



BELFAST A LEARNING CITY

A Consultation Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned by the Lifelong Learning Group of the Belfast Strategic Partnership.

The research undertook desk research into the academic literature on learning cities and a comparison of the approaches of the existing UNESCO Learning Cities in the UK and Ireland. At its core is a consultation across a wide range of stakeholders in Belfast, consisting of 24 semi-structured interviews and 2 written submissions. The consultation was supplemented by seminar attracting 53 participants that broadened the consultation base still further.

1. Literature Review

1.1 The literature identifies some critical principles for the development of a learning city:

1.1.1 **Collaboration** is critical to both management and operational development. This is both about forging new/improved relations between the 'traditional' stakeholders for learning in the city, and expanding this in recognition of the capacity of learning to enable outcomes across a broader range of fields, including health, resilience, social cohesion and community development.

1.1.2 As implied above, the learning city should be **inclusive** in its approaches and this should stretch beyond the relations already indicated, embracing the needs and hearing the voices of all Belfast's citizens, particularly those who can be more removed from decision-making and isolated because of social and economic inequalities.

1.1.3 A learning city needs to be **innovative** throughout its governance and delivery. This is not about a constant demand for the creation of new projects, but to consistently ask – could this be done better? Those managing and inputting to learning city provision have to reflect on their own continual learning.

1.1.4 At the core a learning city is a commitment to **lifelong learning**. Building a learning culture is critical for a city's sustainable development. UNESCO states that:

Lifelong learning is the key to developing the resources necessary for building cities which are green and healthy, inclusive and equitable and which strive for decent conditions for work, employment and entrepreneurship.

2. UNESCO Learning Cities

- 2.1 The principles described above are evident in the work of Bristol, Cork, Limerick, Swansea and Wolverhampton learning cities.
- 2.2 The UNESCO learning cities of the UK and Ireland all operate from strong partnerships developed with core stakeholders and throughout the local authority and third level education providers have been the initiators and main resource providers.
- 2.3 Most of these cities have seen the importance of incorporating their learning city programmes into core corporate and other key development plans, spanning health and wellbeing, age, culture etc.
- 2.4 Festivals form a crucial part of the growth and success of learning city initiatives, particularly in Ireland.
- 2.5 The cities are united in their view that being part of the UNESCO Network of Learning Cities has been beneficial both for learning initiatives, but also for their cities more generally.

3. Stakeholder Consultation

- 3.1 There was unanimous support and enthusiasm amongst the stakeholders for the development of Belfast as a learning city: a very strong base on which to build.
- 3.2 Consultees were also clear on the benefits for the city of the promotion and facilitation of lifelong learning for all citizens. Investing in this way in its people will grow the city's capacity and sustainability.
- 3.3 Such investment, if channelled across the breadth of lifelong learning (formal, informal and non-formal), can help address generational inequalities in terms of education, health and wellbeing and life opportunities, as well as legacies of the conflict such as sectarianism and trauma.
- 3.4 Stakeholders felt that the Learning City should be incorporated into the Belfast Agenda across **all** its strands. Learning should be recognised and supported as a key enabler for the city's desired outcomes.
- 3.5 There was recognition that much good practice already exists in the city amongst providers across all sectors, but the Learning City holds the potential to create outcomes greater than the sum of the parts. It is critical for the Learning City to facilitate co-ordination and collaboration amongst providers for existing and new provision.
- 3.6 The stakeholders generated many ideas for the creation of a Learning City Plan and should be consulted further as the draft plan emerges, as their cooperation will be crucial.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 4.1 Belfast a Learning City is well-placed to take the next developmental step forward. It has gained UNESCO status, built a network with other learning cities on these islands and developed a well-evaluated Festival of Learning.
- 4.2 To successfully grow Belfast needs to strengthen key foundational structures, determining the appropriate governance and resourcing. The placement of the initiative may need to move from its current base in BSP and certainly requires some additional staffing for Belfast to match the achievements of other UNESCO learning cities. To resource this Belfast should look at the model of a Memorandum of Understanding between council and key third level institutions.
- 4.3 A new/renewed strategic group needs to create an action plan as soon as possible and then consult on this with Belfast Agenda boards and other stakeholders.
- 4.4 The Belfast Festival of Learning, as the most visible manifestation of the learning city, needs to create its own development plan as it certainly has not reached its full potential.
- 4.5 Belfast a Learning City seems to be at a critical juncture. Support through the Belfast Agenda (and the Belfast Region City Deal) could lead to exciting and, for the whole city, very worthwhile developments. Cork is seen by UNESCO as a leading light amongst learning cities – why should Belfast not aim equally high?

INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the Report

1.1 Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) is a multi-sectoral partnership which was created in 2011 as an exemplar of key agencies in Belfast working together to tackle inequalities. Membership of the Partnership can be seen in Appendix 1.

1.2 The aim of BSP is 'to champion and lead the case for tackling life inequalities across the Belfast area.'

1.3 BSP is led by the three CEOs from the Public Health Authority, Belfast City Council and The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Lifelong Learning (LLL) is one of the key thematic areas of BSP and has its own cross-sectoral group to provide guidance. Membership of the LLL Group can be seen in Appendix 2. There is a development worker for LLL based in the Belfast Health Development Unit (BH DU).

1.4 Over the past seven years the LLL Group has achieved the following:

- Collectively agreed a definition of Lifelong Learning in Belfast
- Carried out a scoping exercise of learning activity in Belfast
- Commissioned research and input to Belfast's 10-year Employment and Skills Framework
- Developed a common language and shared understanding through the creation of a Lifelong Learning Framework 'Belfast a Learning City' and the 'Learning Charter for Belfast'
- Established an annual Belfast Festival of Learning inaugurated in 2016
- Begun work on an inclusive learning city plan which maximises the impact of collective efforts in tackling inequalities and works towards inclusive growth and sustainability
- Developed external relationships with other learning cities and became a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in 2018.

1.5 The particular focus in Belfast of the Learning City is on tackling inequalities and the Group believes that 'nothing will change until we develop a learning city approach that offers equality of opportunity for all, across the life course, and across all areas of formal, non-formal and informal learning.' This was the basis for its application to UNESCO.

1.6 Being a member of the UNESCO Network brings challenges/expectations. UNESCO defines a learning city as one that

- effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
- revitalizes learning in families and communities;
- facilitates learning for and in the workplace;
- extends the use of modern learning technologies;
- enhances quality and excellence in learning; and
- fosters a culture of learning throughout life.

1.7 The BSP LLL Group believes that to demonstrate Belfast’s progression towards these goals requires the creation of a Learning City Plan, focusing on how learning can address the city’s inequalities. The group sees the four strategic pillars of the Learning Charter for Belfast as the basis for this Plan: these pillars are –

- Creating a learning culture that promotes and values all forms of learning
- Partnership working for maximum reach and impact of all available resources
- Collaborative working to ensure equality of accessibility and excellence in provision
- Matching skills with economic needs.

1.8 The importance of urgently developing a Learning City Plan for Belfast, not least to raise its profile and invigorate leadership, can be seen through its lack of visibility on the web and social media. The achievement of international recognition as a UNESCO Learning City (only the third in the UK and the third in Ireland) might have been expected to have had major media coverage and significant coverage on BSP and Belfast City Council websites – but that was not the case. After seven years of effort, and even with the annual Festival of Learning, many stakeholders in Belfast and the majority of citizens are unaware of the learning city initiative. This, as will be seen in this report, is in contrast to the situation found in other learning cities, such as Limerick and Cork

1.9 Critically UNESCO status is not endowed in perpetuity and Belfast will have to demonstrate how it is progressing against all qualifying criteria in order to maintain this prestigious accolade – a Learning City Plan should be a significant step in evidencing this.

1.10 To assist the creation of an action plan the LLL Group with support from BSP commissioned a consultation report.

2. **Methodology**

2.1 **Desk Research**

- 2.1.1 The aim was to produce a short review of the literature on learning cities and also to pull together a report on the core structures and working of other UK and Ireland members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC).
- 2.1.2 There is a vast literature on the subject of learning cities and an even larger one on lifelong learning. The report has taken a sampling of the writing to offer some background to the development of the learning city concept along with some further references most relevant to the creation of a learning plan and associated evaluation.
- 2.1.3 Questionnaires were sent to the five members of the UNESCO GNLC in the UK and Ireland – Bristol, Cork, Limerick, Swansea and Wolverhampton – and to the then aspirant members: Derry/Strabane and Dublin (these cities were welcomed to the UNESCO GNLC in July 2019). The questionnaires elicited information on learning city development, governance, resourcing, festivals and evaluation. The detail of responses varied and often required supplementary questions by further emails. Two of the cities preferred to respond to the questionnaire by phone interview. Most sent additional data in the form of strategic plans, evaluations and other reports. Additional information was available from websites.

2.2 Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.2.1 The core of the consultation was engagement with key stakeholders across Belfast.
- 2.2.2 The range of stakeholders linked to lifelong learning in Belfast is enormous and stretches well beyond the bounds of this particular consultation. While the original tender suggested focus groups, the choice was made instead to concentrate on 1:1 interviews as a means to more effectively reach CEOs or senior figures in organisations. Personal interviews also avoid censorship or group-think which can arise from focus group situations, where opinions can be coloured (consciously or unconsciously) by relationships with others in the group. Having existing relationships with a large number of the consultees also led, I believe, to more open and honest responses.
- 2.2.3 24 1:1 interviews (usually of an hour) were conducted and two others submitted written responses. The list of consultees can be seen in Appendix 3. Quite a number of other organisations were also approached with whom it did not prove possible to arrange meetings. Ensuring that any gaps identified from the current consultation are covered in future outreach will be important to ensure maximum inclusion. One group which was not reached was councillors – the time of the consultation worked against their inclusion as it coincided with both local government and European elections.

