Employment Research Institute

SWELL ACTION 3 EVALUATION

Professor Ronald W. McQuaid and Colin Lindsay

Employment Research Institute, Napier University

November 2005

SWELL ACTION 3 EVALUATION

CONTENTS

SWELL ACTION 3 EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and aims

This report details the findings of research undertaken by the Employment Research Institute, Napier University, Edinburgh as part the evaluation of the Scottish Workforce Empowerment for Lifelong Learning (SWELL) project. The report focuses on SWELL's 'Action 3' activities, concerning the communication, dissemination and mainstreaming of practice and outputs from the project.

The SWELL project is one of the seven thematic priorities under the ESF Equal programme in Scotland, focusing on promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market. SWELL partners engaged in a range of activities under Action 3 of the project. These activities fell under a number of broad objectives, seeking:

- to promote and encourage demand for lifelong learning through the models developed under Action 2 of SWELL;
- to build infrastructure to support learner demand;
- to establish communities of practice to support opportunities for learners and employees;
- to work to influence mainstream policy through evidence-based practice;
- to broaden the experience of SWELL partners through effective links with other Development Partnerships.

The aims of the Action 3 evaluation research were:

- to evaluate the impact of mainstreaming and dissemination activities undertaken as part of Action 3 of the SWELL project;
- to assess the value of Action 3 activities as a means of promoting the dissemination of good practice and facilitating networking among SWELL partners and between SWELL partners and other bodies.

Assessment of activities under SWELL Action 3

SWELL partners have successfully completed a broad range of activities under Action 3 of the project. Partners, with the support of the Lead Partner team at SFEU, have developed dissemination and mainstreaming activities and resources that in many cases have made a substantial contribution to raising awareness of the SWELL project's benefits. A range of activities have been undertaken, including:

- hosting conferences and events (QMUC; UHI; SFEU; TWE);

- conference and workshop presentations (LDS; QMUC; SQA; STUC; SFEU; TWE);

- tailored, web-based information materials (LDS; SEL; STUC; SQA; STUC; SFEU);

- published reports (LDS; STUC; UHI; TWE);

- multi-media resources (QMUC; SEL; UHI; SQA; TWE);

- informal and formal networking activities (LDS; SEL; QMUC; UHI; SQA; STUC; SFEU; TWE).

The audiences for these different dissemination activities have varied considerably, but all SWELL partners appear to have developed a coherent vision of the groups that materials and communications should be targeted at. In some cases activities were focused mainly on informing and supporting the work of learning service deliverers (for example, UHI; LDS), or by adapting and further developing existing tools and approaches (SQA; SEL). Elsewhere, SWELL partners extended their dissemination activities to seek to inform the decision making of both practitioners and policy makers (QMUC; SFEU; TWE). The breadth of the project means that partners have also been able to present findings from SWELL that may inform the approaches to learning adopted by employers, trade unions and voluntary organisations (STUC; SFEU; UHI).

In a small number of cases, limits of time and resources restricted some activities, while in other examples there was an insufficient audience for planned events. Where SWELL partners were reliant on other organisations to provide access or facilities for dissemination activities there were some logistical problems. However, in-depth interviews with SWELL partners, combined with a review of dissemination reports and materials, have highlighted the extent to which dissemination activities have been successfully completed.

Fit with strategic objectives

The activities reported by partners fit well with the strategic objectives for this phase of the project, in terms of promoting SWELL supported learning models and strengthening service infrastructures. Initiatives such as those led by QMUC, UHI and STUC have also contributed to building communities of practice, by promoting and facilitating community engagement, assisting capacity building where learning infrastructures are fragile, or establishing new areas and networks of learning within existing organisations and partnerships.

Where possible, SWELL partners have sought to mainstream the benefits and products from their activities within existing structures and services. There remain some concerns about the lifespan of certain (undoubtedly valuable) activities once SWELL support has been withdrawn. However, in many cases (with the work of SFEU providing a clear example) the learning developed through SWELL has already been mainstreamed within national and/or local policy and practice.

SWELL partners have worked effectively with each other and other partners to develop and disseminate Action 3 activities. In some cases both transnational partnership working and practical links with other EQUAL DPs have been limited (although the SWELL Lead Partner has engaged with both of these groups effectively). Some organisations involved in SWELL continue to view partnership working within the project and with other (especially transnational) partners as something of a missed opportunity, and there may be lessons regarding the need to establish the potential focal points for *practical*, inter-agency co-operation early in EU projects. That said, there have been a number of examples of innovative partnership working within SWELL and with external actors.

Administration of the SWELL project under Action 3

SWELL partners considered the administration and leadership of the project to have been effective. While long-established concerns regarding the paperwork associated with the project were again raised, all partners were satisfied with both the project administration and (in many cases) the 'creative' role played by the Lead Partner in helping to consider and develop Action 3 activities.

One partner noted the potential need for "more coaching" and support on the administration of ESF claims, but this and other partners were generally satisfied with Lead Partner performance. In terms of measures to reduce the project's administrative burden, partners again called for a more streamlined, possibly ICT-based system of reporting activity.

Findings from case study research: SFEU and 'Equality, Diversity, Inclusion'

SFEU's 'Equality, Diversity, Inclusion' (EDI) activities aimed to promote awareness of equalities issues and to inform policy and practice on equal opportunities in the Further Education (FE) sector. The EDI website at www.sfeu.ac.uk/edi.asp provided a central focus for these activities offers a range of information and advice sections, including:

- Resources and Support pages presenting key sources of equalities information;
- Legislation pages presenting detailed information on rights and responsibilities under the six areas of equal opportunities legislation;
- Guidance for Colleges on "Developing a Policy on Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation";
- Self evaluation pages enabling FE professionals to compare their practice and policies with guidance on under the SFEFC/HMIe Quality Framework;
- Additional features including a quiz on equalities issues, a glossary of terms, and instant e-mail access for comments on the website.

Survey research conducted with website users highlighted the value of this approach, with 95% of users finding the site's information presented in an accessible manner, and 69% acknowledging that it had informed their own organisation's policy and practice. All aspects of the website were reasonably well used, but resources and legal guidance on combating racism appeared to be particularly popular. In general the feedback was positive, with one user noting:

I generally think it is excellent and a much-needed resource for the FE sector. I think the focus on self-evaluation and actively using the information to change practices is the right one and very helpful.

A major concern for users was that the EDI website should be up-dated and built upon. A key challenge for SFEU will be that resources are located so that the site can be maintained as a resource for the FE sector. SWELL support has so far played a key role in establishing the EDI website as an important, high quality resource for the FE sector.

'Good practice' lessons and conclusions

In terms of drawing lessons for good practice, a number of themes emerge from the preceding discussion. The most effective Action 3 activities have been based around a clear idea of a specific audience to be targeted, often following research and consultation exercises that have identified the needs of information users. In the best cases, these activities have added value by filling gaps in existing information, or by developing innovative solutions (often using ICT) that overcome problems of distance and accessibility or gaps in content.

Indeed, in terms of dissemination tools, it is striking that many partners deployed considerable resources on website development or the use of e-resources. Evidence from SFEU and UHI in particular suggest that this has been an effective way of communicating key messages from SWELL and supporting the work of learning professionals (with important benefits in terms of building capacity and communities of practice). Effective Action 3 activities have also considered opportunities for mainstreaming at an early stage, and partners (such as SFEU) have engaged with the relevant bodies (HMIe, SFEFC and the Scottish Executive) to ensure that the tools and resources developed through SWELL gain the widest possible audience.

Despite some relatively minor problems preventing the execution of a number of activities, SWELL partners have generally reported substantial benefits linked to Action 3 of the project. There are some lessons to take forward to future activities, particularly in relation to early engagement with partners outwith the DP, but in general Action 3 activities have provided some important opportunities for partners to share good practice, build capacity and communities of practice, and disseminate information about benefits arising from SWELL supported models to learners, practitioners and other key stakeholders.

SWELL ACTION 3 EVALUATION

1. INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of research undertaken by the Employment Research Institute, Napier University, Edinburgh as part the evaluation of the Scottish Workforce Empowerment for Lifelong Learning (SWELL) project. The report focuses on SWELL's 'Action 3' activities, concerning the communication, dissemination and mainstreaming of practice and outputs from the project.

The report is structured as follows: after these introductory remarks, Section 1 sets out the background to SWELL and the key objectives and methodology for the evaluation. Section 2 provides an overview of the activities undertaken by partners (and their fit with SWELL Action 3 objectives), problems and benefits encountered, and the effectiveness of administrative procedures and partnership working. Section 3 presents a detailed case study, with survey results on the impact and value of the Action 3 activities of one partner – the Scottish Further Education Unit's team working on the Unit's 'Equality, Diversity, Inclusion' campaign. Finally, Section 4 discusses conclusions and lessons from SWELL Action 3.

