Social Equalities Monitoring in Glasgow's Community Learning

A Report for the Glasgow Community Learning Strategy Partnership

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Executive Summary

The aim of this project was to identify and assess baseline data on equal opportunities in community learning and development held by community learning providers in Glasgow. This research project was commissioned in Spring 2006 by Glasgow City Council on behalf of the Glasgow Community Learning Strategy Partnership (GCLSP). It was conducted by Ralf St.Clair and Louise Sheridan of the Centre for Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning at the University of Glasgow and Mary Sinclair of Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector. All opinions expressed in this document are those of the researchers and not of the commissioning agency. There were three stages in this research:

1. Survey of current mechanisms

The research team conducted a survey of current community learning provision within the boundaries of Glasgow City, including Community Learning and Development, Further Education colleges, and community & voluntary organisations in order to discover what methods are used to collect and monitor data on equal opportunities.

2. Analysis of data collection

Once the most common mechanisms were identified, and the strengths and gaps of each noted, the research team interviewed a small number of practitioners to record their impressions and experience with data collection.

3. Recommendations

Based on the two previous stages the research team produced a set of recommendations that it might be useful for the GCLSP to consider in its attempts to ensure equal opportunity in learning.

Findings

- Data collection varies by equalities dimension. Postcode is collected always or sometimes by 100% of survey respondents, whilst both sexual orientation and religion/belief are never collected by 92% of respondents. Disability, gender, age and race/ethnicity are always recorded by 60-80% of respondents.

- Data collection is strongly linked to the requirements of funding.

- Data is collected by a form filled out by learners or by staff interviewing a learner.

- Data is stored most often in paper files, though electronic formats are also popular.

- Use of the data varies between simply recording it and using it to shape future programming. It is reported to funders by 81% of respondents.

- Responding organisations are not strongly targeted in their provision—for example, about 50% never target by race/ethnicity, and only 8% always do.

- Eighty-nine per cent of respondents viewed learning as one of the most important, or the main, activity of the organisation.

Data collection is generally seen as important, though it is most strongly motivated by funders' requirements. If the pattern found in our research holds true, then collection of equalities data is not consistent. While this does not necessarily call organisations' commitment to equality into question, it does suggest that there is no systematic effort to measure and record progress in dealing with issues of under-representation.

There is some indication that relatively few equalities dimensions are being captured by these organisations, and often do not include all six of the dimensions the Scottish Executive considers central. In particular, belief and sexual orientation are commonly not addressed. This may be linked to the lack of anonymity in the information.

The information currently collected is only partially used in managing the organisations, and does not always appear to be a significant piece of management information. There is little evidence of a 'feedback loop' where the information collected is used strategically to improve programmes and increase diversity. This issue may well be related to the lack of definition about what a clear equalities 'outcome' would look like.

Recommendations

The best place to start in further developing equalities systems for community learning are to ensure that the current equalities dimensions are well recognised and that consistent, accessible data is collected. Some potential strategies to support this are:

- To develop a unified reporting system that will fulfil the needs of programmes to report to their funders as well as providing a central clearinghouse for equalities data

- To ensure that the means of collecting data are anonymous

- To ensure that data collection, storage and analysis does not place an unfair burden upon organisations, especially those with limited staff and resources

- To develop mechanisms for collecting data on 'invisible' equality dimensions

- To investigate technological solutions to these challenges, such as the idea of smartcards

- To develop ways for organisations to set appropriate, localised equalities targets

- To consider providing training on developing an equalities strategy for community and voluntary organisations across Glasgow

- To investigate models of programme management that ensure equalities data can contribute to the development process

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1. Introduction and method

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The aim of this project was to identify and assess baseline data on equal opportunities in community learning held by community learning providers in Glasgow. There was three stages to the research: mapping of organisations involved in community learning and their current structures; analysis of coverage and gaps of existing data; and recommendations regarding what would be useful to monitor and how this could be done.

