

**Empowering the learning community  
Demonstration projects  
West Midlands Proposal - Inspire West Midlands**

**Lead organisation:** MLA West Midlands: the regional council for museums, libraries and archives

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**Partners:** Society of Chief Librarians West Midlands (representing 14 public library authorities)  
West Midlands Higher Education Association Libraries Group (representing 8 universities and 3 Higher Education Institutions)  
Regional NHS Library Services

**Summary:** By March 2004, as a result of Inspire West Midlands, all learners across the West Midlands will have supported access to the resources that they need in HE or public libraries. The project will put the building blocks in place to make this aspiration a reality – brokering access agreements, testing the scheme with learners, creating targeted marketing materials, working with staff to develop the skills and confidence to implement and promote the scheme. We will be able to demonstrate the impact of easier access to resources on two targeted sets of learners and on staff through work with focus groups. Sustainability and future development will be built into the project by using existing cross sectoral library groups and long term performance management.

**Total cost:** £20,000

**Delivering Empowering the Learning Community:**

This bid supports *Empowering the Learning Community* in the following ways:

- Recommendation three: *Public and educational libraries in any community or region should draw up "access maps" to enable users and learners to reach resources or assistance in other libraries on a managed basis.* This is the essence of this project and we recognise that it is a significant challenge. Some HE institutions will be concerned that the needs of their own staff and students might be compromised as a result of increased access by other learners and negotiating access agreements will require sensitivity. Equally empowering learners from socially excluded groups to take advantage of the access agreements will involve extensive staff training in both public and HE libraries. This will mean ensuring that the information about access rights and restrictions is brought together in a way that is helpful both to staff and learners and in a way that can be easily

maintained. We will use both electronic and printed formats that are embedded in other mainstream activity eg updates in the MLA West Midlands newsletter, using existing websites, working with Resource as further work is undertaken in developing collection level descriptions. An important element in this will be to ensure that learners have access to resources that meet their needs and in a supported way – to be simply aware of an institution and its opening times is not enough for many people who will feel real trepidation at using an HE library. Crucially the scheme will be underpinned by a programme of staff development to ensure that staff themselves are able to take on the role of managing referrals with confidence and competence. Working with learners themselves to test and evaluate the scheme will also ensure that procedures are likely to result in successful and appropriate referrals and that marketing programmes are effective.

- Recommendation four: *Training of librarians, resource managers and teachers should be co-ordinated and should include ways of developing mutual support.* Through the development and delivery of a staff development programme, staff from all sectors will be sharing the skills of working with learners as well as knowledge of the wealth of resources in the region. We will do this by working with the well established regional Training and Development Group for library staff that is already cross sectoral. Other current work for the Advantage West Midlands (AWM) Libraries Challenge is complementary to this and will lead to local networks in some parts of the region that will offer opportunities for mutual support.
- Recommendation one: *Public and educational libraries in communities or defined geographic areas should establish co-operative arrangements to improve services to their users.* This project will establish a co-operative approach to access arrangements for the region that will fundamentally improve services for learners by ensuring that resources are genuinely available for all. Importantly, establishing co-operative arrangements is part of other current work, for instance the projects funded by the Advantage West Midlands (AWM) Libraries Challenge all offer elements of cross sectoral co-operation as part of unlocking the assets of the region by using ICT. Although this project will operate separately, nonetheless the lessons learned and relationships established both through this and the AWM Libraries Challenge will be parallel and thus reinforce each other.

The project builds on the successful “Libraries and Learners in London” project and “Inspire” nationally, developed in response to “Empowering the Learning Community”.

## **Inspire West Midlands** **an “Empowering the Learning Community” demonstration project**

### **1) Objectives**

- To create a seamless cross sector pathway for learners to access learning resources across 14 public library authorities and 11 HE institutions by March 2004 so that the process is transparent, easy to use and open to all but managed in a way that benefits all learners.
- To investigate the role that increased access to resources can play in enabling learners to continue with their studies and progress on to HE and so support the achievement of the DfES targets for increasing and widening participation in Higher Education.
- To improve the quality of the support for learners in public libraries in line with the *Framework for the Future* proposals through a programme of staff development activities for front line and enquiry desk staff in HE and public libraries.
- To test, market and evaluate the impact of the scheme working with two particularly disadvantaged groups to ensure that the scheme benefits those learners who face significant additional barriers as well as learners more generally.
- To promote the use of “Inspiring Learning” as a framework by using the principles and practice recommended in it to implement and evaluate the scheme.