The SWELL project is one of the seven thematic priorities under the ESF Equal programme in Scotland, focusing on promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market. SWELL partners engaged in a range of activities under Action 3 of the project. These activities fell under a number of broad objectives, seeking:

- to promote and encourage demand for lifelong learning through the models developed under Action 2 of SWELL;
- to build infrastructure to support learner demand;
- to establish communities of practice to support opportunities for learners and employees;
- to work to influence mainstream policy through evidence-based practice;
- to broaden the experience of SWELL partners through effective links with other Development Partnerships.

The aims of the Action 3 evaluation research were:

- to evaluate the impact of mainstreaming and dissemination activities undertaken as part of Action 3 of the SWELL project;

- to assess the value of Action 3 activities as a means of promoting the dissemination of good practice and facilitating networking among SWELL partners and between SWELL partners and other bodies.

The methodology for the research was essentially qualitative, focusing on partners' perceptions of the value of Action 3 activities, and benefits and problems associated with mainstreaming, communication and dissemination. A range of methods were deployed to assess Action 3 activities, including:

- a review of proposed activity summaries provided by partners on Action 3 activities, enabling the research team to establish each partner's proposed activities and outputs in terms of the mainstreaming and dissemination of materials and activities;

- a desk-based evaluation and review of online, multimedia and hard copy reports and other materials produced to disseminate best practice and mainstream learning tools and other outputs from SWELL;

- a series of in-depth, face-to-face interviews with a number of staff within all SWELL partners involved in Action 3, focusing on the effectiveness of SWELL activity as a mechanism for change, and the effectiveness of activities designed to mainstream and disseminate policy lessons emerging from SWELL;

- where possible, the development and dissemination of short evaluation questionnaires to audiences at seminar events and users of dissemination materials – due to difficulties in gaining access to audiences, this research focused mainly on the case study example, the SFEU's 'Equality, Diversity, Inclusion' activities;

- a review of informal and formal feedback and evaluation results obtained by SWELL partners following their own Action 3 activities;

- telephone interviews undertaken with organisations with whom SWELL partners have established links elsewhere in Europe – these interviews focused on the extent and value of any mutual policy learning; and the broader impact and value of national and transnational partnership working in mainstreaming and disseminating policy lessons and best practice.

2. ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITIES UNDER SWELL ACTION 3

2.1 Activities of SWELL Partners under Action 3

SWELL partners have successfully completed a broad range of activities under Action 3 of the project. Partners, with the support of the Lead Partner team at SFEU, have sought to develop dissemination and mainstreaming activities and resources that in many cases have made a substantial contribution to raising awareness of project successes. In some cases, limits of time and resources restricted some activities, while in other examples there was an insufficient audience for planned events (for example, in two cases 'rural' dissemination events did not proceed due to the small numbers able to attend). However, in-depth interviews with SWELL partners, combined with a review of dissemination reports and materials, have highlighted the extent to which communication, dissemination and mainstreaming activities have been successfully completed.

Learndirect Scotland (LDS)

LDS was committed to engaging in a range of Action 3 activities, including:

- LDS Conference workshop presentations at events at Dundee and Glasgow;

- targeted information on SWELL supported activities, disseminated through inserts in LDS's "e-Learning in Action Across Scotland" publication;

- a targeted web-based version of this information on SWELL supported activities, disseminated through LDS's specialist "lds4partners" website (targeted at Learning Centre professionals);

- initial contacts with NHS staff and managers through LDS's "Networking for Success" activities to disseminate information on SWELL supported activities.

The target audience for LDS's activities was generally the organisation's own network of Learning Centres (so that the benefits of the competency framework and skills matching tools adapted and implemented under SWELL could be highlighted). However, LDS staff also saw dissemination activities as an opportunity to feed into Scottish Executive's lifelong learning strategies. Workshops and resulting discussions with potential future partners have provided LDS with the chance to consider opportunities and barriers to further roll out of SWELL supported activities through the Learning Centre network. LDS staff presented on SWELL activities twice

at each of the conferences discussed above, in each case reaching audience of between 12 and 30 learning professionals. Monitoring data gathered by LDS suggested that SWELL presentations met with a positive response, with participants valuing the emphasis on practical benefits for Learning Centre professionals.

LDS's "e-Learning in Action Across Scotland" publication features a number of case studies of the innovative use of ICT, with a chapter on LDS's work in partnership with SWELL included. The same chapter will be used as an 'insert' to be included in other future LDS materials. The publication targets a diverse audience, including FE and Learning Centre professionals, training providers, and policy makers. The case study "A SWELL way for workers to learn" highlights the value of LDS's Skillnet as a virtual learning environment, and the wider benefits of LDS's SWELL supported activities:

> *It has provided an opportunity to identify and address resource issues facing Learning Centres, with a view to promoting sustainability through a competency and training framework across Scotland.*

An e-version of the content on SWELL within the "e-Learning in Action Across Scotland" publication has been made available through LDS's specialist "lds4partners" website at www.lds4partners.com (the website is specifically targeted at Learning Centre professionals).[1] The "4partners" website also provides passworded access to further information about the competency framework materials developed under SWELL, as does SE Lanarkshire's website (following joint working on this between SE Lanarkshire and LDS). Informal feedback following the site's launch suggests that this may prove an effective way to promote the further use of the tools in the 496 Scottish Learning Centres supported by LDS. Ongoing discussions with LDS's Learning Service Development Team have focused on facilitating the effective use of these tools in Learning Centres.

Finally, the materials developed under SWELL have been discussed in the context of their potential value for NHS librarians through a "Networking for Success" event. Although falling outwith the scope of Action 3 activities, a presentation to this forum highlighted the personal development gains that can follow from the deployment of Skillnet and related materials. These activities were not supported by Action 3, but SWELL clearly provided the context for this work, and LDS's future activities in this area will continue to be informed by learning developed through SWELL.

---

[1] http://www.lds4partners.com/NR/rdonlyres/A7477C7C-160D-4AFE-BF91-1CACA106A95A/0/SWELL.pdf

<u>Queen Margaret University College (QMUC): Community Arts Research and Practice</u>

QMUC has undertaken an extensive range of highly successful Action 3 activities, including:

- the development of web-based dissemination materials and website building;

- 'practice connections' networking with community learning professionals;

- the development of a publication, in partnership with the British Council, disseminating information on community arts practice in a number of partner countries;

- the development of community arts practice and a piece of theatre, in partnership with the British Council of Pakistanis;

- cross-generational participatory research activities, and inter-generational creative arts learning;

- participation an networking relating to UN Human Rights Day;

- the development and delivery of a major, three-day international conference on creative arts learning.

The target audience for QMUC's activities has been broad, ranging from arts professionals and practitioners, and community participants interested in the creative arts to policy makers. Some delays and resource shortages have affected the time frame for certain activities – web-based dissemination materials were near completion at the time of writing, but will not be available by the end of the SWELL project. However, these materials, designed to enable arts practitioners across Europe to share good practice and to disseminate lessons from QMUC's SWELL supported activities, will be available from late 2005 at www.community-arts.org.uk

QMUC's work with the British Council is similarly near completion, but resource constraints will delay the final publication of a dissemination report until late 2005. However, as part of this area of activity, QMUC has already developed and successfully run a cross-national forum on community arts, engaging practitioners from EU, African and other states. Research and practice report papers presented at the forum will be pulled together with other materials on arts learning within the written dissemination report. Similarly, while a number of practical activities saw the development of a piece of community theatre in partnership with the British Council of Pakistanis, full dissemination (possibly through a formal presentation and discussion event) will take place following the completion of SWELL.

Other activities have been completed in full, with positive results. Practice Connections activities successfully brought together arts practitioners and community education professionals in a series of participative research, evaluation and networking activities facilitated by QMUC. Representatives of Communities Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council and a range of community learning providers were linked with artists/arts practitioners and QMUC staff in events designed to highlight good practice and share information and experience. Networking and partner engagement activities undertaken as part of UN Human Rights Day events resulted in the informal dissemination of information about QMUC's SWELL supported activities. As a result partnerships are currently being developed with Amnesty International and others with the purpose of developing activities highlighting the value of participatory arts learning, practice and research, engaging arts workers on equalities and justice issues and sharing practice.

QMUC's cross-generational and inter-generational activities have been particularly successful. Learners from a range of age groups (aged between 13 and 70) were encouraged to engage in a process of participative research and action learning on Scottish identity, resulting in a piece of theatre presented at the Practical Connections forum event discussed above. The work of the group was then used to facilitate discussion and sharing of experience between practitioners, learners and audience. The inter-generational initiative has targeted older learners, bringing them together with youth and children's theatre and adult drama groups, and engaging them in community arts learning. On-going "Acting Your Age" and "Living Memory" initiatives seek to build upon this work. Feedback from learners and wider practitioner audiences viewing their creative outputs has been positive.

One older learner interviewed by the research team for this evaluation highlighted the value of these SWELL supported activities. After responding to an initial awareness-raising mailshot from QMUC and attending two introductory community drama modules, 'Mary' has since engaged in QMUC's "Acting Your Age" and "Living Memory" initiatives. She described the learning environment provided by the QMUC team as "welcoming and highly supportive", while the activities that she has engaged in have brought social and practical benefits.