The specific research questions to be addressed by this project are:

1. What systems are currently used to collect and collate data relating to equal opportunities in learning?
2. What quality of data is collected using these systems?
3. What recommendations can be made based on the survey and analysis of existing data?

Research methods

There were three stages in this study.

1. Survey of current mechanisms

The research team conducted a survey of current adult learning provision within the boundaries of Glasgow City, including Community Learning and Development, Further Education colleges, and community & voluntary organisations in order to discover what methods are used to collect and monitor data on equal opportunities.

2. Analysis of data collection

Once the most common mechanisms were identified, and the strengths and gaps of each noted, the research team tried to undertake two types of analysis. The first was to interview a small number of practitioners to record their impressions and experience with data collection. This helped us to understand the practicalities of data generation and recording. It was hoped that it would also be possible to examine a small sample of the data to assess its quality, but organisations proved unable to provide this.

3. Recommendations

Based on the two previous stages the research team set out a set of recommendations that it might be useful for the GCLSP to consider in its attempts to ensure equal opportunity in

learning. This includes both concrete recommendations on the format of data collection and analysis as well as suggestions for any training that might be useful to provide.

Before turning to these concrete activities it is useful to examine what the idea of social equalities means in practice, and how it will be used throughout this report.

2. The meaning of social equalities in Scotland

'Social equalities' is a phrase that looks simple at first glance, but working out what it means in practice is complicated. A general approach to equalities might be based in the principle that everybody, irrespective of any groups they belong to, has the right to equal treatment by public services. There are a number of statements from Scottish organisations that expand on this notion. The Scottish Executive has a strong and clear commitment to reducing inequality. They state:

> We want a Scotland where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. A Scotland where no one is excluded and where we respect each other and our differences . . . These issues are not marginal. They affect many women, disabled people, ethnic minorities, and other groups within our communities (Scottish Executive, 2000, p.1).

The Scotland Act of 1998 (the Act establishing the Parliament and the Executive) gives responsibility for promoting equal opportunities to the Scottish Executive, and defines equal opportunities as:

> The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions (cited in Scottish Executive, 2000)

This legislation lays down the framework for the six 'equality dimensions' usually considered in Scotland:

- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion or Belief
- Gender
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual Orientation

The same policy document provides a useful general background to social equalities. It suggests that inequalities can manifest as:

- restricted access to employment, goods, services and other material resources
- under-representation in high-status social positions
- under-representation in political and public life
- experience of direct, indirect and institutional discrimination
- experience of abuse and violence (Scottish Executive, 2000)

It also promotes monitoring as an essential part of any equalities strategy, suggesting that without this step, there is no way of knowing if actions to promote equality are effective. There are three types of action that can be taken: equal treatment, where the goal is to treat everybody the same; positive action, where disadvantaged groups receive treatment designed to level the playing field; and the equality perspective approach, which tries to take the needs of all groups into account.

The Scottish Executive Equality Strategy is the background against which all other policy approaches to equalities in Scotland have been developed over the last few years. Yet the definition is not without its own problems. As SCVO points out, few discussions of social equalities include economic equality, and few discussions of economic equality include social equalities (SCVO, 2003). They argue for a mainstreaming approach to equalities, where the equalities dimensions are built into policies designed to enhance social justice. This approach, they argue, serves to make the connections between economic and social inequalities visible.

> Enabling conditions for mainstreaming social equalities include specific legislation, structures and policy; statistics designed to capture participation levels; knowledge of patterns of social division; administrative knowledge; necessary resources; and fair participation of equality groups in public life (Mackay & Bilton, 2003, p.1).