- 2.2.4 In addition to the interviews a consultative seminar was held on 6th June in the East Belfast Network Centre which was attended by 53 representatives from a wide range of organisations, primarily from Belfast (see list in Appendix 4). To stimulate discussion there were inputs on the development of Belfast a Learning City, on the impact of the learning city initiative in Cork, and on the learning neighbourhood initiative in Limerick, as well as initial findings from this consultation. Feedback for the development of Belfast a Learning City was gathered through facilitated table discussions.
- 2.2.5 The findings described later in the report incorporate ideas from both the individual interviews and the consultation seminar, although the latter contributed mostly to leadership/governance and ideas to shape an action plan for Belfast a Learning City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an extensive academic literature on the subject of learning cities. However, for the purposes of this report the review is brief, to serve as a general introduction and to offer some insights that might further guide Belfast's ongoing work in this area.

1. The Development of the Learning City Idea

1.1 The late 20th century saw two highly influential international reports. Donald Hirsch's 1992 OECD report, City Strategies for Lifelong Learning¹, which is seen as a key driver for the creation of a network of learning cities in the UK, and the influential Delors UNESCO report Learning: The Treasure Within² which made explicit the link between lifelong learning and a learning society –

The concept of learning throughout life is the key that gives access to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. It links up with another concept often put forward, that of the learning society, in which everything affords an opportunity of learning and fulfilling one's potential.

1,2 The Delors report is best known for identifying the Four Pillars of Education - learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be – which are core to lifelong learning and therefore the development of learning cities.

1.3 1996 was a momentous year in that it not only saw the publication of the Hirsch and Delors reports, and another OECD report Lifelong Learning for All, but was also proclaimed by the European Union the 'European Year of Lifelong Learning'. These all gave added impetus to the growth of new initiatives globally around creating learning cities and learning regions.

1.4 The 1990s and early 2000s saw a huge expansion of the learning city idea in the UK and there were 50 members of the UK Learning Cities Network. This surge rode not just on the back of the Hirsch report mentioned above, but on the short-live centrality of lifelong learning in the Labour government of the time, influenced by David Blunkett's report The Learning Age³. This network did not survive all that long and the term seemed to go out of fashion, not least because of the change in government policy to a more utilitarian focus on skills and qualifications. However,

¹ Hirsch, D. (1992) *City Strategies for Lifelong Learning* Paris: OECD/CERI

² Delors, J. et al (1996) *Learning: The Treasure Within* Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. Paris: UNESCO

³ Dept of Education (1998) *The Learning Age* HMSO

Yarnit⁴ argues that the notion lives on as part of an integrated approach to urban development led by local authorities and universities.

1.5 Belfast was part of that learning city growth around the turn of the century with an initiative led by Belfast City Council and the Workers' Educational Association.⁵ They established a Learning City Forum in 1997. It was an inclusive body with more than 35 members including councillors, colleges and universities, voluntary and community sector organisations, government agencies, the Education and Library Board, trade unions and employers. The Forum agreed that the purpose of the Learning City must be to add:

- Learning Change - expanding the shared use of education buildings; linking education establishments; and overcoming obsolete divisions e.g. between science and art
- A rounded and lifelong education - encouraging access for all with greater investment in both early childhood and adult returners
- Quality - valuing the education of all by raising the availability and standard of education in the city.

Sadly, like similar initiatives in other UK cities, this innovation did not survive and also suffered as a result of the emerging narrower skills agenda.

1.6 Since that decline in the West, interest in the development of the learning city movement shifted more to developing nations in Africa and to countries in the Far East. Recognising this growth of interest, in the 2013, at a major international conference in Beijing, UNESCO established the Global Network of Learning Cities to offer support and share learning to its members and raise awareness of the benefits.

1.7 There has been a recent more modest revival in interest in the Learning City in the UK and Ireland, primarily as demonstrated by six cities achieving the UNESCO award and at least two more in the process of applying. The RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) has also recognised its potential and will be working with the cities of Greater Manchester, Brighton and Plymouth in the coming years with its own model of learning city development.

2. Definitions and Rationale for Learning Cities

2.1 For UNESCO Learning Cities clearly the Network's definition is key to their development and measurement of success, however that definition borrows elements from various other definitions created by leading scholars.

⁴ Yarnit, M. (2015) *Whatever Happened to the Learning City?* Journal of Adult & Continuing Education Vol 21 Issue 2

⁵ <http://eurolocal.info/resource/case-study-belfasts-early-journey-becoming-learning-city>

2.2 One of these leading lights is Norman Longworth who has written extensively on the subject. Longworth (2006) offers the following definition of a learning city:

A learning city is one with plans and strategies to encourage personal growth, social cohesion and sustainable wealth creation through the development of the human potential of all its citizens and working partnerships between all its organisations.⁶

So, Longworth sees personal, social and economic benefits arising from a learning city initiative that invests in all its citizens and effective partnership working.

2.3 Lifelong learning is seen as the core developmental enabler of a learning city, as expressed by Faris (2007) –

*(a learning city uses) lifelong learning as an organising principle and social/cultural goal in order to promote collaboration of their civic, economic, public, voluntary and education sectors to enhance social, economic and environmental conditions on a sustainable, inclusive basis.*⁷

2.4 Once more collaboration is seen as key and this should be inclusive in both its actors and beneficiaries. Faris' quotation includes the idea that a learning city can also achieve environmental benefits through lifelong learning. This is something later picked up by UNESCO in its Learning Cities and the SDGs: A Guide to Action⁸ report –

Lifelong learning is the key to developing the resources necessary for building cities which are green and healthy, inclusive and equitable and which strive for decent conditions for work, employment and entrepreneurship.

2.5 This report also stresses that a learning city 'encompasses other approaches to sustainable development on the local level, such as *Healthy Cities, Child Friendly Cities, Smart Cities, Age Friendly Cities, Resilient Cities* and so forth.'

2.6 Returning to the centrality of lifelong learning, Longworth⁹ explains that this century, in response to the rapid changes brought by the Information Age and its as yet not fully known consequences, is seeing a growing recognition of the need to shift from the concept of education packaged and delivered in a largely age-limited fashion, to the principle of continuous learning for everyone controlled by individuals themselves. For Longworth

⁶ Longworth, N. (2006) Learning Cities, Learning Regions, Learning Communities: Lifelong Learning and Local Government Routledge p9

⁷ Faris, R. (2007) *Learning Communities: Webs of Life, Literacy and Learning* paper presented at Symposium of Learning Communities

⁸ UNESCO (2017) *Learning Cities and the SDGs: A Guide to Action*_Hamburg

⁹ *ibid*

Cities that do not respond to the need for educational, social, political, environmental and cultural change will be the losers in a brave new world we don't even begin to understand yet.¹⁰

2.7 The RSA agrees with the need for cities to be alert and responsive through lifelong learning to the challenges of the 21st century –

Socially inclusive lifelong learning should be at the heart of how we respond to these challenges. Keeping pace with economic and work-related trends, and responding creatively to complex problems, requires individuals and communities to develop skills, competencies and habits that promote resilience, collaboration, civic entrepreneurship and social and emotional learning. We must recognise the value of non-academic routes into work, as well as continuous formal and informal learning throughout life¹¹

3. Critical Principles

The literature identifies some of the critical principles that should drive the development of learning cities, including the following:

3.1 Collaboration and Inclusion

3.1.1 These principles have already been identified in some of the quotes above and are echoed by the RSA as vital to ensuring the overall success of a learning city initiative –

Forging relationships with a broad range of actors - non-formal learning organisations but also schools, colleges, employers, policymakers, community leaders, and others - will significantly impact engagement with the initiative and the quality of the outcomes.¹²

3.1.2 Inclusivity should also be the watchword in a city's policy development –

Learning cities can only fulfil their potential if their citizens are involved in determining future policies for the development and direction of the city.¹³

3.1.3 While it has been agreed in the above definitions that a learning city should strive for all its citizens to be beneficiaries, this should not be viewed as a passive relationship, but rather dynamic, empowering people to identify their own learning needs and help shape the requisite policy and delivery.

¹⁰ Longworth, N. (2011) *Norman Longworth on Learning Cities* A collection of papers for the Xploit Girona session

¹¹ Painter, A & Shafique, A. (n.d.) Cities of Learning in the UK: Prospectus RSA and digitalme

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Hamilton, R. & Jordan, L. (2010) *Learning Cities: The United Kingdom Experience* Paper presented to the International Conference on Heritage, Regional Development and Social Cohesion, Ostersund, Sweden

3.2 Innovation and Lifelong Learning

3.2.1 A learning city needs to be innovative and be open to learning in all aspects of its administration and delivery.

However important it is for policy-makers and practitioners to be pragmatic and make things happen, they must also develop the skills and self-discipline to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, to get a sense of reality, and to question their own ways of doing things.¹⁴

3.2.2 Whilst recognition of the value of lifelong learning has seen highs and lows over the years, the literature on learning cities consistently places it as the key enabler of success for learning cities – as Hamilton & Jordan¹⁵ put it '*The UK experience demonstrates that progress can be made but only if lifelong learning is central to local government strategy.*'

In 2016 UNESCO's Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education¹⁶ recognised three universal and interlocking impact areas for adult learning (which can be extrapolated for lifelong learning) -



A learning city needs to take its understanding and delivery of lifelong learning to span all three impact areas.