I had spent a lot of time at home looking after my grandchildren. That can be quite isolating. The activities I have been involved in have given me a lot more self-confidence. Some of our work focused on speaking at and running public meetings, which has been practically useful – since getting involved I have become the vice-chair of two different community organisations. I could never have done these things before – getting involved, performing has really given me confidence and a great sense of achievement.

Finally, a major international conference co-ordinated by QMUC in September 2005 proved highly popular and successful, drawing an audience of artists, cultural workers and educationalists from more than ten European states, Australia, the US and elsewhere. More than sixty participants and five critical observers engaged in sessions on good practice in arts learning and community arts engagement and development of practice and research, while the conference provided scope for participative and creative interactions and networking, which has enabled QMUC and other participants to build partnerships that will outlive the SWELL project. At the time of the conference, dissemination of information about the event was carried through a range of media including a tailored "Practical Connections" newsletter. Evaluation feedback suggests very positive outcomes (although detailed data had not been analysed at the time of writing and were therefore not made available to the evaluation team). QMUC are in the process of developing DVD materials to disseminate the conference's activities, and a number of academic publications planned for 2006 will further highlight the value of this and other SWELL supported activities.

In general terms, despite resource and manpower issues delaying the full publication of some planned materials, QMUC has made substantial progress in planning and delivering a broad range of dissemination and mainstreaming activities under SWELL Action 3, with benefits for audiences and learners, and the emergence of new opportunities to develop working partnerships with other providers (see below).

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
SQA has engaged in a range of Action 3 activities aimed at rolling out and disseminating information around the launch of materials developed under SWELL Action 2 – namely qualifications under the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise

and Employability brand. Interviews with two SQA managers pointed to a number of successfully completed activities, including:

- the commissioning and completion of exemplars for new units developed under three Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability qualifications;

- activities to investigate the feasibility of building on-line assessment into the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability model;

- the development of web-based materials accessible through Careers Scotland;

- the development and dissemination of awareness raising materials;

- presentations and networking to disseminate information about the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability, including feeding into the Careers Scotland "Talent and Diversity Workshop";

- presentation and information sharing activities at the EU Conference on Developing Entrepreneurship In Young People.

These activities have been undertaken to ensure the successful dissemination of information about a comprehensive suite of Enterprise and Employability provision (developed with the support of the SWELL project), with qualifications targeted at client groups ranging from relatively inexperienced and disadvantaged learners (at Intermediate 1 level) to HE level learners seeking accredited professional learning opportunities (through a Professional Development Award). The structures created are discussed below under the general heading of "Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability", but it should be noted that this term reflects the development and dissemination of three distinct qualifications, namely:

- Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability Intermediate 1;

- Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability Intermediate 2;

- Professional Development Award in Enterprise and Employability (HN Level).

SQA has successfully worked with partners to complete the development of exemplars for new units under the continuing development of the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability. The three exemplars relate across the full range of the different qualification levels developed under the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability template (Intermediate 1; Intermediate 2; and Professional Development Award).

A further six exemplars, based around e-learning approaches (reflecting problems of geographical remoteness encountered by many learners) had been commissioned

by SQA at the time of writing. SQA has also worked with UHI Millennium Institute to examine data on online assessment issues – further consultation with managers at SQA is on-going. The development of web-based materials on the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability and related qualification frameworks has been completed and is available at www.sqa.ac.uk/spa - a link to this site has been established on the Careers Scotland website. An e-mail link has provided feedback on the website and the Award, which SQA reports as "all positive", with a number of detailed queries for further information received.

A number of general awareness raising activities and materials have been developed. SQA has partnered with Young Enterprise Scotland to produce interactive CD ROM materials based around the Intermediate 1 version of the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability, targeted at young people who have struggled to engage with formal learning. Young Enterprise Scotland and the SQA are discussing rolling out Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability and linked materials in other learning contexts in order to target hard to reach learners effectively. Dissemination leaflets and posters have been developed and distributed to key stakeholders and learning providers. The SQA team have also disseminated information to learning providers through a targeted event drawing together schools and FE providers interested in deploying the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise. The team also fed into the Careers Scotland "Talent and Diversity Workshop" event in March 2005, providing information on the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability framework and module descriptors to attendees.

Finally, one member of the SQA team travelled to Norway in September 2005 to attend the EU Conference on Developing Entrepreneurship in Young People – the event provided an opportunity to engage in fact finding activities, share good practice and discuss policies and products, with SQA disseminating information about Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability and its development through the SWELL project. Administrative problems and (in one case) small audience numbers for a proposed rural dissemination event have meant that not all proposed Action 3 activities have been completed by SQA. However, the core activities for Action 3 appear to have been progressed and delivered effectively.

<u>UHI Millennium Institute (UHI)</u>

UHI has engaged in a wide range of SWELL Action 3 activities, including:

- the development and delivery of practitioner workshop events in major UHI colleges;

- Learning Centre website development and maintenance, the development of online promotional materials and the development and delivery of regular e-bulletins to Learning Centre workers and others;

- the development and dissemination of a Learning Centre Newsletter;

- the development and dissemination of a Learning Centre Guide;

- dissemination activities linked to case study research on remote Learning Centres;

- the development and dissemination of promotional materials linked to a BA programme in Tourism;

- awareness raising activities, including targeted open days and school visits;

- additional support for SME and business engagement activities.

Much of UHI's Action 3 work has focused on supporting the work of Learning Centres in remote areas and further promoting the services developed during Action 2 of the SWELL project. Practitioner workshop events at Lochaber and Argyll Colleges (each drawing 15-20 participants) reviewed progress under UHI's SWELL supported activities, and provided opportunities to discuss challenges and share good practice. The events helped Learning Centre workers to place their activities during Action 2 in context and facilitated the development of ideas for Action 3.

Given the remoteness of many Highlands learning facilities, ICT has been crucial to the delivery of Action 3 activities by UHI. UHI's Learning Centres Unit has developed and maintained web-based information on Learning Centre programmes, examples of good practice, and training for staff at www.uhi.ac.uk/learningcentres The website has been designed to provide an accessible, 'one stop' virtual home for those interested in Learning Centre development. A regular Learning Centre e-Bulletin has been developed and is disseminated approximately every six weeks to more than 100 Learning Centres, other partners, key stakeholders and learners. The development of the e-Bulletin reflects an acknowledgement of the need to deploy ICT in order to deliver information to Learning Centres in the remote areas covered by

UHI. UHI staff have consulted and, as a result, developed an HTML based dissemination tool that emphasises accessibility and ease of use.

An interview conducted by the evaluation research team with a UHI staff member (based at Lochaber College, Fort William) involved in the development and distribution of the Learning Centre e-Bulletin confirmed the value of these activities. The interviewee reported strong positive feedback from Learning Centre workers, who valued the "accessible, 'newsy' approach and content" of the bulletin. The bulletin has encouraged Learning Centre workers to contribute their own ideas on good practice, while communicating information on learning tools and strategies, government policy, UHI staff changes and roles, and potential funding sources. As the interviewee noted:

> *The e-Bulletin is an important outlet and information source for Learning Centres. It allows people to share best practice and discuss successes and sometimes other issues. It's about local knowledge and local engagement. The bulletin also goes to funders and other stakeholders – it lets people see what Learning Centres are about and what they are doing.*

The interviewee noted that the regular contributions and feedback from Learning Centre workers and learners suggested that local learning communities found the service to be of value, and that a sense of "local ownership" was apparent. In order to compliment these regular communications, a one-off hard-copy Newsletter, with substantial content on Learning Centre services, was sent to every home in the UHI area. The Newsletter was designed to raise awareness of Learning Centre locations and provision, with several versions tailored to local circumstances in different Highlands areas. A more-detailed, 30-page Learning Centre Guide has also been developed, published and disseminated.

Additional activities have seen UHI and Learning Centre staff focus on disseminating lessons from Action 2 research on the take-up of Learning Centre services, the development of online and hard copy materials promoting qualifications available through Learning Centres and a range of community engagement and awareness raising activities. The latter activities have ranged from tailored presentations at Learning Centre, FE and school open days, school visits and specific awareness raising sessions at sporting events. Given the often informal nature of these

presentations – with Learning Centre workers 'slotted in' to other organisations' events – formal evaluation has proved difficult. However, UHI reports generally positive feedback from audiences at these events. Perhaps more importantly, SWELL Action 3 has continued to provide opportunities for capacity building and networking for staff in remote rural Learning Centres. As an interviewee at UHI noted, given the vulnerability of service infrastructures in these areas, the opportunities afforded by SWELL to share information and practice and develop targeted information on learning opportunities, has been "invaluable, really important".

STUC: One Workplace Equal Rights

The Scottish Trades Union Congress's (STUC) Action 3 activities have focused on presentations on the findings of Action 2 research and training activities, and the dissemination of key messages (in person and through written reports) to trade unionists, researchers, employers and policy makers. Activities have included:

- short presentations to employer forum seminars and ELREC Careers Seminar;
- communication of findings at the STUC Congress;
- engagement with rural SMEs through the Highland and Islands Equality Forum;
- dissemination of findings and learning materials through seminar and forum presentations;
- the publication and dissemination of research findings and campaign materials;
- the maintenance of a targeted One Workplace Equal Rights website.