Exactly who should count as an equality group is far from clear. There is a temptation to assume that particular persons either do or do not—for example an able-bodied middle-aged heterosexual white man who is part of the majority religion could be considered as belonging to no equalities group. But what if the company employing him since school has closed down and he also has to provide care to elderly parents? The point here is that simple categories do not work very well—rather anybody can be in an inequitable situation in certain contexts. This is reflected in documents such as the National Advisory Group on Lifelong Learning (1997) Report, which lists twelve further specific equalities groups. Listing categories is not necessarily a helpful way to capture the complexities of disadvantage.

It is important to realise that not all equalities groups are the same. A recent survey of local authority policy regarding equalities and sexual orientation (Fyfe, Fleming and Reid, 2006) shows that this equalities group tend not to self-identify willingly, and that this dimension was significantly different from others. There is a less developed legislative framework covering this equality dimension, and many councils stated that this group was not a priority for them. When ranking the six equalities areas, sexual orientation was placed consistently lowest on the list.

Despite these issues about the meaning of equality, social equalities have been placed centrally within quality frameworks for community learning. One of the goals of recent Scottish Executive lifelong learning policy is 'a Scotland where people have the chance to learn, irrespective of their background or current personal circumstances' (Scottish

Executive, 2006, p.6). Similarly, a report on standards in community learning recommended that 'the CLD professional body should undertake the approval of training courses. This function should contribute to ensuring high standards and support inclusion and progression' (Milburn, 2006, p.14).

The resource issues of data collection on equality dimensions have been recognised. For example, Communities Scotland state that:

> In promoting equal opportunities, one size does not fit all. However, we will require, where it is appropriate given the scale and formality of the operation, that organisations receiving funding from us to demonstrate their commitment to diversity and equal opportunities. We will expect a more robust commitment to equalities from some organisations than others. (Communities Scotland, 2005, p.25)

When reviewing the policy documents about equalities, one clear impression is that there is no clearly defined end point to these activities. While an organisation may collect all the requisite information, there is no way of knowing what constitutes a satisfactory outcome. So, for example, it could be argued that half the people engaged in community learning should be female, to use a crude example. But why would we expect this to be the case? And how much local variation would be expected or be acceptable? What if it were a programme for South Asian women and children, would this be considered inequitable? While this can appear to be a pedantic point, there are some very significant issues needing to be carefully thought through before the equalities data collected can really be understood in terms of what it is telling us about access to educational resources.

Summary

Collection of equalities data appears to be a balance between different factors. There is the administrative need to monitor numbers to ensure that there are no significant absences within programmes, the individual's need to keep some information private, and the organisation's need to limit the resources it is committing to equalities monitoring. Throughout this research we adopted an open approach, collecting information on the standard equalities dimensions plus postcode (an indicator of economic deprivation) but open to other dimensions of equality, or other ways of collecting information. This study was driven by a very pragmatic approach to equalities, but there is a pressing need to develop a more nuanced and effective understanding of what equality means.

3: Survey Results

A survey was conducted with organisations involved in community learning across Glasgow, with the intention of creating an overview of the organisations' approaches to equalities' data.

Response

Copies of the survey were posted to 121 teams and organisations across the city of Glasgow. Voluntary and statutory providers of community learning and development services were targeted, as well as Further Education Colleges. This yielded 36 replies from a range of organisations. These included responses from the following areas of activity: Community Regeneration and Development; Housing; Family Support; Children and Young People's Services; Disability; Employment and Training; Art and Culture; and Education.

Within this were represented: 32 community and voluntary organisations, 4 Further Education Colleges and 1 Glasgow City Council CLD Team

Electronic copies of the survey were also distributed to teams involved in Community Learning and Development within Glasgow City Council in an attempt to increase participation. This was done via the Community Learning Strategy Co-ordinator. Only one response was received through this route and this was from one of the council's Community Action Teams.

Equality Dimensions

The first section of the survey addressed the information organisations collected regarding equality dimensions.