¹⁴ Preisinger-Kleine, R. (2013) *An analytical quality framework for learning cities and regions* International Review of Education 59 pp521-538

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2016) *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* Hamburg, UIL

These common impact areas were also recognised in the 2017 Healthy, Wealth and Wise¹⁷ report which synthesised the thinking of Impact Forums on adult learning across the four jurisdictions of the UK

4. Evaluation

- 4.1 Many writers on learning cities also address the challenges of their evaluation (for example Preisinger-Kleine, Longworth and Yarnit). A mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators are generally suggested, but the collation of such a range of data presents a considerable demand logistically and financially.
- 4.2 At its inaugural conference on learning cities in Beijing in 2013, UNESCO adopted its Key Features of Learning Cities¹⁸ framework with suggested corresponding indicators. The framework has 42 identified key features, with indicators assessed by different actors from city authorities to experts, from precise statistics to subjective assessment, all requiring contributions from the full range of stakeholders.
- 4.3 Yarnit¹⁹ argues that UNESCO would do well to reflect on the experience of the UK Learning City Network.

Indicators for a learning city should reflect the development of human and social capital (naturally) but also the city's capacity to solve problems creatively. One way of measuring the latter is by gauging how well it deals with issues like unemployment or homelessness over time. Too many indicators and the risk is that the data won't be collated and it will be too difficult for lay people – as opposed to experts – to use them to make comparisons with the past and with other cities. On the other hand, over-simplification can lead to indicators that do not differentiate socially – for example, an overall participation rate in community learning tends to mask important differences between social groups and the sexes. Experience suggests that over-reliance on qualitative opinion surveys carries real risks: there may not be the will or the resources to carry them out over time, and it may be difficult to compare results in different cities because of the construction of the surveys.

- 4.4 Other players continue to explore alternatives. Wolverhampton Learning Region is in the process of developing a suite of monitoring and evaluation tools and as its learning city initiative is based in its university's highly respected Centre for Lifelong Learning there would be high hopes of the quality and applicability of these tools. The RSA's recent initiative in the field (see above), will see a partnership with the

¹⁷ Learning & Work Institute (2017) *Healthy, Wealthy and Wise: the impact of adult learning across the UK*

¹⁸ UNESCO (2013) *Key Features of Learning Cities* Hamburg

¹⁹ Ibid p31

Learning & Work Institute to devise evaluative models, and again expectations are high for the identification of useful models.

COMPARISON OF OTHER UK AND IRELAND UNESCO LEARNING CITIES

1. Background Information

1.1 UNESCO Definition

A learning city promotes lifelong learning for all. UNESCO defines a learning city as a city that:

effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;

revitalizes learning in families and communities;

facilitates learning for and in the workplace;

extends the use of modern learning technologies;

enhances quality and excellence in learning; and

fosters a culture of learning throughout life.

In doing so, the city enhances individual empowerment and social inclusion, economic development and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development.

1.2 There are 205 cities in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, one of the programmes of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

1.3 In the UK and Ireland there are six cities which are members of the Network: Belfast, Bristol, Cork, Limerick, Swansea and Wolverhampton, with two others currently submitting applications – Derry/Strabane and Dublin.

1.4 While having the above UNESCO goals in common, each city is free to identify priorities according to its needs and in tune with other city plans, so there can be considerable variation in programme content. Stripping out these differences in emphasis, the comparison that follows looks in particular at common structural and developmental elements across the learning cities in the UK and Ireland. Learning from this comparison could assist Belfast in progressing its own Learning City Plan. As Derry/Strabane and Dublin are in the early stages of development most of the evidence comes from the other five cities.

2. Leadership and Governance

2.1 Since it is a requirement of UNESCO that the mayor of an applying city is the signatory, all these cities have their council as a core part of the leadership and governance of their Learning City programmes.

- 2.2 All the learning cities have partnership-based governance, sometimes formalised through Memoranda of Understanding (for example, Cork, Limerick and Derry/Strabane).
- 2.3 All the learning cities have their universities and Further Education providers as core partners – sometimes, as is the case with Wolverhampton and Dublin, the universities were the initiators.
- 2.4 Additional partners vary, but usually include representation from the community and voluntary sectors and sometimes organisations representing schools.
- 2.5 Membership varies according to the core focus of the city, so that Bristol with its emphasis on young people is led by the council along with statutory partners, while Limerick with its strong lifelong learning focus, has a partnership with members spanning from childcare and youthwork to Higher Education and the workplace.
- 2.6 In Cork there is a working group which oversees the Action Projects and each Action Project has its own leadership group and staffing structure.

3. Resourcing

- 3.1 There is variation in the staffing of the Learning City programmes and the budgets allocated:

City	Staffing	Annual Budget
Bristol	F/T Programme Manager P/T Project Manager P/T Project Officer	c £100,000
Cork	F/T Coordinator P/T Learning Festival Worker P/T Learning Neighbourhoods Coordinator	c€200,000
Derry/Strabane	F/T Coordinator	£90,000
Dublin	F/T Coordinator	€48,000
Limerick	P/T Lifelong Learning Facilitator	€48,000
Swansea	Work shared across staff team	£3000 for festival
Wolverhampton	F/T Coordinator	In development

- 3.2 Learning City workers are based within council, or an educational body – for example, Bristol, Cork and Derry/Strabane workers are based in their councils, while

Limerick's worker is employed by the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and the Wolverhampton's worker is based in its university.

- 3.3 Within many of the Learning City Partnerships partner organisations may offer in-kind resources (for example, in Limerick the PAUL Partnership gives office space) and staff from partners may give considerable time to management or the leadership and development of specific objectives or projects.
- 3.4 Sponsorship is used in some cities to support projects and festivals e.g. in Swansea, Osprey's in the Community (local rugby team) sponsored a Welsh language programme for schools and Cork receives sponsorship towards running its Learning Festival.
- 3.5 Bristol additionally actively fundraises with appropriate partners to create projects to achieve specific objectives e.g. its Bristol Works programme increasing work placements opportunities for young people.
- 3.6 Funding for the Dublin city development currently comes in the form of a three-year grant from the Higher Education Authority and part of the action plan that it is developing in 2019, will be identifying future funding sources.
- 3.7 Under its MOU the Derry/Strabane initiative is equally funded by the three partners – Derry & Strabane District Council, Ulster University and the NW Regional College – with a commitment for three years.

4. Planning

- 4.1 All the Learning Cities have produced strategic plans of 3-5 years, created either by just the strategic partners or with additional consultation.
- 4.2 In keeping with the UNESCO agreement there are a number of shared themes – promoting/improving access to learning, building collaboration, learning for and in work, embracing new technologies and celebrating learning.
- 4.3 However, every city adds its own priorities – for example, in Bristol the emphasis has been on learning for young people and in Swansea there is a particular entrepreneurial focus. One of the key priorities for Wolverhampton (in common with Belfast) is the improvement of health and wellbeing.
- 4.4 Most cities have incorporated, or are in the process of incorporating, their Learning City plans into general corporate or other key development plans: Wolverhampton's is embedded in the city's Strategic Economic Plan (2018-2030); Bristol's will come under the new One City Plan; and Learning Limerick falls under the social pillar of the Limerick Local Economic and Community Plan.

- 4.5 In Swansea the Learning City initiative is aligned to the Partneriaeth Sgiliau Abertawe / Swansea Skills Partnership, a partnership of the local authority, schools, colleges and universities and the Swansea Adult Community Learning Partnership, which includes cross sector organisations involved in the delivery of adult learning.
- 4.6 In Cork the Learning City programme falls under the city's EcCoWell strategy which is about integrating strategies across ecology & economy, community & culture and well-being & lifelong learning.
- 4.7 The Derry/Strabane initiative is already part of the council's Strategic Growth Plan and Dublin hopes over the next couple of years for incorporation into the city's Corporate Plan to ensure the longevity of its learning city initiative.
- 4.8 Delivering on Learning City Plans therefore is increasingly becoming incorporated into that of core overarching city plans.
- 4.9 Limerick's Learning City Plan also links to other city initiatives such as its Cultural Strategy, Children & Young People's Plan, Age Friendly Strategy and Social Inclusion and Activation Programme.

5. Festivals/Celebrations of Learning

- 5.1 Festivals are currently held in Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Swansea. For Dublin and Swansea 2019 was their first year, while Limerick has now run for nine years and Cork for 16 years. Bristol is planning its first festival for 2020. Derry/Strabane and Wolverhampton are still at early stages of development, but seem likely to organise festivals in the future.
- 5.2 All cities view festivals as highly important elements of their plans – opportunities to raise the profile of the Learning City, to highlight the opportunities for learning that exist across their cities, to showcase good practice and to demonstrate that learning is fun and is for all ages, abilities, ethnicities etc. All cities ensure that events are free to participants.
- 5.3 Both Cork and Limerick, which have the most experience, believe that their festivals have had significant impact in terms of creating a culture of learning in their cities - children are now growing up where a celebration of learning is part of the annual life-cycle of their city. These two festivals have grown significantly across the years, demonstrating how this vehicle can very effectively enthuse people about learning and improve engagement: in 2019 Limerick had over 200 events in its festival, while Cork had over 500. Growing festivals of this scale requires significant amount of time and energy, but these cities believe it to be a very worthwhile investment.

6. Evaluation

- 6.1 For some of the cities it is too early in their development to have undertaken any assessment of their success, but Wolverhampton reports that it is in the process of developing a suite of monitoring and evaluation tools which may prove useful to other cities also.
- 6.2 Bristol completes evaluations for its individually funded projects according to the requirements of funders, but acknowledges that it is harder to assess the impact of the learning city more generally – to what extent can the learning city initiative lay claim to general learning successes in the city? Two successes which it feels it has achieved is improved collaborative working amongst the city’s learning providers and a growth of understanding of what lifelong learning is.
- 6.3 Over the past six years Limerick has invested quite some time in exploring possible evaluative tools and measures, consulting with partners and other stakeholders. Most recently its indicators come from the 2017 UNESCO report Learning Cities and SDGs – a Guide to Action²⁰ which arose from that year’s Cork conference (SDG = Strategic Development Goal).
- 6.4 Cork tracks progress against the Key Strategic Actions over three years and against actions identified as priorities in the Annual Planning process.
- 6.5 All members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities are required to submit biennial reports showing their progress towards their objectives and towards UNESCO goals.

