



**EQUAL Transnational Management Group
Interim Report - November 2003
Identification OF End User Requirements Theme (UK)**

Aims and objectives of the thematic group

The identification of End User Requirements is one of five research themes that underpin the transnational activities. The lead partner is Sweden, while in the UK, Walsall take the lead role across the Black Country.

Specific issues to be addressed have been identified by the UK theme group:

- What are the needs of the beneficiary in the context of learning and good practice?
- What are the needs of the 'non -learner'?
- What are the 'hooks' that will engage people into learning?
- What are the barriers that are preventing access into learning?

The following desired outcomes have been agreed:

- Action research that will allow a complete and holistic understanding of the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries to inform planning for future lifelong learning using ICT.
- The sharing of methodologies and research findings locally and transnationally among partners and others.
- On-line learner cluster
- Empowerment of disadvantaged groups and individuals.
- To effect change to the perceptions and behaviour of organisations and institutions with regard to lifelong learning and employment practices
- A conference to disseminate findings.

Projects Contributing to End User Requirements Theme

1. 'Capturing the Past' - Walsall Libraries

This Walsall Community History Project aims to help people with little formal learning experiences to develop their ICT skills using the research of their personal history as a 'hook'. The ethos is to view the learner as the 'expert' in his/her knowledge of his/her personal history. In addition, flexible responses to learners' diverse needs is also a major priority. The outcomes are to create an autobiography using the internet and word processing packages and to contribute to the projects WebPages, www.walsall.gov.uk/capturing-the-past.

2. 'Clancey's Project' - Halwsowen College

Halesowen College have set up a computer based learning centre in Clancey's foundry at the Saltbrook Trading Estate. The courses are offered to members of Clancey's staff, their friends and family members over 18 and include 'computing for the terrified', 'computing for the more confident' and 'CLAIT' modules. An internet link will be installed shortly and access to Learn Direct courses will be available. The aims and objectives of the project are:

- To retrain staff on-site, who are under skilled due to possibility of redundancy.'
- To address basic skills needs and ESOL needs (many workers from Yemeni community.)
- To help raise Clancey's profile within the local community.

3. Wolverhampton EQUAL Pathways - Workable

This project is managed by WorkAble Disability services Ltd. WorkAble is a 'not for profit' organisation. EQUAL pathways is designed to research, analyse and support the needs of 40 people with head injuries/strokes or other disabilities who wish to move forward towards retraining and work. The aims and objectives of the project are to work with people with head injury, stroke or other disability to enable them to take part in lifelong learning using ICT with a view to gaining employment. The project will establish a 'what works' menu of interventions to be disseminated widely.

It is the intention that the project will offer beneficiaries the support that will enable them to gain confidence and achieve measurable

differences in their lives. The project is increasing the level of participation to people normally excluded from learning and employment. It is anticipated that Wolverhampton Primary Care Trust and Wolverhampton City Council will support this project by offering support with work placements. These organisations will monitor the success and the Primary Care Trust have shown an interest in mainstreaming this provision after completion of the project.

4. Stroke Survivors - College of Continuing Education, Walsall MBC

This project offers ICT, Arts and Personal development sessions on a weekly basis. The aim of the project is to enable people who have had strokes, and their carers, to access courses to learn and develop new skills, to meet others in the same position and most importantly build their confidence and self esteem. The ultimate goal of the project is employment and two of the students have already gone on to work experience through 'links to Work'. The stated aims of the project are:

- To create a website for stroke survivors
- To identify the needs of this group
- To extend the service to the carers of stroke survivors.
- To provide ICT skills to stroke survivors and their carers.
- To become autonomous and sustainable beyond the life of the funding.

5. Antena - Walsall Community Arts team

Antena stands for 'Arts New Technology- Encouraging New Abilities.'

The project aims to provide combined creative technology arts projects for groups of people of varied ability across the borough, particularly those who don't easily have access to services and with a focus on young adults. The sessions run by community arts workers in a variety of settings, provide new approaches to arts technology training through innovative projects that ultimately link separated community groups either physically or through the internet. All projects are documented and will be 'fed' to a new website, currently under construction.

The project has created steering groups of particular user groups to act as a forum for discussion of user needs.

www.walsall-antena.net

6. Bollywood - 'Click' Sandwell

This project aims to use the theme 'Bollywood' to both research user needs and to develop a virtual learning environment (VLE) around this theme. The idea is to take the VLE into people's homes and community centres. The project uses a consultancy to develop the project (Worth Media) and Asian women have been trained to be community evaluators. The theme 'Bollywood' links into many aspects of learning e.g. fashion, film, culture, family values, design, music, crafts, drama, dance, health/beauty and basic skills.