Equality Dimension	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
Race/Ethnicity	62	22	16	100
Religion or Belief	0	8	92	100
Gender	81	16	3	100
Disability	70	19	11	100
Age	78	16	6	100
Sexual Orientation	0	9	92	100
Postcode	84	16	0	100

Table 1: Percentage of organisations collecting information on each equality dimension

The patterns of information collected in the different organisations showed some interesting trends. Firstly, it is clear that Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation data are collected far less frequently that other data—no organisations claimed to collect this data all the time, and 92% stated that they never collected it. Secondly, the most commonly collected information is postcode area, which in Scotland is often linked to deprivation mapping and funding. Gender and age are also two dimensions about which information is collected very frequently. Disability and Race/Ethnicity are always or sometimes recorded by 89 and 84 per cent of respondents respectively. It is important to look at the degree to which these patterns are driven by the requirements of funders.

Equality Dimension	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
Race/Ethnicity	51	35	14	100
Religion or Belief	0	11	89	100
Gender	67	22	11	100
Disability	51	27	22	100
Age	70	19	11	100
Sexual Orientation	0	3	97	100
Postcode	65	19	16	100

Table 2: Percentage of organisations stating that funders require them to collect information on each equality dimension

The two tables are generally consistent—as expected, the percentage collecting information on various dimensions is higher than the percentage required to collect the information. This shows that organisations are voluntarily collecting information in some dimensions. It is interesting to note that postcode information is consistently collected even though it is not always required. In general, funders seem to require information on Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Disability, Age, and Postcode most commonly, but it is clear that such requirements are far from universal. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Collection and Uses of Information

We provided respondents with three options regarding how data was collected, with the option to tick more than one. The low cumulative percentage (127%) suggests that relatively few organisations do use more than one method, however. It is encouraging to see that staff observation was used as a data collection method by a relatively small proportion of the programmes. When asked about anonymity, 16% of programmes said that they collected the data anonymously and 70% did not collect it anonymously (there was relatively high non-response to this item).

How is information about learners collected?	%
Learner completes a form	65
Staff member completes a form through interview	54
Staff member completes a form through observation	8

Table 3: Percentages of organisations using specific methods of data collection

The information was generally collected at the beginning of the learning programme.

When is information about learners collected?	%
At the start of the learning programme	73
During the learning programme	8
At the end of the learning programme	11

Table 4: Percentages of organisations collecting data at specific times

The collection of the data was not assigned to a specific individual who had only that responsibility. Usually data was collected by an individual who would have contact with learners as part of their role.

Who collects this information?	%
Tutor	40
Administrative worker	32
Manager/Co-coordinator	32
Project worker	30
Development staff	16
Student services staff	8
Monitoring officer	0

Table 5: Roles responsible for collecting data

The way data is stored is also a potentially significant consideration, affecting what use can easily be made of it. The responses suggest that electronic storage of this data is very common, through a cross-tabulation of our data shows that only two organisations have electronic data storage without paper files as well.

How is this information stored?	%
Paper files	70
Excel spreadsheet	16
Access database	32
Customised database	38

Table 6: How data is stored

We next asked how the information was analysed. Three (8%) of the organisations stated that they simply recorded it. The table below shows the percentages of the remaining organisations who analysed the information in each way.

How is this information analysed?	%
Collate and summarise	62
Compare to programme goals	65
Compare to previous years	53

Table 7: How information is analysed

The next question follows on by asking what specifically is done with the information once it is analysed. The respondents suggest that the information is well used once it is collected, materially informing the work of the organisation.

What do you do with the information?	%
Report to funders	81
Include in annual report	65
Inform future programme design	65
Include in future funding applications	62

Table 8: How information is used

Finally in this section we asked who actually got to see the data collected on equalities dimensions. The strongest answers by far are staff and funders—even board members and management committees (who might be the same in some organisations) had limited access to the data.

Who gets access to this information?	%
Funders	73
Board members	41
Management committee	41
Staff members	78
Learners	24

Table 9: To whom the information is available

About the Organisation

The final section of the survey dealt with the size and focus of the organisation, as this potentially has a very significant impact on the collection and management of equalities data. One of the most important questions is whether the organisation targets a specific sector of the population with its community learning programmes, and 87% of the respondents stated that they did. The table below shows how they are targeted in terms of the seven equalities dimensions.