### **Evidence of need**

There are some specific characteristics about learners in the West Midlands that we would like to address through this project:

- 37% of students in Higher education are part time<sup>1</sup> (compared to a national average of 34%). In addition, research by UCE into People Flows showed that in the cases surveyed more than 20% of students used public libraries as well as the institution they were studying at. This has implications for library staff in HE and public libraries. By improving staff knowledge about the resources of the region, this project will ensure that learners are supported in using resources at locations (outside HE) that may be more convenient to them than their place of study.
- In the West Midlands 14% of students come from low participation neighbourhoods<sup>2</sup> – higher than the national average of just under 12%. Whilst this is a positive achievement, they remain a priority in terms of Partnerships for Progression activities<sup>3</sup> and an under resourced group overall. Through the project we would work with this group to identify some of the difficulties they encountered accessing resources before starting in HE themselves and so test Inspire West Midlands and its applicability to this group.
- Only 28% of young people in the West Midlands progress to HE<sup>4</sup> which is below the national average. Through this project young people will have a supported mechanism for accessing resources available in HE libraries when needed but before they become students. For young people from low participation neighbourhoods this will be an opportunity for them to grasp some of the potential that a university education can offer them.

### **Target audience**

This project will provide a mechanism that can be used by all learners across the West Midlands. However, in order to ensure that Inspire west Midlands will be genuinely of

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benefit to learners from excluded groups we will focus on learners from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE and participants in another programme to increase information literacy skills:

- 1) Small cohorts of students from 2 or 3 specific neighbourhoods with low participation. We will work with these groups to identify the particular barriers they experienced and to promote the scheme. In addition they will be involved in evaluating the impact that access to resources has had on their pre-HE studies including where this featured in the factors preventing or enabling them to continue with their studies. We will achieve this by working closely with several contrasting home institutions to contact and involve the students. These will include some Health Service employees.
- 2) Participants in the "Ticket to find" AWM Libraries Challenge project that will be targeted at adult learners with skills gaps that are inhibiting their learning. This project is particularly focussed on Wolverhampton but the outcomes will be transferable across the region. Participants will be introduced to the scheme as a supporting mechanism to the work on developing their information literacy skills. We will encourage individuals to take it up and to play the roles of "mystery shoppers" with a brief to work with us to identify the benefits they perceive it brings to their learning and the ways in which we can make the scheme work better for people who may not be regular learners.

### **Activities and timetable**

The activities fall into three phases:

Phase one – Establishing the foundations

- Mapping the current position
- Negotiating the necessary access agreements

Phase two - Putting the building blocks in place

- Developing staff training resources
- Developing a marketing strategy
- Testing and evaluating with two excluded groups of learners.

Phase three – Sustaining the work

- Promoting Inspire West Midlands
- Building into regional Libraries Strategy
- Establishing performance management mechanisms and learning lessons
- Identifying future developments including implications for archives and museums

Phases one and two will take place during the funded period of June 2003-March 2004, phase three will run from March 2003 onwards.

Timescale	Activity	Who by	Outcomes
May 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map and collate current access and joining procedures for NHS staff, HE and public.</li> <li>Identify potential steering group members from partners and role/remit of Steering Gp</li> </ul>	Learning Team MLA West Midlands – 2 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map established</li> <li>Membership and remit of steering group agreed</li> </ul>
June 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employ project officer/consultants to deliver agreements and staff training</li> <li>Scope extent of access agreements with steering group and identify challenges</li> </ul>	Learning Team MLA West Midlands – 5 days plus SG members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First meeting of steering group</li> </ul>
July – October 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiate access agreements with all partners.</li> <li>Quarterly report in September</li> <li>Agree monitoring mechanisms with steering group – short term and long term.</li> <li>Identify cohort of staff to work with to evaluate impact of project and monitoring mechanisms on them</li> </ul>	Project officer – 30 days with Steering Group members and institutions Consultants 5 days MLA Learning Team – 5 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff in place for 1/8</li> <li>Agreements signed by all partners that include agreement to monitor by 30/10</li> <li>Staff group established by 30/9</li> <li>Second meeting of steering group and quarterly report - Sept</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft staff training materials -standard briefing, supporting documents and agree programme for delivering with each authority</li> </ul>	Consultants – 15 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training package and programme by 30/10</li> <li>Documentation drafted by 30/10</li> </ul>