7. Visibility

- 7.1 Having a web and social media presence for the learning cities generally and their festivals in particular is very important. Today if you do not have such a presence you are ‘invisible’. These are key to raising the visibility of lifelong learning that is happening in a city on an ongoing basis – telling learner stories, highlighting good practice, advertising learning opportunities and networking to partners locally, nationally and internationally.

7.2 Websites

<https://www.bristollearningcity.com/>

<https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/widening-participation/centre-for-lifelong-learning/learning-regions/>

²⁰ <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/learning-cities-and-sdgs-guide-action>

<https://www.learninglimerick.ie>

<https://www.dublinlearningcity.ie/>

Cork's website is under redevelopment

8. Benefits of UNESCO GNLC Membership

8.1 Cities were asked what benefits they saw to belonging to the UNESCO Network. There were very positive responses to this question, many shared widely, with cities feeling that it

- has given international stature and profile to the learning city initiative,
- inspired local partners to join in
- enabled networking to improve learning city programmes and share learning
- opened up partnership opportunities with other cities
- attracted high quality applicants to learning city jobs and projects
- added positively to the profile of the city generally.

FINDINGS FROM THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

1. A Vision for Belfast a Learning City

1.1 The BSP Lifelong Learning Group (LLL Group) has created its own vision for the initiative, but as the consultation was involving a much wider range of stakeholders, only a very small number of which had had involvement in the LLL Group, an opening question to engage interviewees was what vision the concept of a learning city conjured for them.

1.2 Overall those consulted responded with very positive thoughts, seeing a learning city as a vibrant community, confidently moving forward and maximising the potential of Belfast's core resource – its people.

1.3 There was a great deal of commonality across responses, particularly in terms of concepts and ideas, but also in language. I have taken these commonalities and constructed the following sentences which could be taken by the LLL Group, or others taking the Learning City forward in Belfast, to refresh the existing vision statement:

- A city offering access to learning for all – throughout life and across all aspects of life and work
- A city that values the contributions of all learning provision, formal, non-formal and informal as equally important for all its citizens to achieve their full potential and desires
- A city moving forward through its citizens collaborating to create solutions to meet its future challenges
- A city that sees learning as the driver/enabler of all its civic goals – health, economy, tourism etc.
- A city that celebrates the diverse learning successes of its citizens and builds on current good practice.

1.4 When we look at the LLL Group definition

Belfast is a city where learning is valued in all its forms and promoted as a force for improved personal, social, civic and economic change in the city. All people in Belfast have equal access to lifelong learning opportunities, creating conditions for a better quality of life for everyone in the city.

there are a number of similarities – for example, access to learning, and learning as an enabler of change. One element missing from, or at least less obvious in, the LLL Group's definition is celebration. Incorporating this into a shared vision would reflect the importance of portraying learning as fun and engaging and not just 'worthy' and that the city wishes to reward learning efforts. It may be implied when it says

learning is valued ... and promoted, but more explicit reference to celebration should be considered.

- 1.5 A number of consultees commented that it was important that the vision should be universally understandable and relatable, as well as reflective of the views of the full range of lifelong learners – old and young, new citizens and other minorities.
- 1.6 As with other promotional messages, thought should be given to the use of imagery and to breaking down the elements of the vision into ‘bitesize pieces’ so that the messages are accessible regardless of literacy abilities.

2. Addressing the City’s Endemic Inequalities

- 2.1 A core aim of the LLL Group is ‘using lifelong learning to create an inclusive and equitable city’, mindful of the significant number of wards which have suffered generations of multiple deprivations and inequalities.
- 2.2 Overwhelmingly consultees endorsed this goal as a critical focus for a learning city plan. While the learning city is for all citizens, there must be special attention given to those for whom learning opportunities would be most transformative, bringing new life opportunities and aspiration. A number of consultees suggested that Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) areas in particular face the need for a cultural shift in terms of valuing learning and recognising its importance for both individual advancement and community transformation.
- 2.3 Some, however expressed a caveat. There have been many area-specific initiatives in the past to tackle inequalities with limited results that have not broken the cycle. Clearly something different must be tried. Just as inequalities are multi-layered so too any interventions need to be multi-layered/multi-disciplinary and effectively co-ordinated. Too often it has been a different agency or partnership putting a slightly different sticking plaster on top of those that have already been tried. There is a need for honest assessment as to why previous investment has not resulted in achieving fundamental change.
- 2.4 Local, tailored and collaborative intervention plans with whole community involvement are needed, with co-design, co-delivery, co-management and co-evaluation. This should bring together and pool the expertise and resources of local community groups, churches, libraries, businesses, youth and sports clubs etc., to work with the appropriate external agencies.
- 2.5 The potential outcomes would be multiple – improving health and wellbeing, economic prospects, intergenerational relations, social cohesion and social mobility. Learning would be the enabler.

- 2.6 One possible model is that of Learning Neighbourhoods as have been developed in Cork and Limerick and both cities would be happy to share their experiences.

3. Generating action points for the Learning City Plan

- 3.1 The enthusiasm of the interviewees and the participants at the consultation seminar created a long list of actions for consideration in the construction of the Learning City Plan. These are divided below into two sections – actions to motivate and facilitate stakeholders and actions to promote and celebrate learning.
- 3.2 Some of the action points were reiterated by several contributors, while others are from individuals, but these are included as still worth considering. The ordering of the points should not be taken to always equate to importance or popularity. These are ideas to which the consultees want to contribute as partners.
- 3.3 One word that dominated throughout was **collaboration**. In all the learning city's aspects, objectives and projects, participants in the consultation emphasised that collaboration must be the guiding principle (thereby unconsciously echoing the opinion found in the literature review). It was acknowledged that collaboration is not easy and is demanding of time and resources, but it is essential for the success of the learning city initiative. The leadership and staff of the Learning City initiative need to model collaboration and facilitate its growth, building strong, effective relationships and trust.

4. Learning City Plan: Motivate and Facilitate Stakeholders

- 4.1 Create a common vision and holistic plan – and be creative!
- 4.1.1 There was general enthusiasm for the creation of a shared vision for Belfast a Learning City to which all stakeholders and citizens can relate. This needs to be then operationalised by a plan that respects and incorporates the strengths and resources of the disparate providers from all sectors. Everyone was anxious to feel a part of a grand plan, with their unique contributions recognised and efficiently linked to those of others, so that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.
- 4.1.2 There is a need to think creatively in terms of devising the plan and its actions/projects. Just as the learning city has a role to make learning exciting and attractive to (new) learners, it also needs to make collaborative working exciting and attractive to the city's providers. Innovative projects may be one way to do this and certainly working together is proven to build relationships and trust.

- 4.2 Encourage organisations to incorporate the values and objectives of Belfast Learning City into their learning and development strategies e.g. via Charter
- 4.2.1 To make commitment visible stakeholder organisations should embed core principles and objectives into relevant strategies and demonstrate this by signing/adopting the Learning Charter for Belfast.
- 4.2.2 Signing a charter is not in itself sufficient – stakeholders must consider how they incorporate its commitments into strategic and operational plans.
- 4.2.3 The BSP LLL Group created and launched The Learning Charter for Belfast in 2015, with the CEOs of the three core agencies of BSP publicly signing copies of the document. Since then few additional organisations have made such a commitment.
- 4.2.4 Consultation on the Charter was not part of the current research, but some interviewees were aware of it. Opinions varied – all acknowledged the value of such a document, but some felt it needed review. It is a wordy document and quite a difficult read, with confusion between principles and objectives. It appears to commit signatories to 28 actions, some of which relate to specifics that currently do not exist and may or may not form part of future developments e.g. a Belfast Learning City Forum and an e-library. Consultation with the initiative’s development worker reveals that these are in fact indicative actions – this needs to be made more clear in any future versions of the Charter.
- 4.2.5 If the Charter is to be included in a new action plan for the Learning City then there should be further consultation with stakeholders to create a document that is universally relatable and sufficiently generic to allow its continued relevance over the span of future action plans.
- 4.2.6 There is the related issue of monitoring adherence to the Charter as it currently stands. Would signatories be required to submit reports demonstrating their commitment to and related actions? If there is not some monitoring how do you ensure that the Charter does not become a mere PR exercise for an organisation? Could the Charter be linked to badging, which was also raised as a possible action? (see below)
- 4.3 Ensure that learning is an active cross-cutting theme in the operationalising of the Belfast Agenda
- 4.3.1 A significant majority of consultees saw the Learning City initiative needing a close relationship to the Belfast Agenda as the leading plan for the city for the next 10+ years.
- 4.3.2 With a unanimous belief in the wide personal, social as well as economic benefits of learning, consultees stressed that lifelong learning must not be confined to economic outcomes, but clearly recognised and resourced as a key enabler across all the Agenda’s pillars.

4.4 Build effective collaboration between Lifelong Learning stakeholders

- 4.4.1 As stated above, collaboration was identified by all as critical for moving forward: there needs to be a shift away from the current practice of competing initiatives and self-interest.
- 4.4.2 Learning providers and policymakers need to work together otherwise the failures and inefficiencies of the present will persist and those who are currently losing out will continue to do so.
- 4.4.3 One of the biggest challenges would be the shift to the creation of collaborative budgets – something that can be explored initially through specific projects – but if there is a genuine commitment to shared outcomes then budgets will need to be reflective of this.
- 4.4.4 The leaders/staff of the Learning City need to take an active facilitative role to build improved relations, more inclusive relations and honest dialogue. Good practice in collaboration should be identified and shared and training support offered.