Equality Dimension	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
Race/Ethnicity	8	41	51	100
Religion or Belief	3	0	97	100
Gender	5	27	68	100
Disability	16	30	54	100
Age	24	33	43	100
Sexual Orientation	3	0	97	100
Postcode	18	41	41	100

Table 10: Percentage of organisations targeting programmes by each equality dimension

The most common forms of selection are postcode and age, with religion/belief and sexual orientation the most uncommon. Two thirds of programmes do not target by gender, half do not target by race/ethnicity or disability, and slightly less do not target by age (this is probably the influence of youth work programmes, which do explicitly target by age). The respondents imply that there is a reasonably high degree of targeting by programmes in

Glasgow, though it would be interesting to see how much implicit targeting goes on—for example by aiming for a specific region of the city with an atypically high Black and Minority Ethnic population, for example.

The survey also asked about the size of the organisation, and found that the majority of organisations responding worked with more than 200 learners per year, with almost half working with more than 300. We analysed whether otrganisation size affected information gathered (as summarised in Table 1) but found no significant correlation.

How many learners does your organisation work with in a year?	%
Less than 50	3
51-100	14
101-200	24
201-300	11
More than 300	46

Table 11: Size of organisation

Given the range of organisations surveyed, it was also important to get a sense of how important the provision of learning was to their activities. For almost 90% of respondents it was one of the most important, if not the most important, activity.

How important is the provision of learning activities to your organisation?	%
Not very important	5
Quite important	6
One of our most important activities	51
The main activity	38

Table 12: Importance of learning

Finally we asked whether organisations were working within a specific locality or citywide. The responses were split evenly between the two types of organisation.

Summary

Generally a large proportion of organisations collect data on the equality dimensions of postcode, race/ethnicity, gender, disability and age. It is interesting to note that these dimensions are (to some extent) visible, and that funding requirements drives the collection

of this data. Two further equality dimensions, religion/belief and sexual orientation are rarely required by funders and are rarely monitored. This suggests that collection of data on these "invisible" dimensions will occur only if there is a requirement to do so as part of funding systems.

However, some caution is imperative. Sexual orientation and religion / belief are less visible elements of identity and people providing such information would need to trust those to whom they were providing it. Seventy percent of organisations collect data without anonymising it, so learners could justifiably assume that in telling their tutor they were informing the entire organisation providing learning. It would be crucial to ensure that the information was secure, and that organisations were using it to improve their provision.

The use made of the information gathered by equalities monitoring procedures is relatively broad. The findings in this chapter suggest that many organisations report equalities statistics to funders and staff, and almost 2/3 use it to inform future programme design. This could be more valuable still if more categories of information were collected, and there was a clear mechanism for incorporating the data into future activities.

4. Interview Data

Interviews were conducted with nine organisations that provide a range of learning activities across Glasgow. These included a project dedicated to the provision of support and training for local organisations; an organisation involved in the provision of a specialist literacy programme for people who have a Visual Impairment; a national organisation providing adult learning opportunities; an Arts Development Company; a project involved in Widening Access Services; one of the eight Further Education Colleges in Glasgow; an organisation involved in providing support and training to enable people with a disability to access employment opportunities; and two projects providing support and services for Children and Families.

Participants in the interviews were asked for information the following nine question areas, and also asked for general comments. Overall, the responses to the interview questions are consistent with the responses to the survey.

Data collection

Approaches to collecting the information vary considerably in detail. The methods identified by interview respondents included a monitoring form at the start of the course, a form at the end of workshop, a simple registration form, and examining the information in referral paperwork. There were comments about the need for sensitivity in gathering the data—one participant mentioned that some learners had responded with 'how dare you ask for this information?' in the past. Several organisations had put considerable effort into the wording of data collection instruments to ensure they were not likely to cause offence. Particular examples were questions about sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability or age.

