set up a knowledge management system (www.renewal.net)

Action 2: Provide neighbourhood renewal advisers

Action 3: Build the knowledge base through evaluations

Action 4: Support Regional Networks

Action 5: Support and evaluate residents' consultancies

Action 6: Encourage regional centres of excellence

Action 7: Provide funding for learning in neighbourhood renewal through community learning chests

(Continued)

Actions to develop skills

Action 8: Set up a learning programme for neighbourhood renewal

Action 9: Provide leadership skills

Action 10: Develop new approaches to neighbourhood renewal learning

Action 11: Support professionals and practitioners working locally

Action 12: Support civil servants and other policy makers

Action 13: Support residents

Action 14: Support councillors

Action 15: Train the trainers

Action 16: Develop ways to support organisational change

Action 17: The role of the Government Offices for the Regions

Action 18: The role of Regional Development Agencies

Action 19: The role of local strategic partnerships

Action 20: The role of local authorities

Action 21: The role of Learning and Skills Councils

Action 22: Support learning in neighbourhood partnerships

Action 23: Ensure that learning supports community cohesion

Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations are set out under the four main themes used above.

Partnerships

Importance of differences in the size and type of partnership
The importance of the culture existing within organisations at all levels and of the individuals that operate within them can be underestimated as a factor leading to better practice in training.

There is a feeling of isolation amongst a number of smaller partnerships. Particular attention needs to be paid to the needs of both community-based partnerships and those relying on very few staff.

- The NRU is recommended to place a specific emphasis on the training and support needs of community-led partnerships.

Resources

Poor resourcing in its widest sense – financial, time/staffing, provision of and access to information – is a key factor in the difficulties of finding adequate training and support. It is not, however, the only important factor. Other factors can include the lack of a learning culture within partnerships. A lack of information is not seen as a key problem – simply the lack of time and knowledge to access it.

Resources do exist, for example the in-house training provision of local authorities, that have the potential for wider use.

The community has a largely untapped potential to provide training in, for example, regeneration skills such as partnership working.

Partnerships that undertake particularly effective practice can be placed in the role of the disseminator of such practice without being resourced to do so.

- Local authorities should identify in-house training resources that may be used by other partnerships within the area.

- The NRU is recommended to demonstrate in its training and support strategy how funding is to be dispersed to all partnerships which undertake to fulfil a wider training function.

- Partnerships are recommended to encourage projects to be set up which specifically address the training and capacity-building needs of those involved directly in partnerships.

- Partnerships are recommended to identify particular areas of expertise within staff, board members and projects that may form the basis of consultancy to other regeneration practitioners and other bodies.

- Partnerships are recommended to undertake an audit of the potential for employing members of local communities as trainers.

Sources of information
Despite the greater accessibility of information online and the ability to exchange information by email, there is still the key need to meet other practitioners face to face.

- Partnerships are recommended to establish partnership 'twinning' arrangements with similar partnerships.

Networks

Existing networks
The large number of networks is not a problem per se but there is the need to ensure that practitioners are aware of the range of existing networks – particularly before starting new ones – and of the opportunities for, and methods of, informal networking that exist.

Lessons can, however be drawn out from other networks to provide criteria against which new ones may be judged.

- The NRU is recommended to issue advice on the differing roles currently and potentially played by networks with guidance on their applicability in differing circumstances.

Reasons for establishing/requiring networks
Those setting up networks need to be very clear as to their purpose. This can range from passive networks in which information is given in reaction to a request to action networks that serve to lobby and push practice forward. Networks need to be focused, supportive of partnerships, independent, active and inclusive.

Imposed or owned networks
Networks will not function effectively if they are imposed by some external agency with no degree of ownership by those that they are designed to serve.

External agencies

The allocation of responsibilities for regeneration, partnerships and resources amongst national and regional government departments is confusing and unnecessarily compartmentalised. It does not take account of the training and support needs of practitioners and boards.

Partnerships can feel a responsibility for drawing together different threads of government policy, initiatives and funding sources without having the support to do so.

There is the need for a culture change in the relationship between central and regional government and partnerships and, in particular, the voluntary sector represented on partnerships.

There are a number of overlapping national bodies operating in the field of training and information provision with a lack of clarity of the unique position, if any, that they each occupy.

The establishment of regional centres of excellence is progressing at a different pace in different regions without any clear overview as to their role, focus, relationships with other bodies, funding sources and degree of independence. There is a fear that the opportunity may be lost to design them to be as effective as possible in aiding regeneration at the neighbourhood level.

- The NRU is recommended to commission an independent scoping study of the existing and potential roles of national bodies in this field.

- RDAs and Government Offices are recommended to require partnerships to build staff and board training outputs into delivery plans.

- The Government Offices and the RDAs are recommended to issue joint guidance encouraging a wider and less compartmentalised view of what constitutes a valid output from regeneration funding.

- More specifically, the Government Offices and the RDAs are recommended to allow the skilling of staff and board members to be a valid output of current and future regeneration programmes.

- The NRU is recommended to establish a regional forum jointly with the RDA, the GOR, the Regional Assembly and regional networks which will serve as a focus for training and networking activities with partnerships and which is properly resourced and has a published annual programme. It is also recommended to establish and publish the respective roles to be played by the RDAs and the GORs in this respect.

- The NRU is recommended to undertake an urgent study of the current position with regard to regional centres of excellence with a view to both issuing early good practice guidance on their establishment and adopting a policing role should any fail to meet the potential for such bodies.

- Government Offices for the Regions are recommended to play a positive and active role in the formation of regional centres of excellence in their region to ensure that they are complementary to other networks and that they fulfil the full range of functions necessary for the support of partnerships.

Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices for the Regions

Regional Development Agencies have failed to arrive at a considered, rigorous, comprehensive and consistent approach to the support needs of the partnerships for which they have responsibility.

RDAs and others responsible for guiding the work of partnerships need to ensure that they establish a culture in which partnerships are encouraged to seek advice and help.

- The NRU is recommended to devote resources to an active programme of establishing clear working relationships with all the partnerships funded under RDA programmes.

- RDAs are recommended to set up pilot schemes to test new regimes for funding partnerships in which evaluation is reduced and the onus is on encouraging effective practice.

- RDAs are recommended to consider relaxing the evaluation regimes for those partnerships that have achieved a track record of effective practice.

- The NRU is recommended to establish mechanisms to learn from the experience of RDAs when establishing relationships with partnerships to fulfil the GORs' roles in learning and skills.

- RDAs and Government Offices are recommended to initiate experimentation in relaxing the monitoring regime for regeneration spending to place the emphasis on monitoring as a means of capturing effective practice rather than as an activity in itself.

- RDAs and Government Offices are recommended to take the training provision within a project as one of the criteria for project approval.

- RDAs and Government Offices are recommended to seek to ensure greater continuity in staffing, particularly the contact persons.

Universities
- Universities are recommended to work with partnerships to develop an outreach strategy and to undertake an active outreach programme to engage with local partnerships in a variety of ways (according to local and regional needs), including research, secondment, in-house and modular training, management support, evaluation and appraisal services.

- Universities are recommended to establish consortia to provide continuing professional development courses to address the new skills requirements for regeneration.

Training

The value of training
There is clearly an eagerness to learn and any lack of activity in this field does not derive from a general lack of desire to engage in learning and development or from any lack of awareness about the potential value of doing so. It is due to the factors set out above – notably lack of time resulting from the pressure of work. This could be counteracted by fostering a culture in which learning and development are seen to be intrinsic parts of a work programme and time is built in by managers and boards who recognise that to do so will add value to the work of the partnership.

- The NRU is recommended to provide a clear message, reflected in funding allocations, that time spent on training and networking is an integral part of a partnership's responsibilities.

- The NRU is recommended to develop material on the value derived by partnerships in undertaking programmes of training and learning, derived from examples from practice, and to disseminate this alongside other effective practice work.

Training budgets and plans

The current ways in which practitioners learn and network do not form any coherent approach to learning and networking. Too much relies on factors such as the culture of organisations, individual commitment, time constraints and knowledge of available sources.

The need by practitioners and boards to 'own' the approaches they adopt – sometimes through 'reinventing the wheel' – can be an important part of the process of gaining ownership and understanding of a project.

There is no one model that is applicable to the existing range of partnerships. Indeed, no single approach was duplicated within the 19 partnerships interviewed. A blanket approach to meeting the perceived training and support needs of partnerships and of regeneration partnerships and board members will not work. Instead, it should be sensitive to the particular requirements and ways of working of different participants in regeneration. However, this fact does not relieve the NRU and others from setting out models of training and development for use by partnerships.

Board members have particular needs, and can derive particular benefits, from training but these are often not recognised in practice.

- The NRU is recommended to set out models of training, support and networking informed by a clear understanding of the particular needs of different types of partnership and of what barriers exist to their achievement.

- Partnerships are recommended to put in place clear procedures for establishing the training needs of staff and of board members.

- The NRU and other partnership funders are recommended to make clear in guidance that the allocation of funding under emerging programmes should rely, *inter alia*, on recipients having a clear and implementable strategy for training and support, including being explicit about the ways in which different communities will contribute to, as well as benefit from, such a strategy.

- Partnerships are recommended to use board member and staff training not only as a means of imparting information or acquiring skills but also as a means of engendering a partnership approach to working and decision making.

- Partnerships are recommended to recognise the value of training to board members particularly in the initial stages of a project and institute an induction process for new board members where this does not already exist.

- Partnerships are recommended to draw up and implement a strategy for benefiting from the existence of local universities and other education providers.

Types of training achieved
A wide variety of approaches – and degrees of rigour – are adopted in the identification of an individual's training needs.

Types of training/skills required
There is no clear picture of what skills are needed by those working in, or managing, regeneration. The debate on the skills and practices that are needed for community regeneration has been confused, and held back, by a failure to look across the three main separate approaches to regeneration – development and design-led (the Urban Task Force), neighbourhood renewal and social exclusion-led (the National Strategy) and community development-led. One approach is to start this integration at partnership level – and one of the intentions of LSPs is to do this – but this needs to be built into any strategy for LSP development.

The system is tending to be process-driven in that priorities in learning and support are given by partnerships to those activities that best serve the needs of key inputs to the system – such as evaluation and appraisal – rather than the outputs and outcomes of the system. This is an important conclusion as it focuses on what is learnt more than how it is learnt. It also raises wider questions as to whose needs and interests are being served in training – those of the communities and practitioners engaged in renewal, or those of the system that has developed.

- The NRU is recommended to define the skills needed by regeneration practitioners.

Accreditation
Professional bodies are starting to engage in debates on new professional skills, on new styles of education and training and on the new place of professionals and professionalism but progress is slow.

The key role of the lifelong learning approach to training is not yet fully recognised by professional bodies and education and training accreditors.

There are clear moves towards properly designed training programmes for individuals and towards those that are accredited in some way.

- Universities are recommended to work with partnerships and the GORs to address the need to provide accredited modules that can be linked to provide more comprehensive training.