Timescale	Activity	Who by	Outcomes
November – December 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify cohort of learners and negotiate role with them.</li> <li>Prepare draft impact evaluation programme - for staff, students and learners</li> <li>Second quarterly report – Dec</li> </ul>	Project officer –15 days MLA Learning Team 2 days Institutions 5 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target groups identified and their role agreed by 30/11.</li> <li>Third meeting of steering group and quarterly report -Dec</li> </ul>
November – December 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot staff training materials with staff cohort and institutions affected by student and learner cohorts, amend programme and documents as necessary</li> </ul>	Consultants – 5 days Project officer - 5 days MLA Learning team 1 day Institutions 25 days total	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff training materials completed and distributed to all library services and HE libraries by 31/12.</li> </ul>
January 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with learners to establish base line and to develop impact evaluation programme</li> </ul>	Project officer 4 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact evaluation programme underway</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan launch and publicity materials –electronic and hard copy</li> </ul>	Project officer 6 days with MLA Learning Team 3 days plus SG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicity materials in production</li> </ul>
February – March 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver series of staff briefings to start cascade process.</li> <li>Carry out impact evaluation with students, learners and staff</li> <li>Final report</li> </ul>	Project officer – 20 days with 10 days MLA West Midlands 220 staff days from institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fourth meeting of steering group - Mar</li> <li>Final report - Mar</li> <li>6 cross sectoral staff briefings in sub regions by 15/3</li> <li>Impact evaluation complete 15/3</li> </ul>

Timescale	Activity	Who by	Outcomes
April 2004 on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft launch at start of Summer Term, further launch October 2004</li> <li>• Collect performance management information twice a year</li> <li>• Reports to SCL and WMHEA LG.</li> <li>• Include progress monitoring as remit of Libraries Forum and base on contracts monitoring processes already established for MLA West Midlands</li> <li>• Monitor success and identify priorities for extension</li> <li>• Build into Libraries Strategy</li> </ul>	SCL/WMHEALG with Libraries Forum identify future development Contracts Assistant MAL West Midlands collates and circulates monitoring returns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular reports and analysis of progress circulated to all partners.</li> <li>• Extension to FE libraries in 2004-5</li> </ul>

### Partners and their roles

SCL WM and WMHEA LG both represent the heads of the library services in the region (including the Regional Health Librarian). During the funded period their role would be to co-ordinate consultation on agreements and to provide for a mechanism for reaching a consensus. They would both nominate two people each for the steering group plus the Regional Health Librarian. After the funded period they would receive monitoring reports and work with MLA West Midlands to identify future priorities.

Students and learners in the targeted cohorts are vital for keeping learners at the centre of the work. We would work with them to test procedures and the impact of staff development work as well as consult them on marketing the scheme to other learners.

Libraries Forum is newly established to provide a sounding board and scrutiny role for MLA West Midlands. This is cross sectoral in the widest sense. During the funded period it would have a limited role but long term it would provide an overall steer and initiate further developments, for instance with FE.

NHS Regional Librarians will provide support and expertise based on the work they are already undertaking to build access agreements for NHS staff.

MLA West Midlands will manage the project during the funded period - employing staff, handling the finances and evaluating the impact. Staff will also use their role as regional brokers to ensure that links are made to other projects or areas of work. In the long term, monitoring progress on Inspire and reporting on it will form part of the Contracts role that MLA West Midlands is already playing for the region. In addition, MLA West Midlands will take the lead on initiating a regional libraries strategy and include Inspire West Midlands as a key component in improving access to resources.

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MLA West Midlands will also identify the potential for future developments with museums, archives and libraries.

During the funded period the project will be directed by a Steering Group with members from SCL, WMHEALG, MLA West Midlands, Regional Health Librarian, a nominee of the West Midlands Higher Education Association and a Learning and Skills Council nominee. This will operate during the funded period and for six months after. Its role will be to give the project a steer, provide links to SCL and WMHEA LG and to provide support in brokering access agreements.