7. Teenage Mothers - Manor Farm Community Centre, Walsall

This project had covered a lot of work but it was not moving in the right direction to meet the EQUAL criteria. Hence it has had to be reconfigured. The project has forged links with the local SureStart Plus initiative which concerns itself with the needs of young teenage parents.

Plans are to work with teenage mothers to identify their learning needs and use the Cybercafe at the centre as a learning environment through which beneficiaries will be able to access Learn Direct courses, information about vocational courses and develop the skills needed to create a website dedicated to the needs of teenage parents. The project will also offer basic skills which has already been identified as a need for this beneficiary group. In order to add value to the project, it is hoped to obtain additional funding to facilitate a group of beneficiaries to attend a residential course which will enable them to gain an accredited qualification in peer mentoring, which will result in them visiting local schools and youth organisations as mentors/learning ambassadors.

8 I.T.'s a Small World - First Base Walsall

The project is based at a UK Online Centre, set in a residential unit for young homeless people. ICT is used as the 'hook' into learning for this target group of beneficiaries, as well as other young disengaged people in the local community. The aim is to offer web design techniques to beneficiaries and encourage communication via ICT to other similar groups. The project also aims to create lifelong learning ambassadors through networking with similar cohorts.

9. CRYASIC - Dudley gateway

This project looks at learning in the construction of simple robotics and the refurbishment of obsolete computers, progressing to development of their own electronic curriculum vitae and web page design. This is a development of training already undertaken by 'crylic' in the basement of a block of flats. Dudley gateway will deliver the web page learning . Learning is accredited and will include information, advice and guidance. The target groups are young disaffected people, who have not fully benefited from the formal education system or other learning activity.

Achievements and Outcomes to date

A number of reports have been produced to enhance and move forward the work of this theme group. The research that has fed into these reports has been undertaken by Lisa Jacob, a local Action Researcher.

Background to research techniques used:

Attempts to understand what motivates people from traditionally hard to engage communities into learning have often been based around questionnaires and have rarely allowed for people to formulate their own inquiry based on an understanding of themselves.

Questionnaires can be directive, intrusive and often fail to address the real factors that motivate the learner. This is inevitable given that the questions are set either by academics, who by definition are not part of the 'non - learning' community, by workers who lack the skills required in devising and constructing questionnaires or by consultants who have limited understanding of the communities we are working in.

In all scenarios, however, the real issue is that in setting the questions, you have already limited the answers. However, by participating in a process that gives people the opportunity to define and describe their own experiences, what emerges is a rich and more opposite picture of factors that have motivated people to learn.

The technique used by Lisa Jacob is an alternative approach that aims to allow individuals to take greater control over the whole process. It takes the focus away from written questionnaires and encourages the learner into exploring different ways of explaining motives and outcomes via 'conversational' inquiry. This enables them to talk in their own idiom, since they have the freedom to express and explore themselves, a

freedom denied by rigid form filling, which often hampers individuals inhibited by traditional methods.

Summary of research produced:

1. *What does it do for you? - An inquiry into the factors that excite traditional non-learners into learning. (September 2002)*

This report looks at five key questions that are key in understanding the success of a particular approach to learning:

- A) Why am I here?
- B) Why didn't I do other courses before this?
- C) Why haven't I given up?
- D) Why has this made a difference?
- E) What do I do now?

2. *Something's cooking in the learning Kitchen - A report of a half-day evaluation workshop for the Black Country Learning Kitchen project (November 2002).*

3. *The Voice of the Learner project - Walsall (Jan-March 2003)*

This is a three month pilot project to look at ways in which the 'voice of the learner can be captured in Walsall. The report outlines a new framework to enable us to listen to the voice of the learner. It recognises that if we ask what someone has to say, we have an equal responsibility to listen to it. It implores that where we can make changes as a result of what we hear we should take responsibility to do so. It equally recognises that every one of us has an equal right to be heard, regardless of what way we choose to 'speak', and that learners and non-learners alike have a valuable role to play in this work.

The initial focus of the pilot was to look at ways of 'listening' to the voices of a representative sample of Walsall residents in respect of their views on learning and their learning experiences. It looked to listen to learners that ranged in age from the youngest members of the community right through to the oldest. It aimed to listen to the non-learner as well as the learner

4. *Learning from Hobbies.*

Pilot study: Can we create relevant learning content from a better understanding of user's hobbies and interests. (May - June 2003).

These are two questions that this pilot study addresses: Firstly, can an understanding of the hobbies and interests of people are using Learning Net Centres help us develop a broader range of learning resources to populate the Managed Learning Environment (MLE)? Secondly, are there centre users that would be interested in creating these resources and if so, would they be interested in taking part in training and further development in order to do so?

This piece of work was commissioned to see whether their current hobbies and interests could be 'translated' into possible learning resources. In addition it hoped to see whether any of the users would be interested in learning how to develop learning content so that the MLE could be populated with materials that not only represented the interests of users but were developed and maintained by users themselves.