4.5 Build links between learning stakeholders and other disciplines (e.g. health, good relations, community development, economic development)

- 4.5.1 The consultation contributors emphasised that learning providers need to build collaborative relations not just amongst themselves, but also with other organisations relating to the wider benefits of lifelong learning.
- 4.5.2 This will be particularly important if the desire to tackle endemic inequalities (see above) is to be effectively addressed. The evidence of the impact of learning on health & wellbeing is the most extensive, and its impact on employability and productivity has always been recognised, but there is growing evidence of its contribution to improving social cohesion, reducing recidivism and prejudice and building social responsibility, both local and global.
- 4.5.3 The Learning City should again take an active facilitative role in linking relevant organisations and agencies and supporting the development of collaborative strategic and operational planning.

4.6 Relating to the above points, facilitate the creation of joint projects, funded by partners or external funding

- 4.6.1 Collaboration needs to be seen to be happening and therefore cannot be only at a strategic level. Building specific partnerships to develop and deliver on identified needs enables collaboration to filter down from management levels to operational levels in participating organisations and leads to greater understanding and trust.

Where appropriate such partnerships should stretch across the sectors, demonstrating the importance of the full range of provision (formal, non-formal and informal).

- 4.6.2 This will also make visible to the city's citizens that stakeholders are genuine in their commitment to work together and model the benefits of collaborative behaviour to others.

4.7 Ensure all citizens have core capabilities to understand, contribute to and access support from wider society

- 4.7.1 While the Learning City needs to encourage the learning dreams of all citizens, to address the growth of an under-class lacking the basic capabilities to engage and succeed in the modern world, it also should support/initiate programmes to grow confidence, essential skills and knowledge.

- 4.7.2 The 2019 OECD Skills Strategy: Northern Ireland says that

The skills outcomes of youth and tertiary educated adults are only average, and the skills of adults are still low in comparison with most OECD countries. According to the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), adults' average scores for numeracy and problem solving were below many of the OECD countries, and just above the average for literacy skills. Northern Ireland also ranks in the bottom 40% for the strength of its adult learning culture, with the participation rate and reported interest in learning in adulthood well below the OECD average. Strengthening the culture of adult education could contribute to improving the breadth and quality of skills in adults.

Northern Ireland has only around average performance in the use of reading, numeracy and ICT skills at work, and skills use has been increasing less rapidly in Northern Ireland than in most OECD countries.

The by-line for the LLL Group is 'No-one left behind' so there is already a commitment to ensuring opportunities for all to learning to help combat inequalities.

- 4.7.3 Belfast Learning City could look at the Citizens Curriculum work developed by the Learning & Work Institute (<https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-work/life-and-society/citizens-curriculum/>) which is also of relevance to the development of Local Action Plans as discussed below. L&W were motivated by the belief that *'it is vital that everyone has the core set of skills they need for living and working in the 21st century - English (or English for Speakers of Other Languages), maths, digital, civic, health and financial capabilities.'*

4.8 Create incentives to attract new learners

- 4.8.1 Statistics show that those who have a poor experience of learning in its statutory provision are the least likely to access learning later in life.
- 4.8.2 The barriers that prevent a return to or ongoing learning must be addressed so that access is there for all. These have been well researched and sadly have altered little over past decades (the Dept. for the Economy carried out a consultation in 2018 – see <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/barriers-participation-and-progression-education-evidence-review>) .
- 4.8.3 The answers to overcoming these barriers will also be known as there have been many successful projects over the years, but these solutions have not been mainstreamed and so it can be a lottery as to whether a potential learner will receive the support he or she needs.
- 4.8.4 Equitable access needs to be a fundamental element in an agreed action plan for the city.

4.9 Guidance support that is neutral and accessible

- 4.9.1 A recurrent theme in responses was the need for better guidance services. The world of learning is complex and daunting for the less confident to access and navigate. This is not helped by information being scattered across numerous websites (see next point).
- 4.9.2 Discussion covered options of a central service with on-line guidance and also localised provision. The latter option would be particularly successful in reaching new learners/returners who would be more likely to access a local service based in a trusted community resource.
- 4.9.3 The neutrality of a guidance service was also stressed – currently there is self-interest from providers wishing to retain learners for their own financial gain.
- 4.9.5 The collaborative creation by providers of agreed and rationalised learning pathways would greatly facilitate guidance.

4.10 Map current learning provision

- 4.10.1 As mentioned in the previous point, learning provision in the city is very complex with dozens of providers offering hundreds of courses across multiple levels and in formal and non-formal settings. Creating a database/website to collate information on opportunities for learning was generally thought a useful development, although people were realistic about the scale of such a project and its cost, both to create and to maintain.

- 4.10.2 BSP commissioned a mapping exercise back in 2013 which it admits was far from comprehensive and which highlighted the difficulties of securing buy-in from providers, especially those lacking the resources to devote to processing data and a diversity of data collection criteria and methodologies across funders. This exercise was attempting to capture more than just information on courses and extended the question of mapping to uptake also.
- 4.10.3 If the Learning City was to create a database of the learning on offer in the city this would be a very valuable tool to assist guidance, whether 'self-service' or assisted. It would also help providers to identify gaps and also facilitate the building of improved links/pathways.
- 4.10.4 An MIS to monitor uptake of provision would be a valuable analytical tool for providers and policymakers and again would help identify gaps in provision and whether strategies are succeeding in reaching those specifically targeted. In the first instance this should mean the creation of common data collection across Government departments, but to tell the full story would need to extend to cover both funded and non-funded provision – an extremely large undertaking. This may go beyond the bounds of the Learning City to initiate or manage, but there is a role to lobby Government for such provision as it would assist other councils also in measuring the impact of their community plans, most of which include some element of growing learning or skills acquisition.

4.11 Create a Community Education Network

- 4.11.1 While the emphasis of the Learning City needs to be on building collaboration across providers and across sectors, the large number of community-based providers in the community and voluntary sector raises challenges of logistics and inclusion.
- 4.11.2 A presentation from Limerick during the consultation seminar identified the existence of a Community Education Network for the city which brought together these disparate voices and could represent them in wider city partnership forums. The Network can advocate for its members and also help facilitate standardisation, professional development and other common services. This network in turn is linked to the Community Education Network managed by AONTAS which stretches across Ireland (<https://www.aontas.com/community/community-education-network>).
- 4.11.3 The Learning City Plan could explore the possibilities of establishing such a network in Belfast taking learning from Limerick and AONTAS.

4.12 Local action plans

- 4.12.1 Time and again respondents emphasised the need not only for citywide initiatives, but, especially to address areas of greatest inequalities, local initiatives. These

should be co-designed with communities, rooted in the communities and delivered in partnership with already trusted providers.

- 4.12.2 Such initiatives should involve a full range of stakeholders in communities including schools, libraries, employers, churches as well as community organisations.
- 4.12.3 The Learning Neighbourhoods model used In Cork and Limerick is one possibility for shaping such initiatives.
- 4.12.4 Also of relevance is the work of the Learning & Work Institute in its Citizen's Curriculum model (mentioned above) and the Rochdale experience in particular which shows the value of place-based initiatives (<https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/LW-Case-studies-Learn-Rochdale.pdf>).
- 4.12.5 Consideration would also need to be given to how such initiatives fit with existing programmes such as Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and Urban Villages. Respondents were clear about the need to avoid duplication and competition.

5. Learning City Plan: Promote and Celebrate Learning

5.1 Create a simple message for citywide promotional campaign

- 5.1.1 Increased visibility was a clear message coming through from the consultation. Once there is an agreed vision that can form the basis of a campaign to reach out to all – selling learning, and particularly lifelong learning, which will be a new concept for many. The campaign should illustrate the value of informal as well as formal learning and learning for all ages, in a variety of contexts – family, school, workplace, community etc.
- 5.1.2 Visual images as well as simple messages are important and these should show that learning is fun.
- 5.1.3 All media should be used to reach the widest possible audiences.
- 5.1.4 A Learning City website would be an obvious development to spread these messages and all the other promotional concepts described below. This is a core tool for other learning cities.
- 5.1.5 This should be an on-going campaign and could link to different relevant days (e.g. International Book Day, International Women's Day, World Health Day) or other festivals in the city.

5.2 Use examples of successful learners for both citywide and local promotion

- 5.2.1 This is a great combination of celebration and promotion, telling the stories of successful learners from a wide variety of backgrounds, ages etc., illustrating the different benefits of learning – for work, health, overcoming isolation, good relations. Learners should come from a variety of learning providers with sectoral and geographic spread.
- 5.2.2 Stories should be disseminated through a variety of media – publications (e.g. a regular feature in City Matters), websites, social media. While initiated by Learning City all partners should be active in dissemination thereby maximising reach.
- 5.2.3 From this selection of stories should emerge learning champions or ambassadors – learners who would be prepared to speak of their experiences to peers and others at promotional events. (this concept has been well developed in England – see various resources on the Learning & Work Institute’s website <https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/?s=learning+champions>)
- 5.2.4 The power of learner stories will be testified by all providers as the best recruitment tool possible.
- 5.2.5 As well as stories of individuals, those of organisations, employers etc. which create excellent learning opportunities should be used to highlight messages around corporate benefits of learning.

5.3 Highlight and share good practice across the city

- 5.3.1 There is an abundance of good practice already in the city, but much of this is unknown even to others within the lifelong learning field. There is currently no platform for sharing.
- 5.3.2 The Learning City should work to share these examples more widely, through events and its website as part of its role as the facilitator of learning for learning providers and policymakers.