### Budget and costs

#### *Funded from "Libraries and Learners"*

Project officer on PO1 for 8 months @18.25 hours per week	£9700
Consultants 25 days @£216 per day	£5400
Expenses – travel etc	£400
Training and support materials for staff	£2000
Office and admin costs – photocopying, phone, postage, etc	£1000
Publicity	£1500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£20000</b>

#### *In kind contributions*

Steering Group meetings 4 x 8 attendees x £100	£3840
MLA Staff input 23 days @ £105	£2760
Accommodation in MLA West Midlands offices	£3000
Training in institutions 1 days training @£80 for 1 person x 250	£20000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£29600</b>

<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>£49600</b>
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### Risks

Risk	Likelihood H/M/L*	Impact H/M/L*	Mitigating the risk
Cannot get agreement on access agreements	M (if only 1 or 2)	L (if only 1 or 2)	Support of WMHEALG and SCL for this scheme ensures that there is in principle support already – will need to work through compromises and use evidence from London for those institutions that will have most concerns.
Cannot recruit a project worker	M	H	Have alternative plan ready in case this happens. Will have to re-scope work, use agency or look for consultants.

Difficulty recruiting students/learners for consultation	L	H	Will work closely with institutions to pinpoint students, may have to work with smaller group and offer incentives. Use groups brought together for other purposes where possible.
Staff training programme runs into delays	H	H	Establish plan for the region well in advance of delivery date. Soft launch only in April, main launch October 2004
Cannot be sustained	L	H	Build performance management into main stream work and use this as evidence to monitor take up, quality and identify future needs.

\*H=high, M=Medium, L=Low

### **Monitoring**

We will use the Generic Learning Outcomes as developed to support the "Inspiring Learning Framework" as a basis for this.

There are two phases to the evaluation:

*Phase One June 2003 – March 2004*

Outputs from the project will be:

- Access agreements for each of the HE institutions included (11).
- A map of joining procedures for the public libraries involved (14).
- Printed and electronic resources marketing the scheme to staff and learners
- Printed and electronic resources bringing together information about access agreements and joining procedures.
- Reports produced and circulated to a variety of audiences (minimum quarterly).
- A procedures manual for staff so that the scheme is implemented consistently.
- Confident and knowledgeable staff (completed for October 2004) and tested through user comment forms.
- Case studies based on work with targeted groups of learners that can be used to support advocacy.
- Small scale evidence of the impact that easier access to resources can have on progression in learning.

Outcomes in this phase will be based on gaining qualitative feedback from learners through focus groups and other consultative activities about their access to resources, their comments on the scheme as it is unrolled and its impact on their learning behaviour:

- Increase in knowledge and understanding of the resources available and how to access them for staff and learners
- Information literacy skills developed through access to wider range of resources
- More confidence in learner attitudes to libraries, to themselves as learners, to HE changed
- More positive attitude to study and more confidence as a result of access to HE resources or public library resources at a convenient location affected their attitudes to continued study.
- Progression to other study or continued study connected to easier access to resources.

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In addition, we will work with a small group of staff to evaluate the training and support they are offered and which elements of this have had most impact on their development and confidence.

*Phase Two April 2004 on*

This will support and expand on the results in Phase One by establishing performance management processes to evaluate delivery and identify future priorities:

- All participating libraries will be asked twice a year to collect statistics for one week about referrals - who, where to/from, learning need (could be timed to coincide with CIPFA enquiry count in public libraries for one of the weeks). These will be sent to Contracts Assistant at MLA West Midlands who will process and report them.
- During these weeks all referred learners will be given a comment form to complete and hand in covering their use of the scheme, their satisfaction with it and any suggestions for future developments as well as some basic details about themselves. Copies of these will be sent to Contracts assistant at MLA West Midlands.

We welcome the use of external consultants as their independence can only strengthen the findings and, in previous projects, we have found the insights offered by independent researchers invaluable.

Signed (on behalf of MLA West Midlands).....

Name.....

Post.....

Date.....

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<sup>1</sup> *Regional profiles of higher education 2002*, HEFCE

<sup>2</sup> *Regional profiles of higher education 2002*, HEFCE

<sup>3</sup> Partnerships for Progression – partnerships between LSCs and Higher Education aimed at widening and increasing participation in HE - sub regions and regions will have plans for achieving this.

<sup>4</sup> *Partnerships for Progression* – West Midlands regional report