The STUC team reported successfully carrying out dissemination presentations to four sector employer forums across Scotland. The presentations, facilitated through partnership working with Scottish Enterprise Equality Champions, provided an opportunity for the STUC team to highlight lessons for employers and trade unions from the One Workplace Equal Rights initiative. A further presentation, targeted at rural SMEs (delivered through the Highland and Islands Equality Forum) has been developed and will be delivered in November 2005.

STUC staff involved in One Workplace Equal Rights have undertaken a number of dissemination activities aimed at trade unionists – a stand display and presentation event at the STUC's Annual Congress communicated key messages from the research and learning activities undertaken through SWELL supported activities. A motion supporting the campaign and its outputs was passed by the STUC Congress.

Attempts to disseminate research findings and learning materials through seminar and forum presentations to other groups have met with mixed success. An attempt to engage voluntary sector organisations through an SCVO supported event met with administrative problems, although a future event is being planned. However, STUC team members were able to engage with voluntary sector workers assisting BME groups through a presentation and discussion event hosted by the Edinburgh and Lothian Race Equality Council. A presentation of mapping research findings at Napier University, with both the research team and STUC staff in attendance, resulted in debate and positive feedback from an audience of researchers and equal opportunities specialists.

The results of a mapping study commissioned by the STUC team on "Scottish trade unions' approaches to equalities" has been published and distributed in hard copy format, and is available online at the STUC's One Workplace website.[2] The same website hosts downloadable versions of campaign posters and leaflets developed to raise awareness of One Workplace Equal Rights. The launch of a second phase of action research has been delayed, but will take place late in 2005. Finally, the STUC reports that the One Workplace Equal Rights website at www.oneworkplace.org.uk averages more than 1000 hits per month. The website provides access to campaign materials, publications, links to key organisations and information about the One Workplace initiative.

It should also be noted that the STUC's core Action 2 activities – focusing on delivering "Bargaining for Equality" training for trade unionists – represented an important forum for the dissemination of key messages to this audience. As reported elsewhere, feedback from trade unionists attending this event was very positive, with benefits ranging from increased practical knowledge to greater self-awareness and self-confidence. The below comments, taken from survey work undertaken by the evaluation team, provide an insight into the benefits reported by participants.

As a 'taster' session on equalities, this course couldn't be improved.

I have more knowledge of the issues and feel I would be more confident of raising issues with my employer.

---

[2] www.oneworkplace.org.uk/oneworkplace/files/Mapping%20Report%20-%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf

The course has also helped me think about ways of supporting members. It has also made may sit down and think about and discuss these issues. It has forced me to confront issues within myself.

The STUC's Action 3 activities have effectively spread examples of good practice identified and developed through its SWELL supported work. Some final reporting and dissemination activities have been delayed due to administrative and logistic problems, but there has been considerable progress in communicating the key aims, benefits and findings of One Workplace Equal Rights to a diverse audience of employers, trade unionists and policy actors.

Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU)

SFEU's Action 3 activities have focused on the dissemination of materials developed as part of the Unit's SWELL supported "Equality, Diversity, Inclusion" initiative. Activities have particularly focused on the web-based dissemination of equalities materials, discussed in detail in the case study in Section 3 of this report. However, these activities have formed part of a broader programme for Action 3, including:

- extensive consultation on the development of equalities materials and their integration with the SFEFC/HMIe Quality Framework;
- the piloting and evaluation of prototype web-based materials on equalities issues in FE and HE (with evaluation responses gathered through a structured questionnaire following the pilot website's launch);
- the development and dissemination of equalities awareness raising literature and posters;
- the above-mentioned website development, and its formal launch through an event gathering equalities officers, staff and managers from a range of FE and HE related institutions.

The target audience for SFEU's work has been FE (and other lifelong learning) institutions and professionals, policy actors and students. The aim of the Action 3 activities was to continue to disseminate information and raise awareness on equalities issues throughout the FE sector, and to build on progress on mainstreaming these issues already achieved through the linking of content and information developed during SWELL Action 2 with the SFEFC/HMIe Quality Framework. Web-based materials disseminated through a tailored website at www.sfeu.ac.uk/edi.asp were launched at a highly successful event drawing equality

and inclusion specialists, learning professionals and quality managers from across Scotland. The event offered opportunities for attendees to use and feedback on the website.

Informal feedback and formal evaluation (see Section 3, below) suggest that the web-based materials in particular have provided a useful resource for FE professionals. An interviewee at SFEU noted that, of the activities' 'sub-audiences', students were less inclined to engage with the information and offer feedback. It was suggested that the targeting of additional materials at students may provide a focus for future activities following the completion of the SWELL project.

Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire (SEL)

SEL's Action 3 activities have focused on the adaptation of existing resources in order to improve the accessibility of skills development provision, including:

- the repurposing of "creativity" learning content (originally developed for young people) to address the needs of a wider potential client group;
- the adaptation of these materials so that they are accessible through, and fit with, the LDS Skillnet tool.

The target audience for SEL's work has been FE (and other lifelong learning) institutions and employers, as well as potential learners seeking to engage in goal setting and personal development linked to individual creativity. The aim of the Action 3 activities was to repurpose existing training needs analysis tools (originally designed to assist young people) to address the needs of a more general learner client group – adults with an interest in developing their creativity in a range of occupational contexts. The tools adapted through Action 3 will assist learners with goal setting, and enable them to consider different approaches to learning. With the successful completion of these activities by SEL staff, SWELL Action 3 enabled the organisation to widen the audience for these learning tools. Following further consultation with SQA (facilitated by both organisations' membership of the SWELL DP) SEL now hopes to build on its Action 3 activities by working towards the development of a SQA-validated SVQ, based on the themes developed through the repurposing of "creativity" learning content.

Additional development work saw the further adaptation of these materials so that they are accessible through, and compatible with, the LDS Skillnet tool. These

activities were successfully completed, so that the learning content discussed above is now "hostable" within Skillnet. Following extensive development and testing, the Skillnet "creativity" content developed through SWELL Action 3 was successfully launched by SEL in November 2005. Information about SEL's work in this area has been disseminated through its website.[3] A SEL interviewee noted the value of these Action 3 activities – "really successful, probably the best thing to have come out of SWELL for us" – and that the partnerships strengthened, especially during Action 3 will facilitate the development of future learning provision. Importantly, SEL's Action 3 activities have effectively facilitated the mainstreaming of creativity learning provision, through its adaptation for new audiences, and its inclusion within the Skillnet tool.

Theatre Workshop Edinburgh (TWE)

TWE's activities under Action 3 of SWELL have focused on the dissemination and publicising of information about community theatre productions developed through SWELL (and particularly 2004's production "Threepenny Opera" and 2005's "Black Sun Over Genoa").

Dissemination activities in the run up to and following the 2005 performance of "Black Sun Over Genoa" (which was performed by SWELL beneficiaries and other non-professional artists during six events in Glasgow and Edinburgh) focused on raising awareness of the production and the work of TWE (and SWELL). A co-ordinated marketing and awareness raising campaign carried out by TWE resulted in extensive coverage in the local, national and international press and TV and radio publicity. These awareness raising activities, combined with the development and deployment of an extensive poster and leaflet campaign (also carried out by TWE), negated the need for advertising of the production and resulted in high audience numbers (approximately 500 per performance) at events staged in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Following networking meetings with MSPs, two elected representatives agreed to distribute leaflets explaining about the production and its aims through their contacts lists, and posters, leaflets and other materials were displayed within the Scottish Parliament. A parliamentary motion acknowledging the value of TWE's work and the production was passed, gaining the support of 12 Members of the Scottish Parliament.

---

[3] http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/sedotcom_home/stp/extra-support/skillsandinclusion/lanarkshire-learning.htm

The "Black Sun Over Genoa" project in itself provided a powerful tool to disseminate information about issues related to the G8 summit, while engaging learners and so highlighting the value of community theatre as a means of impacting on a wide range of stakeholders. Evaluation surveys developed by TWE following consultation with the SWELL evaluation team at Napier University produced very positive feedback. Of the 49 SWELL beneficiaries participating in the learning sessions and performance, all respondents suggested that they had learned more about the issues around the G8 as a result of their participation. The tailored, learner-centred approach adopted by TWE facilitated this process of engagement and information dissemination. As one participant noted:

The open welcome that all participants receive is what I have been looking for, for some time. The individual, personal approach was the best I have received at a workshop and made me feel included and welcome during the production.

A 40-minute documentary highlighting the "Black Sun Over Genoa" production (a piece of community theatre developed with SWELL support in response to issues arising from the G8 Summit), along with other G8 related activities undertaken by community organisations, is under development and will be disseminated through a DVD and on-line during late 2005. A planned full-length DVD of the production ran into logistical problems relating to filming in theatres, but TWE hopes that the documentary that is being developed will reach a wide audience in the community theatre and education sectors across the EU.