(N.B. at the consultation seminar there was the offer to utilise the database from the National Lottery Community Fund)

5.4 Bring good practice from elsewhere to Belfast

- 5.4.1 As a UNESCO learning city, Belfast now has access to a vast network of expertise. Most easily it can tap into the other UNESCO Learning Cities in the UK and Ireland – and there already exists an Irish Network of Learning Cities.
- 5.4.2 Through these resources not just the leaders of the Belfast Learning City can benefit, but also the wider stakeholders of learning.
- 5.4.3 Practice can again be shared through a central website, but also learning events. A number of respondents suggested that the Learning City should organise events

through the year to assist networking, learning and building collaboration. There is currently a dearth of opportunities for those involved in lifelong learning to come together.

5.5 Ongoing consultation and communication with stakeholders

- 5.5.1 This consultation has shown that there is a great deal of interest and support in the city for the Learning City initiative, however many were disappointed that they had known so little of this over the last 4-5 years and often organisations were even unaware of the Festival of Learning.
- 5.5.2 Stakeholders want to be kept informed and consulted regularly as appropriate for the development of the Learning City Plan.
- 5.5.3 Some of this communication can be addressed by a website, but stakeholders should also be invited to sign up to (and contribute to) regular Newsletters. Other engagement or consultation formats should also be considered to address arising needs.
- 5.5.4 The key will be to strike a balance between sufficient information flow and engagement, and not overburdening or overloading. Stakeholders were also clear about having finite resources to offer to the Learning City so it will be important to keep this matter under review with them.

5.6 Badge learning venues with Belfast Learning City logo

- 5.6.1 To continue the aim of greater visibility and highlight the partnership approach to growing the Learning City, consideration should be given to using the Belfast Learning City logo as a badge to be displayed in learning venues throughout the city – whether these are obvious venues such as schools and university buildings, or less obvious such as factories or restaurants – in fact the greater the diversity the stronger the message that the whole city is learning.

5.7 Grow links with other Festivals

- 5.7.1 There is some element of learning within all the other festivals that happen in the city throughout the year, and finding an appropriate link (which could just be badging) will again show that learning cuts across, enables and enriches so many fields of interest.

5.8 Grow the Belfast Festival of Learning

- 5.8.1 The Festival has now run for four years and is the only visible manifestation of the Learning City to date. It has a very varied programme which has successfully engaged organisations from different sectors and shows a good citywide representation. It has been regularly evaluated and participating organisations have been very positive about the support received and impact made.
- 5.8.2 However, a significant number of those contacted in the consultation were unaware of the festival, despite all being lifelong learning stakeholders. There is clearly a need for improved communication and stakeholder engagement. Several consultees offered to assist at least in terms of information dissemination – so there is goodwill to build upon.
- 5.8.3 For the promotion of the Learning City and the celebration of learning the Festival is key and there is surely room for significant growth – if Cork can have a festival with over 500 events, then proportionately Belfast should aim to grow to at least half that size over the next five years.
- 5.8.4 Supporting a growing festival takes resources, not least human, and the Learning City Plan needs to secure these accordingly. Securing greater stakeholder involvement and particularly from some of the larger players in learning could lead to in-kind resourcing or sponsorship to assist costs and to offer help to less well-resourced organisations wishing to run events.
- 5.8.5 The Festival Organising Group is a small if dedicated body. To assist the growth of the Festival consideration should be given to reviewing its membership, as new blood could bring fresh resources and be more representative of the range of organisations and sectors the Festival wishes to engage in coming years.
- 5.8.6 In 2019 the Festival was able to link with the inaugural Open College Network NI Learner Awards (N.B. these were not confined to Belfast). Celebrating learning achievements from across the city could be another development – either as part of the Festival or at another point in the year. These would be another opportunity to make learning visible. A model for running such a ceremony could be the annual Aisling Awards – which interestingly include an Outstanding Achievement in Education Award.

6. **Measuring Success**

- 6.1 Consultees were asked how we would know or measure that the Learning City is being successful.
- 6.2 Some went for quantitative data collection – e.g. number of participants in learning, number of qualifications gained, increased use of libraries and museums – but

acknowledged challenges and limitations with these: for example, do we have baselines from which to measure progress? In the case of participation data this does not exist and the difficulties of collation have already been mentioned above when discussing the mapping of provision.

- 6.3 There was general consensus that quantitative evaluation alone would be insufficient and certainly runs contrary to the recent shift to outcome rather than output analysis. So quite a range of suggestions for qualitative indices were then offered, illustrative of the breadth of impact that learning can have – for example, people are healthier, happier, feel less isolated, feel more empowered. Respondents also suggested capturing changes in perceptions regarding learning – e.g. people feel more confident accessing it, people view it more as a core, ‘normal’ part of life.
- 6.4 Other suggested criteria were – growth of the Festival of Learning in terms of participation and visibility; focusing on transition as well as attainment; and more collaborative working amongst learning providers.
- 6.5 Obviously specific measures will need to be created according to the actions decided in the final Learning City Plan and may also be influenced by the future home for the initiative e.g. within/alongside the Belfast Agenda with its own indicators and measures. Clearly any indicators required by UNESCO also need to be a core determiner of what is collected.
- 6.6 It will be important to have buy-in from all partners to contribute to any evaluation, so further consultation on criteria will be important. Care will also need to be taken not to overburden partners with additional administration. Discussions with key funders to align differing reporting requirements would greatly assist partners and this could be a role for the Learning City to undertake.
- 6.7 A distinction needs to be made between measuring learning success generally and change directly attributable to the Learning City Plan.
- 6.8 However success is measured, it was felt important that this needs to be regularly fed back to Belfast’s citizens and used to encourage more participation.
- 6.9 Resourcing the capture of the agreed measurements must be considered carefully as it could be hugely demanding. Can some of this be commissioned? Could such commissioning be in partnership with other learning cities e.g. the Irish network? Could parts be incorporated into existing surveys, such as the Life and Times Survey?
- 6.10 Timeframes for data capture need to be reflected on too – what needs to be captured annually? What is more appropriately measured at say five-year intervals (certainly most of the qualitative data as lifestyle changes etc. need longitudinal analysis).
- 6.11 As with many aspects of the Learning City Plan, evaluation needs to develop incrementally. Some of the issues raised by the consultation require Northern Ireland-wide responses and so the role for Belfast Learning City might be more to

advocate for wider-scale change or, as appropriate, trial new models which could have wider application.

7. Leadership and Governance

- 7.1 Critical for the success of the Learning City Plan is how it will be led and by whom and this was another question in the consultation.
- 7.2 A wide range of stakeholders was named and the need for collaborative leadership was emphasised. However, there was an acknowledgment that Learning City needed to have a home somewhere and while to date that has been BSP, with the City Council being the signatory of the UNESCO agreement and the lead for the Belfast Agenda perhaps that is where it should now be situated.
- 7.3 Placing Learning City within the Belfast Agenda has the potential of linking lifelong learning across a wide range of objectives for the city, which would be more reflective of the broad impacts learning enables. It would also secure it within the city's plans up to 2030.
- 7.4 There are also a couple of caveats expressed to a move to within the Belfast Agenda.
- 7.5 First, it is important that the health focus, that being part of the Belfast Strategic Partnership brought and which has been core to the development of the Learning City to date, should not be lost. If the Learning City is to be incorporated with the Belfast Agenda its most obvious board would be the Working and Learning Board – as representatives from BHSCT and PHA sit on this board they can help to ensure that this important emphasis is not lost.
- 7.6 The second caveat from stakeholders is that the scope and potential of the Learning City is not reduced by the Council or its Belfast Agenda partners to a focus on purely economic development. Those consulted strongly emphasised that the work of the Learning City and its stakeholders must be interwoven across the full Agenda, so while the Working and Learning Board might lead, other Boards should also incorporate lifelong learning in their planning.
- 7.7 Consultees wanted assurance that the leadership of Learning City would be reflective of the range of stakeholders and not be dominated by the big players. Some will be represented on the Working and Learning Board, but others may not, so where/how can their voices be heard?
- 7.8 Leadership has to date been with the LLL Group within BSP – will there still be a role for such a group in the future, perhaps as an advisory group to the Working and Learning Board? If refreshed its membership could be more reflective of the range of stakeholders and bring that experience and expertise to the guidance of the Learning City. While almost all consultees emphasised the need for diversity in any leadership

structure, many were also cautious about volunteering their services given many demands on their time.

