

P R E C *i* S

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Coherent Diversity – A Literature Review: inter-disciplinary training for community regeneration and social inclusion in Scotland

There is a widespread perception that inter-professional training is an important requirement for improved performance in community regeneration and the promotion of social inclusion. This report arises from part of a research project into the provision, in Scotland, of such training, and the possible need for more or different training. The aim of this Literature Review is to bring together evidence from a wide variety of existing sources that may substantiate the need and provide references to its sources.

The main findings of the research are:

- There is widespread agreement on the need for inter-professional training. There is little in-depth evaluation of its effects, but some work suggests that training works best when linked to practical work situations, and post-qualification.
- There are many specific groupings of professionals who need to learn together in order to enhance their ability to work in multi-disciplinary teams to deal with the problems associated with social exclusion.
- These needs have been most thoroughly studied for health and social care professions and the 'built environment' professions, but the needs identified there appear to be more widely applicable.
- New shared needs to apply the principles of community learning and development and understand social exclusion are emerging for many professions.
- There is considerable evidence from the evaluations of past regeneration work of the importance of good partnership working, and some on the relevance of training to this. Partnerships can themselves become effective learning mechanisms.
- Skills for partnership working are already recognised as being required in a wide variety of contexts extending beyond regeneration
- Other types of knowledge and skills that are seen as pressing requirements for people working (as specialists or as partners) in regeneration and social inclusion include skills to work with communities, and also a range of planning and management, monitoring and evaluation and other practical skills. Some at least can be developed jointly with non-professional partners.
- 'Regeneration skills' and the skill needs for community planning are not necessarily alternatives.

Introduction

There is a widespread perception that inter-professional training is an important requirement for improved performance in community regeneration and the promotion of social inclusion. This report arises from part of a research project into the provision, in Scotland, of such training, and the possible need for more or different training. The aim of this Literature Review is to bring together evidence from a wide variety of existing sources that may substantiate the need and provide references to its sources.

Almost all of the literature is founded ultimately upon the opinions of the providers, consumers or commissioners of training. Few, if any, studies have attempted full evaluations of its outcomes and impacts. Nevertheless the accumulation of so many voices, from so many different perspectives, is itself a significant body of evidence that unmet needs exist.

The evidence reviewed comes from: areas of professional specialism or policy within which needs for inter-disciplinary training have been identified; research and investigations of regeneration initiatives; and a variety of views on the general skills that may be needed for regeneration and social inclusion, and possibly for community planning in general.

Professional perspectives

The need for inter-professional education has been identified for a wide variety of professions. It is very often in the context of regeneration or social inclusion that it is identified. This may be because of a need to work together in partnership institutions, or from a need to deal with multi-dimensional issues, or work with people with multiple problems.

Several aspects of education create a need for multidisciplinary team working and for training to support it. Early years, special needs and community education all provide examples, and the New Community Schools programme required such training, though initial progress was slow.

Examples are found in other fields such as economic development and adult guidance. Some new specialisms – community safety and community arts – appear to have recognised the need from the start.

Some areas of skill have been professional specialisms, but it is argued that many other professionals involved in social inclusion should adopt them. Skills for working with young people, and community learning and development approaches are examples. The latter have been seen as a new area of ‘community practice’ shared by many professions. The need to train for community engagement is recognised in health and housing policy

Some professions have identified a general need for enhanced skills in partnership working. This has been highlighted by National Training Organisations for Social Work and Housing.

The two major areas where inter-professional education has been most developed and researched are the health professions and the ‘built environment’ professions. In the health and caring professions, the need has resulted from the shift to community-based care, the growth in specialisation and the ‘mixed economy of care’. In the built environment professions it is seen to result from inadequacies in past responses to planning and designing for regeneration.

There is a considerable literature on health and social care that argues that shared learning will assist collaboration in practice:

- by increasing knowledge of other professions
- by improving perceptions of them
- by introducing common language and concepts
- and by teaching the skills required for collaboration.

Some work in this field has been evaluated. There is some evidence that post-experience, part-time training is the most

effective. Training without the opportunity for joint working can be transitory in effect or even reinforce stereotypes.

Built environment professionals agree strongly with the need for inter-professional working, but are likely to have gained what relevant skills they have to date from experience rather than training.

Evidence on regeneration

Reviews and evaluations of regeneration initiatives contain many findings relevant to inter-disciplinary training needs. However they are rarely given much prominence, and many relate to training indirectly, by calling for increased attention to cross-professional or inter-agency issues.

Several refer to needs for partnership and problem solving skills to be improved. Some emphasise a need for joint training with partners from other sectors. Some identify a role for partnerships themselves as 'learning mechanisms', identifying opportunities for partners to learn from each other as one of their benefits. One study found that whilst most people working in regeneration put great value on learning from experience elsewhere, they put little systematic effort into achieving this.

A summary of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Programme on regeneration concluded: *"Effective partnerships invest a considerable amount of energy and resources in developing trust and confidence between the partners. This may be regarded as either 'training' or 'teambuilding'."* Reviews of the Scottish experience reveal how little of this is actually in place.

Possible common needs

There is a great deal of additional literature that identifies the common skills and approaches that professionals may require as part of a successful regeneration policy. They need skills to work with communities, but also a range of planning and management, monitoring and evaluation and other practical skills.

There are two broad ways of describing these needs. One is that there are specific skills associated with regeneration, common to all or many professions. The other is that these are examples of needs that are relevant to many aspects of modern governance. But 'regeneration skills' and the skill needs for community planning do not necessarily need to be counterposed as alternatives.

The Rogers Report and 'The Learning Curve' report are two key sources of debate. The former concentrated on the built environment and the latter mainly on neighbourhood management and community development. But regeneration also requires greater understanding between these perspectives. The skill needs identified in these reports correspond closely to those required for community planning in Scotland.

Some reports identify distinctive needs in rural areas, which arise especially from the possible need for individuals to combine professional roles.

In Scotland, regeneration is seen as part of a broad social justice strategy, which has important links to an equality strategy. However there is little in the literature relating to regeneration and social inclusion about a need for training in the equalities agenda, or anti-discrimination practice.

Much of the available literature, from many perspectives, emphasises the need for skills for partnership working as a central element. A substantial amount of evidence also points to the need for professionals to receive training in how to listen to and work with communities. Some suggests the desirability of shared training between public, private, and voluntary sector organisations, community groups and individuals.

About the study

The scope of the project was limited to evidence of the need for post-qualification training of staff who work in or come from professional specialisms. They might be in any of the agencies involved in regeneration

and at all levels in organisations. The main project findings are reported in *Coherent Diversity: towards a picture of inter-disciplinary training for community regeneration and social inclusion in Scotland*, by Duncan Kirkpatrick and Peter Taylor (Report 31, Communities Scotland, 2004).

This literature review is not restricted to formally published documents but considers a range of public domain documents. It covers some literature on English initiatives, and a number of Britain or UK wide reviews, as well as the limited amount of research on Scottish initiatives that comments on the topic.

Related Communities Scotland research

Coherent Diversity: towards a picture of inter-disciplinary training for community regeneration and social inclusion in Scotland, Communities Scotland, Precis 39, Report 31.

Further information

Further information and copies of the report can be obtained from Jim Carruth, carruthj@communitiesScotland.gov.uk or by telephone, 0141 314 0021. The report is also available on our website, www.communitiesScotland.gov.uk.

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