

Stepping Up in Sustainability 2011-12

Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change case study



Title of project	Sustainability in Learning	
Lead partner organisation name and address	Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change 61 Green Lane Redruth TR15 1LS	
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1. Aims of the project	Our aim through this project was to embed a sustainable development ethos within our learning delivery and the learner experience.	
2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you	<p>Sustainability principles already underpin our current learning recruitment, from how we design and develop our courses, to how we engage with the community. Courses are delivered in community settings and therefore invest in community assets. We generally engage with a wide cross section of the community, which enrich the learner experience and reduce the distance needed for people to travel, increasing accessibility and reducing fuel consumption. Rather than courses being organisation led, we actively develop courses around community need through working in partnership with community and voluntary sector organisations that advise us on community need and often recruit via word of mouth. This ensures the community are actively involved within decision making and we are able to engage with people who would not normally seek out more formal learning.</p> <p>Current evaluation has highlighted that despite excellent satisfaction with current delivery, there is limited awareness by learners of how their learning has had an impact on their community. This reflects a lack of explicit discussion of any of the objectives of sustainable development within delivery and that learners are not aware of the wider impact their learning journey has beyond themselves into the wider community.</p> <p>As an organisation we have sustainability high on our agenda in terms of our general structures and systems, however we wanted to try and roll out this ethos of sustainability into our learning delivery.</p>	

<p>3. Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To develop a strategy that ensures sustainable development is truly embedded into all aspects of our learning delivery and the learner experience. 2) To demonstrate leadership in how to implement this strategy through empowering staff, learners and stakeholders to provide their own vision on what sustainable development means to them. 3) To maximise the impact of this strategy through evaluating and disseminating best practice to key partners within the sector and ensuring this new strategy becomes part of our ongoing learning strategy.
<p>4. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach</p>	<p>We consulted with our learners and our tutors to develop a strategy forward for how both groups would like to see sustainability embedded within the learning process.</p> <p>We researched national projects to discover what had already been achieved and developed.</p> <p>We reviewed our current processes and then pulled together a strategy for how we would approach our project based on feedback.</p> <p>This took us away from our original idea to develop tools and resources to embed sustainability into the course delivery. We have therefore examined how we can improve quality within the assessment process by using alternative forms of assessment.</p> <p>We monitored the process and have evaluated what we have learnt.</p> <p>We discussed with other local organisations how we could make a forward plan to support tutors with training and resource sharing to embed sustainability within their course delivery.</p>
<p>5. Results that you obtained</p>	<p>Original feedback from courses highlighted that sustainability should only be embedded into delivery where it is relevant 'Don't try and shoehorn it in'. 'Sustainability isn't relevant to this course'. Most people felt there was the danger of developing too much talk around the subject and not enough action.</p> <p>Following an initial tutor meeting at the start of the project, most felt that they were already embedding sustainability where they could through resource minimisation and empowering students through focusing on their individual needs and learning styles. Therefore, we looked at focusing on giving learners choice about how they would like to collect evidence for their assessments using alternative forms</p>

e.g. photos, videos, audio, electronic workbooks as they felt this was a key area where we could improve quality of learner experience and reduce paper wastage.

We also looked at how we could encourage tutors to be more explicit in how sustainability was discussed and embedded in the course through new Scheme of Work and Lesson Plan templates. We have also through this project set up a Moodle learning space through a community partner to create additional resources for students.

Through this process we have piloted using alternative methods of assessment on 6 courses; ICT (2), Customer Services, Gardening, Cooking, Audio and Sound.

The following quotes highlight the variation in how using alternative assessment methods were perceived by learners. Some found the process empowering and they learnt new skills, others found it daunting and restrictive. Quotes have been mentioned in relation to sustainability where tutors took a greater initiative to embed other discussions this through their course.

"I found it easier with the workbook as I'm not very confident with being videoed, so I'd rather have a workbook than a picture being taken. Discussing sustainability though gardening was really interesting and I will be able to use what I have learnt within my new house."

"The video camera took a lot of time and was uncomfortable because it places pressure on the 'performer'. I've not explored sustainability before though; it is good to have this integrated into the course and look at ways that you can save money through changing use of resources."

"I preferred completing an electronic version of the course of the workbook as opposed to videoing what I learnt as there was less writing."