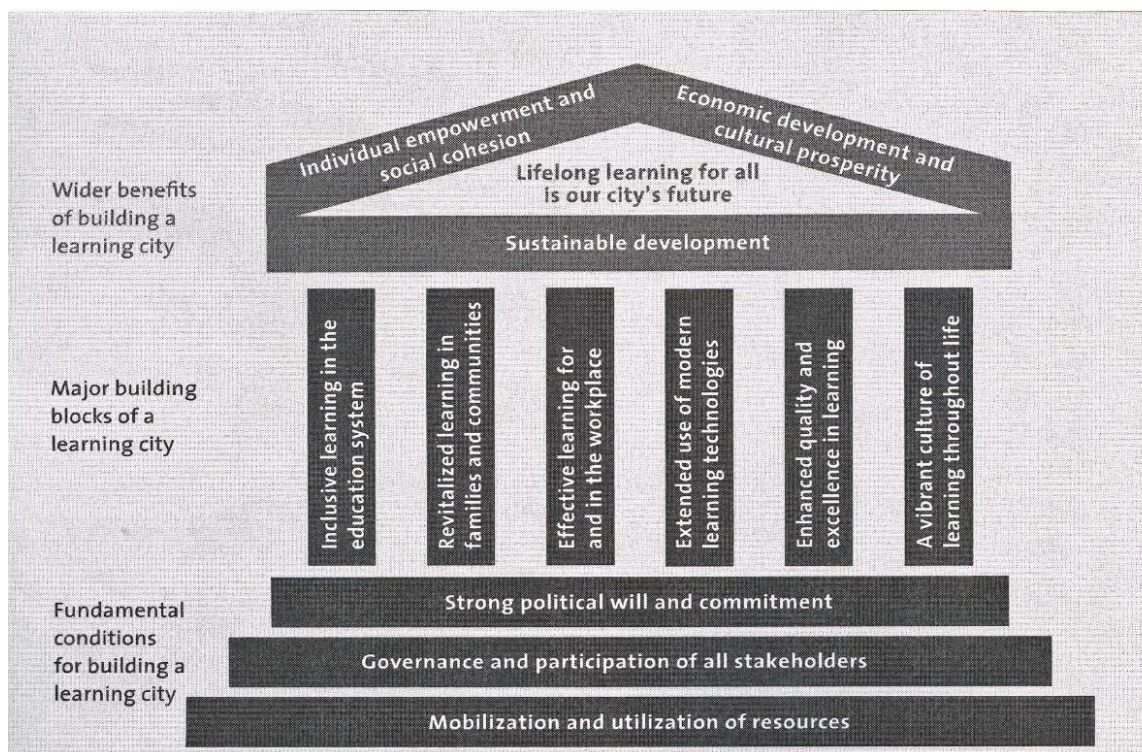
- 7.9 A number of respondents raised the issue of resources for Learning City, both financial and human and whether the current levels are sufficient for it to fulfil its potential. As can be seen from the table on p16, levels of resourcing vary considerably across other learning cities. To reflect the centrality of collaboration, Belfast might consider a model such as that in Derry/Strabane where the core partners have all made a financial commitment. The level of the co-ordinator post within council (should that be hosting organisation) also needs to be of sufficient seniority to carry out the requisite duties.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 By joining the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities Belfast has become part of a growing revival of the learning city movement, and with other major cities in Ireland also joining up there is huge potential for a supportive local learning network on the island – not neglecting also links to the east in the UK.
- 1.2 The stakeholder consultation has shown that there is substantial local support for growing Belfast a Learning City, endorsing and potentially resourcing the ideals and key actions advocated by UNESCO.

2. Assessment using UNESCO Model



The diagram above²¹ sets out the key features of a learning city as developed from UNESCO's Beijing conference in 2013 and which remain at the core of the model Belfast has signed up to. It is a useful model against which to assess the views and ideas collected from stakeholders and compare Belfast's progress to date against that of other UK and Irish learning cities.

²¹ UNESCO (2015) UNESCO *Global Network of Learning Cities: Guiding Documents* Hamburg

2.1 The Wider Benefits of Building a Learning City

There are three benefits expressed on the blocks of the Pediment, surrounding a mission statement.

2.1.1 Individual empowerment and social cohesion

Both the vision of the LLL Group and stakeholder inputs (and also the Belfast Agenda) stress the double goals of individual growth and community development – that individuals attain their full potential and thereby have greater control of their life choices and that communities learn to live together more effectively. With Belfast's history of division (cultural, political, social and economic) an emphasis on social cohesion is all the more important.

2.1.2 Economic development and cultural prosperity

All consultees recognised the importance of the learning city supporting economic development, not least so that more citizens can escape the poverty trap (including in-work poverty). Similarly, the Belfast Agenda vision for the city includes 'where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy.'

There was less emphasis on cultural prosperity, but some did stress the importance of the learning city linking to other festivals in Belfast and others raised the idea of cultural venues such as museums and art centres being badged as part of the learning city programme.

2.1.3 Sustainable development

This did not arise very much in the Belfast consultation, but is much more explicit in the plans of other learning cities such as Cork and Swansea. This may be an area where Belfast needs to give more thought, but sustainable development is a core value of the Belfast Agenda under which the Learning City may sit in the future.

2.1.4 Lifelong learning for all is our city's future

While all those consulted endorsed lifelong learning, a number particularly stressed its centrality in building a sustainable future for the city – people are the only natural resource and so to fulfil all the city's goals continuous investment through learning is a sound strategy. Lifelong learning was also identified as vital to Belfast being a healthy city, including addressing the wellbeing legacies of the conflict.

This is also a view which is clear in the visions and action plans of most of the learning cities examined.

2.2 Major Building Blocks

2.2.1 There are six identified building blocks for a learning city:

- i. Inclusive learning in the education system
- ii. Revitalised learning in families and communities
- iii. Effective learning for and in the workplace
- iv. Extended use of modern learning technologies
- v. Enhanced quality of learning
- vi. A vibrant culture of learning throughout life.

In the consultation responses most attention was given to 4 of these blocks – (i), (ii), (iii) and (vi).

- 2.2.2 Ensuring that any city learning plan gives due recognition for and inclusion of provision extending across the full age range was emphasised by many consultees coming from organisations spanning early years to older age.
- 2.2.3 There was widespread opinion that any learning plan for Belfast needed to include greater recognition of and investment in community-based learning, especially in those areas of the city where there are endemic inequalities. Some consultees also advocated for more investment in family learning – an area where N. Ireland in general is lagging behind other parts of the UK.
- 2.2.4 Consultation responses identified high quality learning programmes already for employability, but it was felt that these needed greater coordination and rationalisation. It was generally felt that more emphasis needed to be placed on in-work learning, especially for the low-waged.
- 2.2.5 While the consultation shows that there is widespread understanding of and support for lifelong learning across stakeholders, there is an acknowledgement that this is not prevalent amongst the general public. There is a need for a promotional campaign to raise awareness and aspiration.

The experience of Cork, which has been delivering a Learning Festival now for 16 years, shows that it is possible to grow such a culture given continual investment.

- 2.2.6 Bristol and Swansea’s learning city plans have placed emphasis on improving the quality of learning and use of new technologies, but then local authorities in England have responsibility for education, unlike their counterparts in N. Ireland and RoI.

2.3 Fundamental Conditions for Building a Learning City

There are three foundational steps:

2.3.1 Strong political will and commitment

To achieve membership of the Global Network of Learning Cities, Belfast’s Lord Mayor had to be the signatory to the application and agreement. Unfortunately, the

consultation was unable to ascertain the breadth of knowledge and commitment to a learning city of city councillors and other city political representatives.

Belfast City Council, the Public Health Authority and Belfast Trust have all shown commitment to a learning city through the Belfast Strategic Partnership and their CEOs were the initial signatories of the Learning City Charter in 2015.

However, a large number of stakeholders expressed concern that they were largely unaware of the learning city development. Clearly its profile is unhealthily low and some have wondered if this is because it is currently adrift in terms of leadership and linkage to larger strategic plans, such as the Belfast Agenda.

There needs to be more explicit commitment for the future development of a learning city, including budgetary support to enable a new action plan to build on the impetus started through this consultation.

2.3.2 Governance and participation of all stakeholders

To date governance of the learning city initiative in Belfast has rested with the Lifelong Learning Group of the BSP. In the consultation it was suggested that this group needs to be refreshed. Its future role also needs to be clarified – if the learning city initiative is to come under the Belfast Agenda and therefore most likely the Working and Learning Board, how could a reconstituted LLL Group (presumably renamed to something more explicit – Learning City Group?) relate? Would it be a reference group? Or a management group? Who would appoint its members?

Similarly the management of any worker(s) needs to be clarified – would this remain under the BHDU, shift to the Council or another strategic partner?

The participation of stakeholders was examined in the consultation and whilst all were wishing to be supportive, not all would want to commit to being part of a management group. Once there is an agreed management structure consideration needs to be given to how to achieve maximum appropriate involvement so that stakeholders feel involved and informed, without being burdened. A range of engagement activities could be devised – newsletters, stakeholder events, questionnaires and the like.

2.3.2 Mobilization and utilization of resources

A review of resources for the learning city programme in conjunction with the creation of a learning city plan is urgently needed.

At present there is one worker with access to a very limited budget which seems inadequate to even ensure the delivery of a Festival programme in 2020 of comparable size to those which have been before.

The consultation has shown how other cities like Cork and Limerick have been able to grow successful cultures of learning, with widespread benefits. There is a large amount of goodwill and support amongst Belfast stakeholders to be utilized if properly channelled. Engaging with them collaboratively holds great potential for both accessing and coordinating their existing resources and for winning new resources. However this requires secure core resources to initiate and facilitate.

2.4 In Summary

In terms of the UNESCO diagram the Belfast Learning City initiative requires some urgent attention to its foundations to enable the strengthening or building of the pillars which will facilitate the vision and wider benefits.

However most of the building elements are in place and this consultation shows clearly that with some renewed impetus the chances of success are high and Belfast could soon be performing as well as other learning cities across the UK and Ireland.

3. **Recommendations**

3.1 Integration of Belfast a Learning City into key city strategies

3.1.1 Whilst the Learning City is specifically mentioned in the Belfast Agenda in the draft action plan for the Working and Learning Board, it should also be incorporated into the action plans of the other Belfast Agenda Boards, as lifelong learning cuts across all silos and learning is a key enabler of the commitments of all Boards.

3.1.2 The Learning City should also be linked to other Belfast strategies such as Shared City, Age Friendly Belfast, Resilience strategy, Belfast Healthy Cities and SMART city

3.2 Governance

3.2.1 Belfast a Learning City needs a steering group. The BSP LLL Group has successfully steered the initiative to this point, but a refreshed group is required to develop and carry forward the new action plan.

3.2.2 Membership of the steering group should reflect the range of lifelong learning, covering providers and other key stakeholder organisations across sectors. It would be important to retain the historic links with health organisations.

3.2.3 For coordination and reporting the steering group should include members from the Working and Learning and Living Here Boards.

3.2.4 Such a governance structure would then mirror that of other learning cities – a broad advisory group with strategic links to council or equivalent body.