Most interview participants commented that they were generally happy with the information they were collecting, and sometimes had been using the same form for a number of years. One organisation finds that some groups they work with are reluctant to complete the forms. In these cases the staff encourage the learners to do the best they can, and then try to fill in the missing information as they go along. Several of the participants commented that they wait and ask people to fill out forms when they have been in the programme for a while and have built up a degree of trust.

Information storage

Interview participants mentioned a range of different approaches to storing the information collected. Usually there was a paper record for each learner, which was often transferred to an electronic database. The paper files are commonly stored as well in order to provide a backup and an audit trail if necessary. One national organisation holds all data centrally for the whole of Scotland.

Use of information

Two of the participants stated that their organisation uses the information only to report to funders and in making funding applications. The rest used equalities data to a greater or lesser extent as part of their management and decision-making systems. One organisation had used equalities data to plan their programmes originally, but now they are established apply the data only to monitoring. Several organisations pass the information upwards, either to parent bodies or to wider strategy groups that they belong to, such as community planning partnerships. The most integrated organisation develops monthly reports containing equalities data alongside a broad range of other information, and these reports are a central resource in programme planning and evaluation.

Importance of equalities data

When asked how important it was to the organisation to monitor equalities groups, all participants replied that it was very important. One commented 'if you don't monitor then projects just exist. It's essential to have the information so that the project can constantly evolve.' Another participant highlighted that collecting this information was one of the priorities of the organisation, with another organisation consciously using the data collected to remind itself that it is lacking in certain areas. One participant simply stated that 'it's essential.'

Changes in data requirements

When asked if the collection or use of data was likely to change in the future, all participants in the interviews said that they thought it was unlikely. One stated that the project would never be self-sufficient and would always have to collect information on participants. Another pointed out that as a voluntary sector organisation they are committed to working with equalities groups, and will therefore always need to monitor participation, and another tied monitoring of equalities to quality control.

Importance to funders

All interview participants stated that equalities data was important to funders. Reasons mentioned included quality control, planning and target achievement.

Funders

When asked to list major funders, interview participants mentioned:

West of Scotland Widening Access Forum	Scottish Arts Council
European Social Fund	Local Action Fund
The Big Lottery	Bishop's Fund
Award for All	Glasgow City Council
BBC Children in Need	Department of Work and Pensions
Lloyds TSB	Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Executive	

These are many of the most significant funders in Scotland, and it is informative to see them linked with a strong emphasis on equalities monitoring.

Supporting monitoring equalities data

When asked what would help the organisations to record and analyse data on equalities, participants put forward a number of suggestions. There were comments about the difficulty of asking about sexual orientation in particular, and one participant made it clear that they thought this was quite different from asking about disability or ethnic minority. There were comments that it is helpful not to ask for too much information, as it can appear intrusive.

There were two strategies for dealing with the intrusiveness of data collection. One was to ensure that it was done on a personal one-to-one basis. The other was to suggest a smartcard system. In order to get the card, individuals would have to complete a form with equalities information on it, then the information would automatically show up when they swiped into the services they used. In this system the organisations would only need information on general trends, not each person.

Several comments were made about the need to improve the quality of the information gathering process on a simple logistical level, such as ensuring that forms are completed and returned to the office for recording.

Anonymised sample

No organisations were able to provide a sample of data within the timescale of this research, as this would have required extra work outwith their current capacity.

General comments

There were comments about the complexity of collecting data in the light of the Data Protection Act, and one project has run a number of training sessions on this topic. One participant argued that when personal information is requested it has to be relevant and stored securely. An important final comment was that it was essential for organisations to get help with how they should go about auditing their work—it is seen as easy to collect the data, but then nothing really happens with it.