"Having the video was great to have work recorded by others but I did feel nervous and at times was uncomfortable."

The following highlighted the variability with our tutor's experience.

ICT

"The group seem to prefer not having to do the writing and we're working on the computers anyway."

"I've been able to use screenshot to save evidence for the online workbook."

Customer Services

"It is much better as you can express much more in a video than a photo or in writing. What would take half a page of writing can be captured in facial expressions, body posture and tone of voice in just 30 seconds. It has been a learning curve for the students themselves using the equipment. I needed to spend

some time at the beginning of the session introducing the equipment and letting them have a practice. The important thing was not making it into a big deal. Though it was a little more time consuming at the start, it saved time in the long run and they learnt something extra in the process.”

Gardening

“I had a go at videoing as evidence for the entry level 3 gardening. I thought it would be easy and better for those who preferred no writing. However the disadvantages outweighed the advantages. Advantages were that it was sustainable and paperless. A good idea in theory. Disadvantages were that as the assessments on video were individual, it meant the rest of the group were doing nothing while I videoed. They didn't want to get in the scene on the plot while the student was being filmed. The video clips appeared to be quite long (maybe it was just nerves!), whereas a photo of planting out or digging was short. (Therefore more thought needs to be given to which is the most appropriate method of assessment collection). Some students appeared nervous of doing tasks in front of the camera. And time taken to download, save and sort the films was considerable (though this may improve once we get used to it).”

Audio and Sound

“Using video has been a more interesting experience. When you ask the students to take more control of their own assessment they support each other, those who are more capable supporting those who are less capable. It's much quicker for me and easier as they are supporting each other, especially as I need additional support to mark the learning if in written format.” (Audio and Sound tutor who is visually impaired)

There has been a reduction of paper used on each course which has varied in each case based on the original workbook structure and how the individual students chose to collect their evidence. However in most cases over half the paper on the course if not all has been reduced through this process.

However, the most important learning curve for us has been the variation in experience from course to course. Adapting the most appropriate methods for each individual and group will be something we will continue to support our tutors with and form an ongoing learning process.

We now have a greater understanding of how we can adapt and be flexible within the assessment process whilst also being mindful of time and cost restrictions.

We have also found that Moodle access is only possible for approximately 2/3rds of each course group and for our short courses isn't a realistic option. Although we hoped this would be an area where we could reduce paper usage through handouts, the feedback given by students has been that they want to have printed handouts as they learn well through them and would print them anyway.

	<p>However, through continuing to use this tool, we will further identify in the future where there may be barriers to computer access within our target communities in order to highlight where investment should be made to improve accessibility. Additionally, we will be working with partner organisations identified through our networking event to create a resource pool where tutors can access or be signposted to relevant resources to embed sustainability further through this website.</p> <p>Through research and discussions with national projects we have also realised that other organisations are also finding it difficult to embed sustainability into learning. The need to develop more training for tutors and a resource pool to support them with specific tools and activities around subject areas will be essential if we are to take this forward.</p>
<p>6. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?</p>	<p>Although the sustainability ethos is very much embedded into the ethos of the organisation, it is a relatively new concept within our learning delivery.</p> <p>Therefore overall, this project has brought about the initial impetus for change and local collaboration.</p> <p>The key ingredients for success have been;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening to our learners and tutors at the outset and deciding to change the direction of the project to embed sustainability into the learning process in a way that they thought would be relevant. - Being open and honest about the challenges with tutors and learners and realistic in how we can embed this into future delivery. - Keeping flexible and open and to understand that not everything works first time. Learn from your experiences. <p>Our tutors feel more empowered to broach sustainability in a natural way and will highlight much of the positive steps they are taking to make it more explicit within their teaching. They will also be given support to understand our ethos that what works with one group, will not necessarily work within the next.</p>

7. Any resources or tools produced by the project	<p>Although the main focus of our project was process driven, the following have been produced as a by product of our project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Example template scheme of work - Example template lesson plan - Template – a tool to map what sustainable development learning has taken place (including example from one of the gardening courses). 		
8. Total costs of the project	LSIS funding	Match funding	Total funding
	£7277	£0	£7277

<p>Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change</p> 	<p>Funded by LSIS through the Stepping Up in Sustainability Fund</p>	
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