3.3 Resourcing

- 3.3.1 A decision should be made on the permanent location of the initiative and its staff. This is currently within BHDU but, while retaining links to health is important, is that the most appropriate and effective location to enable the desired impact?
- 3.3.2 Consider appropriate future staffing in terms of numbers and seniority and in line with the new Action Plan. A point of comparison could be Cork – a smaller city than Belfast, but one which is globally acknowledged to have achieved great success.
- 3.3.3 Explore the possibility of a resourcing model similar to that currently operating in Derry & Strabane District Council i.e. an MOU between the council and key third level education bodies.
- 3.3.4 Secure resources to enable the growth of the Belfast Festival of Learning (see below).

3.4 An Action Plan

- 3.4.1 Once a renewed Steering Group for the Learning City has been established it should immediately work to create an Action Plan for the next 3-5 years.
- 3.4.2 This report contains many ideas from key stakeholders and examples from other learning cities that can help shape this Plan.
- 3.4.3 The Action Plan should include recommendations for the resources required to carry forward the identified actions and suggestions for securing the requisite funds. It is envisaged that the Plan will require a mix of core and project resources.
- 3.4.4 As well as identifying appropriate evaluation for the various initiatives of the Action Plan, consideration should be given to working with other learning cities to create a model for the overall evaluation of the Learning City – a challenging issue as noted earlier in this report.
- 3.4.5 Once a draft Action Plan has been drawn up there should be a stakeholder consultation to secure a wide buy-in. The finalised Action Plan can then be presented to all the Belfast Agenda Boards.

3.5 Belfast Festival of Learning

- 3.5.1 The Festival Steering Group has expressed concern that with reduced support available from the Family Friendly budget, which has always helped broaden participation, and with no budget for publicity, a 2020 festival could struggle to replicate the success of previous years.
- 3.5.2 To be able to use their limited resources to support innovation and to create signature events in the festival programme, the Festival Steering Group and wider

partners within BSP should encourage groups to use the festival to highlight existing provision. In addition, organisations who wish to participate in the festival need encouragement to apply for funds from other sympathetic funding sources, with similar aims on improving health and well-being outcomes, such as Take 5, Awards for All, or BCC community grants.

The necessary PR support to raise the festival's profile and encourage greater participation should be secured either from existing council services or through other funding.

3.5.3 For the future, amongst other options, the festival could investigate sponsorship possibilities, as this has worked for other learning cities.

3.5.4 The membership of the Festival Steering Group should be refreshed and expanded to cover a wider representation of stakeholders and of skills and experience of running festivals.

3.6 Strengthen Support Base

3.6.1 The LLL Group (or its successor) should meet with the party groups of Belfast City Council and with the city's MLAs and MPs. Political representatives were unable to be included in the stakeholder consultation due to clashes with elections.

3.7 Quick Hits

3.7.1 To continue the momentum of interest in the Learning City initiative engendered by this consultation, some 'quick hits' should be considered whilst the new Steering Group is working on the Action Plan and securing its resourcing.

3.7.2 These actions can be co-ordinated and facilitated by the current LLL worker, but may require some modest additional support, human and financial.

3.7.3 *Preparation for the Belfast Festival of Learning 2020.* The momentum of the festival needs to continue and ideally should be growing from year to year. Minimally (as stated above) comparable resources to last year are needed to maintain the current level of programme.

3.7.4 *Creation of a Learning City website and related social media.* This would bring Belfast in line with other learning cities and would instantly increase visibility – something that is much needed from the evidence of the stakeholder consultation. It would also be of great assistance to increasing PR for the Belfast Festival of Learning.

3.7.5 *Collection of more Learner Stories.* This would be an opportunity not only to create a bank of publicity resources, but to engage with provider stakeholders and increase their active involvement in the Learning City initiative. The stories would help

populate the new website, but could also be used in other publications such as City Matters.

APPENDICES

- 1. List of BSP Members**
- 2. List of LLL Group Members**
- 3. List of Stakeholder Consultees**
- 4. List of Attendees at Consultation Seminar**

BELFAST STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS

Ashton Community Trust	Irene Sherry
BCC	Suzanne Wylie
Belfast City Councillor (PUP)	Cllr John Kyle
Belfast City Councillor (SDLP)	Cllr Tim Attwood
Belfast City Councillor (SF)	Cllr Stephen Corr/ Cllr Mairead O'Donnell
Belfast LCG	Danny Power
Belfast Metropolitan College	Marie Therese McGivern
Belfast Trades Council	Paddy Mackel
Belfast HSC Trust	Martin Dillon
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Gerry Campbell
Chair of Belfast Healthy Cities	Nigel McMahon
Community Relations Council	Jacqueline Irwin
Department for Communitles	Mark O'Donnell
Department for Employment and Learning	John McGuigan
Department for Justice	Mary Brannigan
Department of Health	Stephanie Tallentire/ Dr Anne Kilgallen
Department for Economy	Mary Mclvor
East Belfast Partnership Board	Maurice Kincaid
Education Authority	Clare Managan
Frank Gillen Centre	Danny Power
Greater Shankill Partnership	Jackie Redpath
Housing Executive	Jennifer Hawthorne
Health & Social Care Board	Iain Deboys
Inner City South Belfast Sure Start	Joy Poots
Jcomms	Jane Wells
Public Health Agency	Valerie Watts
Public Health Agency	Brendan Bonner
Probation Board NI	Stephen Hamilton
PSNI	Varies
South Belfast Partnership Board	Briege Arthurs
West Belfast Partnership Board	Geraldine McAteer

LIFELONG LEARNING GROUP

Danny Power	Frank Gillen Centre
Tom Mervyn	Queen's University
Mary Coffey	Belfast Metropolitan College
Michele Marken	Gems NI
Susan Russam	Gems NI
Yvonne Connolly	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Gerry Campbell	CCMS
Pat Boyle	Ashton Community Trust
Patricia Cochrane	Dept for the Economy
Sinead O'Regan	Belfast City Council
Dolores Atkinson	BH DU
Kathryn Scott	Dept of Communities

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTEES

ORGANISATION	CONSULTEES
Action Mental Health	Peter Shields
Age NI	Siobhan Casey
Belfast City Council	John Tully, David Robinson, Alistair Reid
Belfast Metropolitan College	Damian Duffy, Isaac May, Mary Coffey
Belfast Trust	Yvonne Connelly, Joan Peden
CCEA	Justin Edwards
CCMS	Gerry Campbell
Community Family Support Programme	East Belfast Mission, Shankill Impact Training, Ashton Community Trust, GEMS NI, and USDT
Conway Education Centre	Pauline Kersten
COPNI	Eddie Lynch
Dept for the Economy	John McGuigan
Early Years	Siobhan Fitzpatrick
Education Authority	Mark McBride, John Unsworth
ICTU	Julie Gorman
Libraries NI	Paul Kelly
NI Chamber of Commerce	Chris Morrow
NICVA	Sandra Bailie
OCNNI	Martin Flynn
Open University	John D'Arcy
Queen's University	Alistair Stewart, Maria Lee
Start360	Anne-Marie McClure
Ulster University	Duncan Morrow
WRDA	Anne McVicker

Other Organisations Contacted Unsuccessfully

CAP, PHA, NICCY, NICRC, Ballynafeigh Community Association, Eastside Learning, NOW Group, Shankill Women's Centre, BCC Political Part Groups



CONSULTATION SEMINAR FOR BELFAST: A LEARNING CITY

6 June 2019

ATTENDEES

Maggie	Andrews	Eastside Partnership
Dolores	Atkinson	BHDU
Sandra	Bailie	NICVA
Denis	Barrett	Cork Learning City
Jessica	Blomkvist	Integrated Education Fund
Eimear	Brophy	Limerick and Clare Education Training Board
Brian	Carr	Belfast City Council
Mary	Coffey	Belfast Met College
Liz	Conlon	Physics4All
Yvonne	Connolly	Belfast Trust
Clare	Cosgrove	Springboard
Paul	Curran	Dublin Learning City
Nuala	Dalcz	Ulster University
Iain	Deboys	HSCB
Joan	Devlin	Belfast Healthy Cities
Stuart	Dickinson	Belfast Metropolitan College
Ali	Fell	Strand Arts Centre
Owen	Fenton	The National Lottery Community Fund
Jan	Flynn	Belfast City Council
Jacqueline	Frazer	Belfast Health Development Unit
Faith	Garrett	Belfast Met
Dawn	Garthwaite	NIACRO
Julie	Gorman	ICTU
EJ	Havlin	Adoption UK
Hazel	Jones	East Belfast Mission
Raymond	Kelly	Department for the Economy
John	Kyle	Belfast City Council
Yvonne	Lane	Learning Limerick
Maria	Lee	Queen's University Belfast
Michele	Leitch	East Belfast Mission
Michele	Marken	Lifelong Learning Group
Peter	Matassa	BBC

Willie	McAuliffe	Cork Learning City
Mark	McBride	EANI
John	McGuigan	Dept for the Economy
Roisin	McKenna	Belfast City Council
Edel	Mullan	Belfast City Council
Michele	Murphy	Derry City and Strabane District Council
Zoe	Murray	Learning Limerick
Betty	Murray	Extern Works
Charlene	Murray	Footprints Women's Centre
Colin	Neilands	Communitus.
Bryan	Nelson	Belfast Trust
Sonya	Nelson	Housing Rights
Danny	Power	Lifelong Learning Group
Jim	Prior	Limerick Community Education Network
Trevor	Purtill	Marino Institute of Education
Deirdre	Quinn	WRDA
Peter	Shields	Action Mental Health
Rita	Simmonds	Early Years
Clare	Skelton	Prince's Trust
Barbara	Wallace	Eastside Learning
Eileen	Wilson	Footprints Women's Centre