Finally, the response from audiences at the production (observed by members of the evaluation team) was extremely positive, and it is hoped that audience members were therefore impressed by the production and the community theatre model it reflects. TWE's activities under Action 3 have sought to add to the capacity building work facilitated by SWELL. Action 3 activities have seen TWE disseminate information about the scope and impact of its work with SWELL, in turn helping the organisation to consider the potential focus for future community learning activities. TWE therefore appears to have successfully engaged in a national-level programme of dissemination activities, informing a range of audiences of the benefits of their SWELL supported activities.

2.2 Benefits of Action 3 activities and barriers to progress

For LDS, the development of Action 3 activities was smooth, due to effective partnership working within the Learning Centre network and support services. Only a delay in accessing an appropriate "Networking for Success" event prevented funds being drawn down for this event from SWELL (although SWELL's role in supporting LDS activities was still prominently highlighted during this event). Some other partners experienced some practical difficulties in delivering all planned Action 3 activities. Low audience numbers prevented planned dissemination activities in rural areas for both SQA and STUC. TWE's planned DVD production has been delayed due to logistical problems outwith the organisation's control, but a product will be widely disseminated (including online) in due course. In general, these problems were minor, and some partners appear to have taken effective action to balance their impact by developing activity in other areas.

For LDS and some other partners, Action 3 activities were about "getting information out" about previous Action 2 successes. But for other partners – with SFEU providing a clear example here – Action 3 activities were absolutely core to the SWELL project. The SFEU interviewee noted the crucial importance of the web-based resources developed and disseminated under Action 3, and the value of presentations and information materials (facilitated by SWELL) that allowed SFEU to raise awareness of its work in this area. Similarly, reaching a range of audiences through community theatre performances (and through extensively disseminating the aims and value of this work through the media) has been central to the Action 3 activities of TWE. SEL's Action 3 work has seen the effective adaptation of existing learning resources to increase accessibility and target wider audiences.

Dissemination events tailored to the interests of specific employer groups also provided the STUC with the opportunity to engage with a range of organisations and discuss the needs of trade unionists and employers in relation to equal opportunities information and training – feedback that has helped the STUC to plan future equalities work.

As noted above, QMUC's problems in fully resourcing the development and delivery of some written dissemination materials should be balanced against the expansive

programme of community engagement, practice sharing and international partnership building achieved by the team. For QMUC, SWELL has provided an important opportunity to make new links and develop large-scale practice and information-sharing events, which have in turn produced opportunities to develop new projects and access alternative funding sources.

Other partners have focused much of their Action 3 work on building networks and markets for products developed under SWELL Action 2, and SQA's work with Careers Scotland, Young Enterprise Scotland and individual institutions is impressive here. Similarly, the STUC has been able to link with the UK TUC to ensure that its One Workplace learning materials are disseminated to a larger UK-wide audience of trade unionists. Finally, for UHI, which appears to have encountered few problems in delivering an extensive programme of Action 3 activities, this phase of SWELL shared continuity with previous SWELL supported activities – focusing on capacity building and the strengthening of networks of information, expertise and mutual support among remote rural Learning Centres.

2.3 Fit with SWELL strategic objectives

Interviews with SWELL partners suggested that Action 3 activities on the ground generally supported and fitted with the project's strategic objectives.

Encouraging demand for lifelong learning though SWELL models
LDS's direct dissemination of the potential benefits of the use of the modified Skillnet tool will, it is hoped, encourage the roll out of personal development activities for staff across a range of Learning Centres. Targeted media, such as LDS's specialist "lds4partners" website at www.lds4partners.com will continue to promote the tools developed under SWELL as a means of considering lifelong learning issues for Learning Centre professionals, and LDS will continue to work in partnership with NHS Scotland, seeking to roll out the provision to NHS Learning Centres. Working in partnership with LDS, SEL has ensured that creativity learning and goal setting content adapted with SWELL support is accessible through the Skillnet, ensuring the wider dissemination of these materials through Learning Centres.

SQA's work on the Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise will clearly add to the lifelong learning infrastructure and services available to learners, by disseminating

and rolling out the Progression Award developed under Action 2 as a resource in schools and FE institutions. The Award has been seen by bodies such as Careers Scotland Young Enterprise Scotland as filling a gap by linking employability and enterprise learning, accessible to a range of learner groups. QMUC has also used a range of events supported by SWELL Action 3 to highlight the value of community arts work undertaken throughout the life of SWELL, sharing this practice with community learning providers and arts practitioners. In the same field, the extensive awareness raising activities undertaken by TWE have contributed to the dissemination of information about the benefits associated with its community theatre learning activities. Finally, the STUC has used Action 3 to disseminate information about equalities issues faced by trade unions, and raise awareness of learning opportunities developed under One Workplace Equal Rights – given moves to mainstream this learning provision within UK TUC education programmes, these activities may result in encouraging on-going demand for and take up of the STUC's SWELL supported services.

Building learning infrastructures and establishing communities of practice

A number of Action 3 activities have informed the continuing development of lifelong learning infrastructures, while in some cases (notably the work of UHI and QMUC) developing networks of support and shared expertise at the regional or transnational level has reflected attempts to establish strong communities of practice in learning. SFEU's work has contributed in a different way to learning infrastructures, by providing a coherent framework of information and advice on equalities that will continue to inform the actions (through the SFEFC/HMIe Quality Framework) of FE institutions across Scotland. As noted above, SQA's work will also directly strengthen learning infrastructures by delivering a product that "fills a gap" in existing employability and enterprise learning. Similarly, SEL's adaptation and development of creativity content materials addresses a gap in existing provision. The development of new equal opportunities learning materials by the STUC has added to trade union education provision, and elements of the One Workplace Equal Rights learning programme are to be taken up be the UK TUC.

For LDS, the still relatively limited roll out of activities developed under SWELL has restricted efforts to contribute to the development of communities of practice. However, LDS is committed to ensuring that the outcomes of SWELL supported activities continue to contribute to the development of an infrastructure allowing

Learning Centre workers to identify skills gaps and learning opportunities. Building on partnerships with UHI Millennium Institute and NHS Scotland, LDS will continue to seek the further roll out of modified competency framework materials as a part of the infrastructure of personal development tools for Learning Centre workers in a range of contexts.

Developing communities of practice has been central to QMUC's work – sharing good practice and building active partnerships with international partners has provided a key theme for activities. QMUC's activities have also facilitated practice and knowledge sharing between community education professionals and arts practitioners and artists in Scotland. During evaluation interviews, members of the QMUC team expressed some disappointment that they had not been able to facilitate more *local* community level capacity building work, and suggested that this might provide a stronger focus for future projects.

Engaging with a range of partner agencies to develop shared knowledge and communities of practice was also a priority for other SWELL partners, such as SQA (which has worked closely with Careers Scotland, Young Enterprise Scotland and education providers in the secondary, FE and HE sectors). However, it is perhaps UHI that provides the clearest example of SWELL's value in facilitating the development of communities of practice – throughout Actions 2 and 3, SWELL support has enabled UHI to provide opportunities for Learning Centre staff to develop their own skills and networks, and to share good practice and information on markets and services.

Mainstreaming services and influencing mainstream policy
Mainstreaming has been a key priority for SWELL partners. Perhaps the clearest and strongest example is provided by SFEU's work through its "Equality, Diversity, Inclusion" initiative. The linking of equalities information and advice to the SFEFC/HMIe Quality Framework will ensure that this information (and the EDI website as a dissemination tool) will be used as a standard tool for equal opportunities and inclusion specialists, and academic staff in the FE community.

As noted above, competency framework materials developed under SWELL by LDS will be retained as a standard service for Learning Centre professionals – LDS continues to work to maximise the roll out of this provision, following from successful

partnership working with UHI Millennium Institute. Similarly, the SQA's Scottish Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability will exist independently of SWELL, and it is hoped that the Award will be adopted by a range of learning providers as part of their core provision. The STUC's One Workplace Equal Rights learning provision will be retained by the organisation as a core element of their education services to trade union – perhaps even more importantly, elements of the equal opportunities training developed under One Workplace are to be mainstreamed within the UK TUC's trade union education programme. SEL's adapted creativity and goal-setting model will also continue to be accessible through Skillnet, while SEL is considering how best to take forward plans for the validation of a formal qualification.

QMUC has sought to feed into mainstream education policy through engaging with Communities Scotland and – at the local level – community education providers and professionals. The same SWELL partner has noted the extent to which the networks of professional expertise, information sharing and support developed through SWELL activities will outlive the project and continue to inform and facilitate QMUC's work. However, there was an acknowledgement of the need to locate new sources of funding – support from SWELL has enabled QMUC to "reach out to a wider, more diverse" group of learners, and efforts are ongoing to ensure that this broad and inclusive approach can be built upon (with ILA funding being targeted as a potential long-term source of support).

TWE has also successfully undertaken activities aimed at informing and influencing policy, and in particular raising awareness of the range of positive impacts associated with community theatre-based learning. Effective networking with Members of the Scottish Parliament has raised the profile of TWE's activities in this area. In more general terms, SWELL support has enabled TWE's to expand the scope and reach of its community learning activities, and the additional capacity and knowledge that this has produced within the organisation will continue to inform future community learning projects.