Summary

Based on these interviews, organisations appear to be willing to collect equalities data, especially when it is tied to funding. However, there are two significant issues. The first is that some types of data, especially sexual orientation, are often viewed as difficult to collect. The second is that organisations are not always clear exactly what to do with the data once it is collected. It appears that there is an opportunity for broadly-based staff and organisational development around these issues.

5. Data collection methods

As part of the study, we examined five examples of entry forms used to collect data on programme participants. The organisations that supplied the forms were one national organisation, three that work across Glasgow, and one local project. The second Glasgow organisation focuses on a specific disability, so to some extent they can be read to be collecting disability information by the nature of their client group. The forms collect the following information:

Organisation	Disability	Age	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Race/ Ethnicity	Religion /Belief	Post Code
National	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Glasgow	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Glasgow		Yes					Yes
Glasgow	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Local	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes

Table 13: Information collected by organisation's entry form. Shaded box indicates 'yes.'

The information collected is strongly compatible with the responses to the interviews and the survey process.

The complexity of the forms varies considerably. The simplest collects broad categories of data but is not at all intimidating. The most comprehensive has many details useful to the organisation, but may appear complicated to a learner if they were asked to complete it. One form has a completely separate page with demographic information, but then asks learners to sign at the bottom. This could easily be anonymised. Generally, however, the demographic and equalities information is mixed in with other information and not easy to anonymise. For the purposes of collecting anonymous equalities information it would make a great deal of sense to have a separate page of the form that could be stored away from the identifying material.

6. Analysis and conclusion

Based on the evidence gathered during this study, it is possible to make some cautious comments about equalities monitoring in community learning in Glasgow. Generally, data collection seems to be seen as important, even though it is most strongly motivated by funders' requirements. If the pattern found in our research holds true, then collection of equalities data is patchy among these organisations. While this does not necessarily call their commitment to equality into question, it does suggest that there is no systematic effort to measure and record progress in dealing with issues of under-representation.

There is some indication that the equalities dimensions being captured by these organisations are relatively few, often not including all six of the dimensions the Scottish Executive considers central. In particular, belief and sexual orientation are commonly not addressed. This may be linked to the lack of anonymity in the collection and recording of the information.

A more significant issue is that the information currently collected is only partially used in managing the organisations, and does not always appear to be a significant piece of management information. There is little evidence of a standard mechanism used as a 'feedback loop,' with the information collected used strategically to improve programmes and increase diversity. This issue may well be related to the lack of definition about what a clear equalities 'outcome' would look like—is it to have population levels of each equality dimension involved in the programmes, or some other goal?

Because some of the fundamental issues remain unaddressed, the best place to start in further developing equalities systems for community learning may be to ensure that the current equalities dimensions are well recognised and consistent, accessible data is collected. Some potential strategies to support this are:

- To develop a unified reporting system that will fulfil the needs of programmes to report to their funders as well as provide a central clearinghouse for equalities data

- To ensure that ways of collecting data are anonymous

- To ensure that data collection does not place an unfair burden upon organisations, especially those with limited staff and resources

- To develop mechanisms for collecting data on 'invisible' equality dimensions

- To investigate technological solutions to these challenges, such as the idea of smartcards

- To develop procedures programmes that can be used to set appropriate, localised equalities targets

- To consider providing training on developing an equalities strategy for voluntary organisations across Glasgow

- To investigate models of programme management that ensure equalities data can contribute to the development process

Summary

Concerns around equalities, and equalities monitoring, in community learning are likely to become a more central part of quality assessment. Programmes that cannot show they are serving the community broadly and equitably will be disadvantaged. It is in everybody's interests—learners, programmes, staff, and the GCLSP—to develop tools that can help programmes to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of the work that they do. Here we have addressed only the most obvious dimensions of equality and found that much of the data collection and application is inconsistent. Based on this analysis, there is an argument for investment of resources into the creation of a set of consistent mechanisms to show how programmes are addressing the issues of equality.

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