5. *Case study - 'To speak up and to have a choice, to have free choice'. Rhythm Rooms Arts and Media Centre - June 2003.*

The group that took part in this work comprised of four performing musicians, a secondary school student on work experience, on one of the co-ordinators of the centre. The focus of the research was 'As performing musicians, what do we feel about our experiences of learning, and how do we express that so that others can learn from them?

Achievements and Outcomes

The Identification of End User Requirement' theme group has been meeting regularly over the last year, approximately on a monthly basis (see appendix 1, dates of meetings'.)

The group has a regular membership of twelve people, covering all four boroughs across the Black Country (see appendix 2, 'membership'). In October 2002 it was decided to appoint Lisa Jacob to research user needs. As previously mentioned in this report, Lisa has since completed five pieces of work to feed into the work of this theme group (see appendix 3, 'research papers')

Also in October 2002 the first transnational conference was hosted by the Learning Kitchen Development Partnership in the Black Country. The User Needs theme workshop+ was facilitated at the Walsall Art Gallery. There were three speakers who presented to the audience around the User Needs theme:

Eleanor Chell - The Electric Palace, Walsall

Eleanor introduced the concept of 'Participatory Appraisal'. PA is an approach that provides local people with the tools to analyse and share knowledge of local resources, services and attitudes; the approach uses visual and diagrammatic tools. The methods are informal and easy to apply; therefore a lot of information can be obtained from different groups of people in a short space of time. P A techniques can bridge the cultural and literacy gaps that often exist between professional and members of the community.

Lisa Jacob - The Appreciative Inquiry Process

This centred around the work Lisa had been involved in on the Harvills Hawthorn Estate, West Bromwich. The project centred on 'How can we all work together to provide local learning opportunities for people living on the estate'. The Appreciative Inquiry approach used is both participative and demographic. Among the aims of the project was the identification of potential links between organisations and to identify steps towards developing a shared learning strategy and agree on how to implement the strategy.

Dr Tom Hamilton - WorthMedia - Technology and User Consultation.

This presentation centred around the need to understand your users and their needs. It emphasised the need for participation in projects and 'interactive participation.' Dr Tom talked about consultation developing consensus and consensus building success. Finally Dr Tom talked about technology supporting user consultation.

See Appendix 4, UK Conference Oct 2002.

Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference have been drawn up (See appendix 5 and include the following information:

- Mission Statement
- Problem statement
- Specific issues to be addressed
- Desired outcomes
- Persons involved
- Time Frame
- Frequency of meetings
- Reporting guidelines

User Needs Workshop - Copthorne Hotel - June 2003

This enabled all of the Black Country projects to come together for the first time en block, and examine similarities and links between projects that could form the basis for future networking and the sharing of methodologies and best practice.

For the benefit of the User Needs group specifically and all projects generally , a network diagram was produced showing these links and the potential for future working together (see appendix 6).

Since then, three of the Walsall projects, 'Stroke Survivors', 'Antena and 'Teenage Mums' have decided to develop websites by each of their cohorts and develop partnership working, not just between themselves, but also with Wolverhampton EQUAL Pathways Project, given the health/disability/social inclusion linking theme that exists. It is hoped to have an online forum, led by the beneficiaries, which provides immense potential for the sharing of ideas and views. It is very much hoped to organise a dissemination event in the near future, involving the beneficiaries launching their individual websites.

Discussions have also followed on from this event to consider the possibilities of beneficiaries work shadowing across projects locally, sub-regionally and hopefully, Transnationally. This will potentially add great value to the EQUAL project overall.

Lisa Jacob is also working with Jonathan Hughes from Dudley on developing a diary/weblet. This is a mechanism for beneficiaries to record their thoughts/ideas/opinions and create a permanent

electronic diary that can be accessed as a source of information on the Learning Kitchen website.

Work on a transnational basis has been based around the need to allocate more time at transnational conferences on the work of the various theme groups. This happened at the recent Finland conference and participants all agreed the time spent with our European Partners had been much more productive and rewarding. The cAME website/online database and grid is now up and running and provides a forum for discussion and the dissemination of reports and other documents.

Specific links around the disability theme have been identified with the Portugal project and this offers tremendous potential for networking and the sharing of methodologies with UK projects such as 'Antena' 'Stroke Survivors and Wolverhampton EQUAL Pathways.

In the UK a matrix of projects attached to each of the themes has been developed and this will be shared with Sweden and Portugal in the hope of encouraging further networking opportunities (see appendix 7).

Work Plan

A final and completed version of this document is still to be finished. (see appendix 8, Workplan)

A plan for the first twelve months of the EQUAL project was developed and, overall, all stated objectives have been addressed and successfully completed. The next and final stage is to agree on specific actions and outputs for the final eighteen months.