Finally, some activities developed by UHI under SWELL will only continue if new funding sources are located – but much of the SWELL supported awareness raising work, which has contributed to efforts to improve the sustainability of Learning Centres, will remain of value. The opportunities to network with other Learning

Centres, and (crucially) employers, provided by SWELL may also continue to deliver benefits long after the end of the project.

2.4 Partnership working

Maximising partnership working and providing partners with opportunities to develop broader links with each other, other EQUAL DPs and international partners were important priorities for Action 3 of the SWELL project.

While throughout the life of the project transnational partnership working has been limited (leading some partner interviewees to characterise this as a "missed opportunity"), there remain some innovative examples of joint working in Scotland and beyond. For LDS, the clearest opportunities for partnership working were within SWELL itself, with successful collaborations with SE Lanarkshire and UHI Millennium Institute cited. Building partnerships with Learning Centres with an interest in engaging with the competency framework materials developed under SWELL has been an important focus of LDS's Action 3 work. Similarly, QMUC and TWE have developed a strong network of communication and practice sharing which, although not formalised, informs the work of both partners. QMUC and STUC are also currently working together to identify areas of future co-operation. The clear overlap between the activities of SFEU and STUC has also resulted in a consistent process of information sharing, and a number of joint presentations highlighted key messages from both partners' SWELL supported activities. However, other partners were frustrated that they had not been able to develop the time or resources to engage in more active partnership working within SWELL. SQA noted its emerging links with UHI and LDS, but suggested that the development of stronger joint working during the life of SWELL represented a "missed opportunity".

For some partners, SWELL had provided opportunities to link with organisations involved in other DPs. STUC has effectively engaged with another Scottish DP under ESF EQUAL Theme B known as "EMPOWER", which seeks to promote economic opportunity for minority ethic groups. STUC staff used their SWELL supported One Workplace initiative's recognition at a best practice award ceremony hosted by EMPOWER as an opportunity to build networks with equalities specialists involved in that DP and others. STUC continues to disseminate information about its SWELL supported equalities work to these bodies, and an STUC interviewee noted the

potential scope for future partnership working on specific projects, based on contacts initiated through the SWELL project. STUC has also sought to compliment the work of the EQUAL Theme H "Close the Gap" project (in which UHI is also an active participant), which seeks to address gender pay gaps in the labour market. Informal links have highlighted shared themes and interests, and the STUC is committed to building stronger formal ties between the Close the Gap and One Workplace campaigns in future.

The SWELL Lead Partner at SFEU has effectively engaged with other DPs to share overall experiences and learning. In particular, strong links have been developed with "Partnership for Innovation and Enterprise" (PIE), the DP covering Theme C on "Entrepreneurship" within the ESF EQUAL programme. However, as noted above, delivery-level engagement across Partnerships was relatively limited for most SWELL partners. Partners suggested that resource constraints prevented more effort being made to build partnerships with a more diverse group of organisations.

Many partners highlighted their success in linking with other organisations outwith EQUAL DPs to develop and/or disseminate activities emerging from SWELL (with SQA's work with Young Enterprise Scotland, Careers Scotland and others a clear example here). STUC has effectively linked with a range of trade unions, to participate in research and learning, and with Scottish Enterprise and a range of employer groups during the dissemination phase. STUC's strong partnership working with the UK TUC will also result in the mainstreaming of learning materials developed under One Workplace Equal Rights/SWELL in UK-wide trade union learning services focusing on equal opportunities.

In terms of transnational partnership working, there were few opportunities in this area for some partners (with little involvement for LDS, SEL and TWE, for example). However, for QMUC, SWELL supported activities have provided a unique opportunity to build international partnerships of practice and co-operation. Beyond the networking and joint-working facilitated through the British Council supported international forum and the international practitioners' conference operated by QMUC in September 2005, SWELL has been directly responsible for networking opportunities that have led to the on-going development of a joint project with six Balkan states. The long-term programme will seek EU funding to address the weakness of arts education in Balkan states – QMUC is leading the development of

plans for arts education and research centres in six cities, and is discussing the development of postgraduate provision. In all cases there will be an attempt to link community arts activities with capacity building and inter-community reconciliation.

It should also be noted that, while in some cases Action 3 partners were on the margins of SWELL transnational activity, the project in itself (with the Lead Partner playing a key role) was extremely active in the X-Train EQUAL transnational partnership. Although not falling under Action 3 of the project, it is worth noting that during earlier phases of EQUAL, SWELL played a central role in the development of the X-Train partnership and in facilitating the dissemination of learning and information between transnational partners.

A telephone interview conducted by the research team with a representative of SWELL's Swedish X-Train partner (Mr Robert Ring, County Council of Ostergotland and 'Diversity Faces' DP) highlighted the value of these activities and also the challenges around transnational working. For this partner, X-Train eventually provided benefits in terms of sharing good practice and learning about the development of common approaches. There were initial problems in defining ideas and objectives that would provide common themes for action among five diverse partners and countries. However, with SWELL playing an important role in both partnership building and the development of a common agenda, Diversity Faces views X-Train as having been successful providing opportunities to share experiences and develop common products. It was noted that SWELL's experience in partnership working had been important in facilitating progress in this area.

For us, our work in X-Train is one of the best successes of the whole DP. SWELL were important – they had the language, the expertise, the experience to help develop the partnership. We would not have had the success that we did without SWELL.

The benefits of X-Train in building partnerships and networking were viewed as absolutely crucial by Diversity Faces, and it was noted that two additional projects (under EQUAL and Article 6) have been developed following from the networks built through X-Train. Diversity Faces partners also found considerable value in sharing information with SWELL partners, and particularly UHI staff. Our interviewee at UHI similarly noted that – at the practical and local level within Scotland – the Institute has

benefited from the development of strong partnership relations with Swedish Learning Centres (a process facilitated through X-Train and the Diversity Faces DP). Exchange visits provided the opportunity for Learning Centre staff to share practice and discuss service delivery in remote rural contexts. As noted in previous reports, the SWELL Lead Partner at SFEU and other partners would have valued the opportunity to develop more of such practical, joint-working activities. Our interviewee at Diversity Faces shared this view, suggesting that an important lesson for future projects relates to the need to establish firm common practices and procedures for joint-working as early as possible.

Similar themes emerged from a telephone interview conducted by the research team with a representative of SWELL's Dutch X-Train partner (Mr Wim Schuiten, TNA and 'Operatie Pelios' DP). For TNA/Operatie Pelios, EQUAL funding provided the opportunity to develop innovative local training interventions (mainly targeting disabled people), and to engage a range of enterprises and training providers in this work. There were also considerable benefits in working with X-Train partners, with SWELL and Diversity Faces singled out.

We have had good co-operation with our Scottish and Swedish partners. With SWELL in Scotland we have had useful exchanges on the use of e-learning for people with disabilities. We have maintained these contacts. X-Train has also allowed us to explore new projects with international partners.

TNA, like Diversity Faces, noted the rapidity with which the co-ordination of joint goals between partners had been established. It was suggested that a longer lead-in time and/or more resources deployed at the outset to allow partners (to understand each others "goals, aims, methods, organisation") would have been helpful. Although useful joint methodologies eventually emerged (with SWELL and TNA both playing important roles in this process) it was felt that the need for the "early identification of overlaps" was an important lesson for future partnerships. It was also suggested that partnerships with a similar balance of resources between all partners were likely to be most effective. However, for TNA, the DP's involvement with X-Train and SWELL had been positive. As was the case for other partners, the opportunity to network and develop relationships with SWELL, Diversity Faces and other national and international stakeholders (in the latter case through events such as EU Employment

Week in Brussels) was as valuable as the practical learning emerging from the project. TNA expects to build upon these relationship through future joint-working.

Transnational partnership working has not been a key element of Action 3 activity for all SWELL partners. However, earlier in the life of the SWELL Project, the X-Train experience was valuable in building networks and facilitating future partnerships. There have been some practical benefits for individual SWELL partners – most notably UHI – and for partner organisations in other states. Maximising the practical benefits of partnership working has been a priority for SWELL, and lessons from the X-Train experience will inform future approaches by SFEU and partners in this area.

2.5 Administration of the SWELL project under Action 3

All partners involved in Action 3 of SWELL thought that this element of the project had been effectively led and administered by SFEU. One partner noted that the lead partner team's experience in leading Action 2 had to an increasingly "effective and responsive way of dealing with problems as they arise". A minority of partners noted some disruption to administrative procedures due to staff changes at SFEU, but none thought that this had seriously adversely affected the running of the project.

A number of partners noted that, given the well-established practices and procedures developed by SFEU as lead partner earlier in the project, intensive administrative support was no longer required during Action 3. However, one partner called for increased administrative support during the life of the project, noting that smaller organisations could find the administrative burden associated with projects like SWELL problematic. As this partner noted:

SFEU have been very supportive, but we would have been grateful for even more support. They have a lot of experience and expertise in running these projects, which we do not. We would have benefited from a bit more coaching.

Other partners again noted the relatively heavy administrative burden associated with SWELL participation. While it was accepted that administration of this kind was an element of EU funding programme, it was suggested that forms and IT systems used to collect data could be streamlined and made easier to use.

A number of partners commended the SWELL lead partner's role in the development of Action 3 activities, with one partner citing the "creative" and "sensible" ideas brought forward by SWELL staff. The lead partner team were described as accessible and supportive during the Action 3 development process, and generally efficient in the delivery of financial and administrative support during Action 3. For one partner: "as a lead partner, they (SFEU) were very accessible. Any problems with forms or the financial element, and you could just lift the phone and get an answer quickly".

All partners believed that they had had adequate opportunity to discuss any problems with the SWELL lead partner. As was found during Action 2, some partners would have valued further opportunities to meet with SWELL partners to discuss the content of activities and share learning and experience. However, the same partners acknowledged that limited time and resources meant that there were practical barriers to more information sharing and networking in person. One partner again noted the need for "more positive feedback on the content of what we were actually doing", but others were satisfied by the support offered by the SWELL lead partner.

In general terms, partners appear to be satisfied with the administration and leadership of the SWELL project. There are lessons to be taken forward from the Actions 2 and 3 evaluations, that may lead to future projects providing a more user-friendly system of reporting activity. There may also be benefits in planning information sharing and partnership building activities early, and building these into the core activities of any future partnership. The SWELL Lead Partner was responsive to calls for the streamlining of communications procedures and improvements to partnership meeting during the life of the SWELL partnership, and it is clear that these changes will inform the development of future projects.

3. CASE STUDY: SFEU AND 'EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION'

3.1 "Equality, Diversity, Inclusion" Activities

The SFEU's "Equality, Diversity, Inclusion" (EDI) activities aimed to promote awareness of equalities issues and inform policy and practice on equal opportunities in the FE sector. As noted above, activities included:

- extensive consultation on the development of equalities materials and their integration with the SFEFC/HMIe Quality Framework;

- the piloting and evaluation of prototype web-based materials on equalities issues;

- the development and dissemination of equalities awareness raising literature and posters;

- the development of a comprehensive EDI website targeting the FE sector and disseminating information developed during Action 2 and 3 activities, and the website's formal launch through an event gathering equalities officers, staff and managers from a range of FE and HE related institutions.

The evaluation team assessed the impact of the SFEU EDI initiative through an in-depth interview with the activity co-ordinator at SWELL, a review of published and web-based materials produced by SFEU as part of EDI, and a specially designed, on-line evaluation survey targeted at users of the EDI website (approached using a contact list provided by SFEU). It is this latter research exercise that forms the basis for the below analysis.

3.2 The EDI Website

The EDI website at www.sfeu.ac.uk/edi.asp offers a range of information and advice sections, including:

- Resources and Support pages presenting key sources of information and support gathered under headings that reflect the six areas of equal opportunities legislation: age; disability; race; religion and belief; sexual orientation; and gender;

- Legislation pages presenting detailed information on rights and responsibilities under the six areas of equal opportunities legislation: age; disability; race; religion and belief; sexual orientation; and gender;

- Guidance for Colleges on "Developing a Policy on Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation";

- Self evaluation pages enabling FE professionals to compare their practice and policies with guidance on equal opportunities under the SFEFC/HMIe Quality Framework;

- Additional features including a quiz on equalities issues, a glossary of terms, and instant e-mail access for comments on the website.
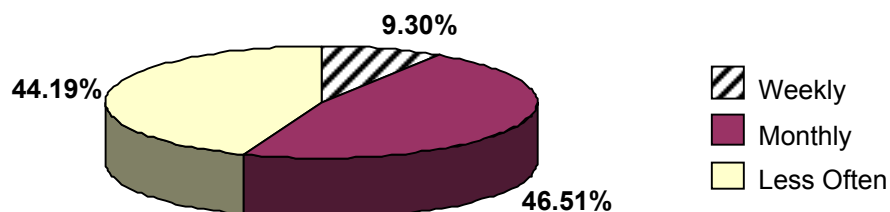
3.3 EDI Survey Results

A web-based survey was developed by the evaluation team, while an e-mailshot to registered website users directed potential respondents to the appropriate website. In total, 86 respondents answered some questions on the survey, while 34 completed the survey in full.

Respondents were first asked about the general presentation of the EDI website, with feedback generally positive – 95% of respondents thought that in general the web-based information was "presented in an accessible way". Asked to suggest general improvement, only six respondents (7%) suggested changes, with a number noting that "no improvement is required". All six of those suggesting changes suggested a larger font setting for the text, with one also commenting that the site could be more prominently presented on the SFEU's main pages.

The majority of respondents used the website at least fairly regularly, with 56% visiting it on a weekly or monthly basis (see Figure 1 below). For many users, the website was primarily an information source rather than an outlet by which to share their own views and practice. No respondents answering questions on communications with the EDI website (n=40) recalled e-mailing information about their own policy, or to contribute examples of good practice. There may therefore be scope to further develop the website as an interactive resource.

However, 12% (n=41) have used the e-mail link on the website to offer comments, while 19% (n=42) contacted the EDI team to ask for further information. *Crucially, 69% (n=42) said that the information on the EDI website had helped to inform and develop policy and practice within their own organisations.*

Figure 1 How regularly do you visit the EDI website?

When asked about how the EDI website had informed policy and practice, respondents suggested a number of impacts, from enabling staff to consider the best approach to implementing DDA regulations, to informing more generic forms of equalities training for staff. For many respondents the website was a helpful resource in continuing work to mainstream equalities with all areas of FE policy and practice.

> *The guidance on bullying and harassment policies is useful, we will be using it in the development of our own policy. The discussion of the HMI framework from an equality and diversity perspective is helping us to ensure that these issues are 'mainstreamed' in our institution.*

A substantial minority of respondents also agreed that the materials presented on the EDI site had challenged their own attitudes and perceptions (see Table 1). Many of those who thought that the site's information had not resulted in a change in their own approach nonetheless noted that they valued the 'back up' received from the website for their own understanding of key equalities issues.

Table 1 How has the EDI website challenged your own thinking and actions?

	YES	NO
Has the information provided on the EDI website helped to change your own **thinking** on equality diversity or inclusion?	45%	55%
Has the information provided on the EDI website helped to change your own **actions** on equality diversity or inclusion?	49%	51%

Respondents valued information presented through the EDI "Resources and Support", with 97% agreeing that these pages were 'generally' quite or very useful. As Table 2 shows, all the tailored sections on age, disability, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender were valued by the majority of respondents – with between 69% (age) and 92% (race) finding the information on specific issues very or quite useful. The least used section of Resources and Support section related to age equality issues (which 17% of respondents had not used), while all respondents had visited the section on race issues.
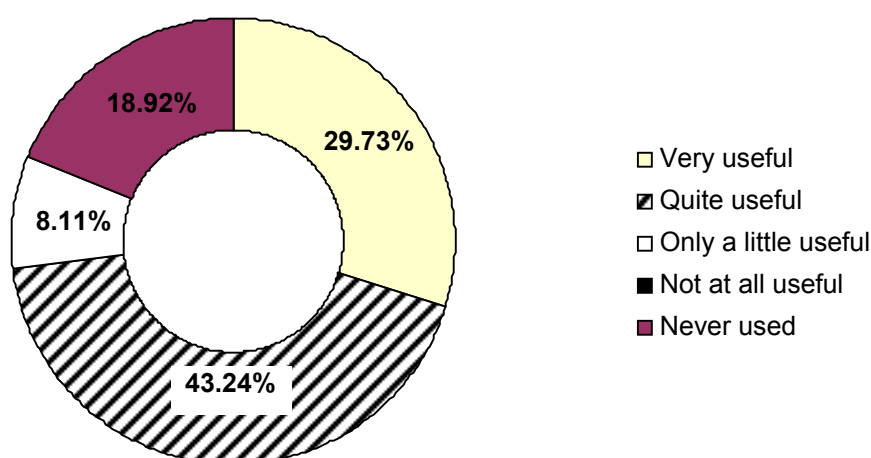
Table 2 How useful did you find the EDI Resources and Support webpages...

	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	Never used
...in general	57%	41%	3%	-	-
...on age	19%	50%	14%	-	17%
...on disability	50%	36%	8%	-	6%
...on race	61%	31%	8%	-	-
...on religion and belief	35%	46%	11%	-	8%
...on sexual orientation	31%	47%	8%	-	14%
...on gender	29%	51%	6%	-	14%

Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Similarly, respondents valued the links in the same section of the website to detailed guidance on developing responses to harassment and bullying. While 19% of respondents had not specifically referred to these pages, 73% had visited the pages and found the content to be useful (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 How useful did you find the guidance for colleges on Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation?

Employment Research Institute, Napier University: SWELL Action 3 Evaluation

There were a number suggestions from respondents on how to improve the content of the Resources and Support pages, generally relating to:

- the need for "links to other domains of practice beyond education";
- "contacts/links to specific people in other Colleges who have similar remits and responsibilities for policy implementation";
- "more on data monitoring and evaluation materials";
- "more practical examples of good practice".