The main problem has been to get members of the User Needs theme group together in order that they can spend the necessary time to agree on a workable and effective plan of action.

Because there are also overlaps with the work of the other theme groups, it has been decided to arrange a meeting in December 2003 with the other groups to ensure there is no duplication of activities in the various workplans to cover the remaining time period of the EQUAL project.

Evaluation Framework LEARNING KITCHEN

Rationale

The evaluation will be concerned with assessing the quality, value and importance of the Development Partnership in the Equal context and to inform the development of the Learning Kitchen Development Partnership

Stakeholders in the evaluation process:

DP partners, Black Country ICT group, Local politicians, transnational partners, policy makers [national and EU level], funders and project sponsors, programme managers [Managing Authorities and National Support Structures], target groups and those discriminated against.

The evaluation activity will take place at a number of levels that coincide with the structures of the DP in the Black Country

Evaluation structures

The evaluation will occur at three levels as detailed below:

- Local
- Black Country
- Transnational

Evaluation at the three levels will ensure participation and representation across the DP

Types of evaluation

The evaluator will be required to undertake both formative and summative evaluation and in addition give consideration to the following:

- Empowerment evaluation
- Impact evaluation
- Process evaluation

Interim evaluation [formative evaluation]

This will to be carried out between July 2003 and December 2003. The aim will be to track progress and adjust and improve aspects of the DP as it progresses [formative].

An interim evaluation will consider whether the DP:

- ◆ has achieved its objectives by the dates set out in the workplan; and
- ◆ is on track to achieve its objectives within the agreed period;

It will also reflect on whether the DP's processes (for example, management and monitoring systems and working with partners) are effective and how they might be improved.

Final evaluation

Final evaluation is scheduled to take place during the last phase of the DP's life. The primary purpose will be to assess the overall lessons from the DP [summative].

The purpose of final evaluation will be to:

- ◆ draw conclusions on the design, implementation and degree of success of the DP when measured against the original objectives and indicators;
- ◆ inform funding bodies and other stakeholders of the results, and the actual and potential impact of the DP's activities;
- ◆ encourage support for transfer, replication and mainstreaming of the innovative ideas and solutions;
- ◆ form the basis of the final report and other publications; and
- ◆ stimulate new ideas for innovation.

Two elements of the DP will be evaluated:

- ◆ *the output* - what was done; and
- ◆ *the process* - how the output was achieved and how you managed the DP (including the transnational element).

In addition the evaluation will consider the five leading principles of Equal:

- ◆ innovation;
- ◆ equal opportunities;
- ◆ transnational co-operation;
- ◆ mainstreaming; and
- ◆ empowerment.

Questions for the evaluation of the leading principles:

Evaluation issue	Questions
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What was new about the DP and did that aspect of its activities work?
Transnational co-operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What were the transnational activities and did they work? ◆ What was the added value of the transnationality?
Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Did the DP attract a representative range of beneficiaries?
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Were beneficiaries able to contribute to the design of work programmes and products ?
Mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is the potential for replication? ◆ How has the DP influenced (or how can it potentially influence) local, regional and national policy? ◆ Is it possible to make bids for other funding to mainstream the activities?

The evaluation will also consider the following:

- ◆ how effective the partnership is;
- ◆ project design and methodology;
- ◆ project management and how projects are delivered;
- ◆ how practical the project and products are; and
- ◆ outputs and outcomes.

Methodology

A range of methodologies will be used to undertake the evaluation and these will include: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, desk research, and web site interactions.

Local evaluation will take place through each sub-project which will be made available to the external evaluator.

The innovation in evaluation will come through the use of the web site which will post up a pictorial representation of the impact of the transnational partnership. This will also be managed by Finland.

The evaluation will be continuous and formative and reports will be made at each transnational management meeting.

The final evaluation report will be available by March 2005.

Data collection

Local/Borough	Black Country	Transnational
Web site [Blogg model]	Web site - does this reflect activity?	Local/National/transnational reports, papers etc
Evaluation sheets at the beginning of the learning, half way through and at the end	Desk research - papers, minutes, reports,	Web site
Focus groups	Products of Black Country activity	Interviews
Interviews	Monitoring	Focus groups
Desk research - locally produced papers/minutes of meetings etc	Analysis of attendance and participation within Black Country activity	Products of transnational partnership
Products of locality	analysis of linkages with other initiatives	Attendance and participation
Monitoring information	Focus groups	
Local research - impact/ effectiveness? Local tools - impact/ effectiveness?	Interviews	
Mainstreaming and dissemination - evidence		

Responsibility

Project delivery members of the DP will carry out the local evaluation internally providing a structure for evaluation agreed by their locality partnership. The external evaluator will have the responsibility for managing the production of the overall interim and final reports and the co-ordination of partners contributions. In addition the evaluator will work with the transnational evaluator providing relevant information.