However, a number of respondents also specifically mentioned how comprehensive and complete the content of these pages was. There was also a broadly positive response to the information on specific elements of legislation provided by the EDI website. Tailored sections on legislation on age, disability, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender have been designed to provide learning professionals with up-to-date information on current and forthcoming legal requirements. While these webpages were generally less well used, the feedback was again positive with regards to content – 86% of users thought that these pages were generally very or quite useful. Again, the race section was considered most useful – commended as very or quite useful by over 90% of respondents.

Table 3 How useful did you find the EDI website Legislation pages...

	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	Never used
...in general	46%	40%	6%	-	9%
...on age	29%	49%	6%	-	17
...on disability	35%	47%	6%	-	12%
...on race	40%	51%	3%	-	6%
...on religion and belief	42%	36%	8%	-	14%
...on sexual orientation	31%	43%	9%	-	17%
...on gender	34%	40%	9%	-	17%

Few respondents suggested any additions or changes to the legislation information provided by the EDI website. Indeed, it was acknowledged that, given the complexity of the subject area, these pages had succeeded in making information accessible:

Sometimes legislation can be complicated and confusing so there is little more than this that you can do to make this more accessible or understandable.

Where there were suggested improvements, respondents most often called for format changes to make these pages more easy to read.

I think these pages are useful. Perhaps the method of presentation could be varied as it is long, detailed information. How about using different headings or bullet points for the main points with a separate page to download if you want the fully detailed information?

As Table 4 shows, it seems that pages developed to provide opportunities for self-evaluation against the SFEFC/HMIe Quality Framework have been less frequently used. However, of those visiting these pages, a clear majority found them of value. Those commenting on these pages through the evaluation survey particularly noted that this section of the website was "comprehensive" and "informative".

Finally, the glossary of equalities terms was again popular with respondents, although more than one-fifth had not visited this part of the EDI website. An interactive quiz developed by the SFEU team to allow users to test their knowledge of general equalities issues was more regularly visited, and was considered quite or very useful by 74% of respondents (see Table 5).

Table 4 How useful did you find...

	Very	Quite	Only a little	Not at all	Never used
…pages on Area A: Curriculum resources, processes and outcomes?	34%	17%	11%	3%	34%
...pages on Area B: Leadership and Quality Management?	32%	24%	12%	3%	29%

Table 5 How useful did you find...

	Very	Quite	Only a little	Not at all	Never used
…the Glossary Pages on the EDI website?	29%	35%	15%	0%	21%
… the Quiz Pages on the EDI website?	32%	41%	12%	9%	6%

Users generally found these pages "informative and interactive". Suggestions on additions and changes to the glossary and quiz pages generally focused on the need to keep pages up-dated and current – there was some suggestion that some

historical references to unequal treatment made in the quiz could be replaced by more relevant modern examples. One user called for a general broadening of the subject matter covered in this section of the website.

There are no questions about religion or belief. More questions about stats as there are some shocking ones e.g. gender imbalance in school exclusions…

Despite a number of potentially useful suggestions for changes and additions, the EDI website appears to have been viewed as a highly useful resource by learning professionals and equalities specialists. General comments of the website were very positive, and pointed to its practical value in sharing good practice and providing a much-needed hub for information on equal opportunities. The views expressed below are fairly typical of users' perceptions of the EDI website.

This is a very valuable site that provides information and links to resources on all the key areas in this priority area in a straightforward and useful manner. It will be very important indeed to keep it up to date. It makes a valuable contribution to resources available; indeed it is unique in pulling key areas together.

It is a good, comprehensive first point of reference and hopefully will continue to be updated as required.

I generally think it is excellent and a much-needed resource for the FE sector. I think the focus on self-evaluation and actively using the information to change practices is the right one and very helpful.

As noted above, a major concern for users was that the EDI website should be up-dated and built upon. A key challenge for SFEU will be that resources are located so that the site can be maintained as a resource for the FE sector. An interview with the EDI co-ordinator at SFEU suggested that, given the in-house ICT expertise within the organisation, maintaining the website itself should be straightforward. Ensuring that there remains sufficient capacity within the organisation to keep the information on the site accurate and analysed in context will be vital in maintaining this important resource. SWELL support has so far played a key role in establishing the EDI website as a high quality resource for the FE sector.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND 'GOOD PRACTICE' LESSONS

4.1 Conclusions

SWELL partners have successfully completed a broad range of activities under Action 3 of the project. Partners, with the support of the Lead Partner team at SFEU, have developed dissemination and mainstreaming activities and resources that in many cases have made a substantial contribution to raising awareness of the SWELL project's benefits. A range of activities have been undertaken, including:

- hosting conferences and events (QMUC; UHI; SFEU; TWE);
- conference and workshop presentations (LDS; QMUC; SQA; STUC; SFEU; TWE);
- tailored, web-based information materials (LDS; SEL; STUC; SQA; STUC; SFEU);
- published reports (LDS; STUC; UHI; TWE);
- multi-media resources (QMUC; SEL; UHI; SQA; TWE);
- informal and formal networking activities (LDS; SEL; QMUC; UHI; SQA; STUC; SFEU; TWE).

The audiences for these different dissemination activities have varied considerably, but all SWELL partners appear to have developed a coherent vision of the groups that materials and communications should be targeted at. In some cases activities were focused mainly on informing and supporting the work of learning service deliverers (for example, UHI; LDS), or by adapting and further developing existing tools and approaches (SQA; SEL). Elsewhere, SWELL partners extended their dissemination activities to seek to inform the decision making of both practitioners and policy makers (QMUC; SFEU; TWE). The breadth of the project means that partners have also been able to present findings from SWELL that may inform the approaches to learning adopted by employers, trade unions and voluntary organisations (STUC; SFEU; UHI).

In a small number of cases, limits of time and resources restricted some activities, while in other examples there was an insufficient audience for planned events. Where SWELL partners were reliant on other organisations to provide access or facilities for dissemination activities there were some logistical problems. However, in-depth interviews with SWELL partners, combined with a review of dissemination

reports and materials, have highlighted the extent to which dissemination activities have been successfully completed.

The activities reported by partners fit well with the strategic objectives for this phase of the project, in terms of promoting SWELL supported learning models and strengthening service infrastructures. Initiatives such as those led by QMUC, UHI and STUC have also contributed to building communities of practice, by promoting and facilitating community engagement, assisting capacity building where learning infrastructures are fragile, or establishing new areas and networks of learning within existing organisations and partnerships.

Where possible, SWELL partners have sought to mainstream the benefits and products from their activities within existing structures and services. There remain some concerns about the lifespan of certain (undoubtedly valuable) activities once SWELL support has been withdrawn. However, in many cases (with the work of SFEU providing a clear example) the learning developed through SWELL has already been mainstreamed within national and/or local policy and practice.

SWELL partners have worked effectively with each other and other partners to develop and disseminate Action 3 activities. In some cases both transnational partnership working and practical links with other EQUAL DPs have been limited (although the SWELL Lead Partner has engaged with both of these groups effectively). Some organisations involved in SWELL continue to view partnership working within the project and with other (especially transnational) partners as something of a missed opportunity, and there may be lessons regarding the need to establish the potential focal points for *practical*, inter-agency co-operation early in EU projects. That said, there have been a number of examples of innovative partnership working within SWELL and with external actors.

Finally, it should be noted that SWELL partners considered the administration and leadership of the project to have been effective. While long-established concerns regarding the paperwork associated with the project were again raised, all partners were satisfied with both the project administration and (in many cases) the 'creative' role played by the Lead Partner in helping to consider and develop Action 3 activities.

4.2 Lessons for good practice

In terms of drawing lessons for good practice, a number of themes emerge from the preceding discussion. The most effective Action 3 activities have been based around a clear idea of a specific audience to be targeted, often following research and consultation exercises that have identified the needs of information users. In the best cases, these activities have added value by filling gaps in existing information, or by developing innovative solutions (often using ICT) that overcome problems of distance and accessibility, or gaps in content.

Indeed, in terms of dissemination tools, it is striking that many partners deployed considerable resources on website development or the use of e-resources. Evidence from SFEU and UHI in particular suggest that this has been an effective way of communicating key messages from SWELL and supporting the work of learning professionals (with important benefits in terms of building capacity and communities of practice). Effective Action 3 activities have also considered opportunities for mainstreaming at an early stage, and partners (such as SFEU) have engaged with the relevant bodies (HMIe, SFEFC and the Scottish Executive) to ensure that the tools and resources developed through SWELL gain the widest possible audience.

Despite some relatively minor problems preventing the execution of a number of activities, SWELL partners have generally reported substantial benefits linked to Action 3 of the project. There are some lessons to take forward to future activities, particularly in relation to early engagement with partners outwith the DP, but in general Action 3 activities have provided some important opportunities for partners to share good practice, build capacity and communities of practice, and disseminate information about benefits arising from SWELL supported models to learners, practitioners and other key stakeholders.