

SKiLD

Skills and Knowledge for Local Development

One year on...

A year ago SKiLD was launched with funding from the Workforce Hub. Here are some of the highlights from October 2005 – 2006.

www.skild.org.uk

- ▶ Number of development workers involved in a SKiLD learning activity in 2005-06: **350**
- ▶ Number of learning days run by SKiLD in 2005-06: **35**
Number of learning days planned between October 2006 and March 2007: **60**
- ▶ Percentage of SKiLD learners from non-CVS infrastructure organisations: **43%**
- ▶ Cost of SKiLD autumn training days for voluntary and community sector organisations: **£35**
- ▶ Number of development workers and managers developing the competency framework: **45**
- ▶ Number of people at Super Supporters conference: **80**
- ▶ Early on, SKiLD identified a need for an induction programme. With SKiLD's help, STAN (the London-based Second Tier Advisors' Network) got funds to develop a pilot induction programme.

Who needs it?

SKiLD is a learning project for development workers based in local infrastructure organisations across England. One of the first things we did was to devise and distribute a learning needs analysis. To date, nearly 150 workers have responded, giving us crucial and relevant information. We're still encouraging people to fill it in.

Programmed for success

Using the learning needs analysis, we cranked up with a small spring learning programme in March. We followed this up with a bigger programme for summer, and by autumn we were – with our partners – offering a calendar of over 50 learning opportunities.

Joined up

Development workers were complaining about being bombarded with too many learning and developmental activities all at once. SKiLD has worked hard to try and co-ordinate the range of activities offered by the national hubs of expertise and other key agencies. Our winter programme will include even more national partners.

What goes cheap?

Our learning needs analysis showed that cost was a real barrier for people attending training. So we negotiated with our funders to get our training days subsidised. Take up increased significantly.

Local local local

At the same time, we've tried really hard to respond to local needs and circumstances. We're currently piloting realistic ways of making sure that SKiLD's work links with what's going on at a sub-regional level.

For example, SKiLD recently worked with the GM2 project – a new network of development workers in Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside and High Peak. GM2 pre-paid for and block booked many of our courses so that their members had free easy access to relevant learning. GM2 were also planning to do a learning needs analysis. To save them time and effort, we gave them ours, and then analysed their results for Greater Manchester and Greater Merseyside so that they could compare the local and national pictures.

► SKiLD has worked with these partners:

- acevo
- ACRE
- Action Learning Matters
- Charities Information Bureau
- Federation of Community Development Learning
- Finance Hub
- Governance Hub
- Performance Hub
- Public Law Project
- STAN
- Sustainable Funding Project
- Workforce Hub

You've been framed

Another major piece of work for SKiLD is to produce a competency framework – a description of what development workers do, and what skills and knowledge they need to do it well. SKiLD set up a focus group of development workers and their managers from local infrastructure organisations whilst our partner – the Federation for Community Development Learning – ran two more specialist groups focusing on black and minority ethnic communities, and rural, local infrastructure organisations. By summer, we were consulting on a draft framework. The full launch will be in February 2007.

A bit of a do

Development workers also told us that they were hungry for chances to network and share experiences. So we ran the successful Super Supporters Conference – in partnership with the Governance Hub – in June.

Different strokes

At the same time, SKiLD has been developing other pioneering ways of learning. So far we've piloted Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and Action Learning Sets, specifically for development workers. We're also setting up a virtual coaching scheme, and creating a set of practical tools and exercises on CD for development workers to use with groups.

Legacy

To make sure that skills and knowledge stay with development workers, we're always looking at ways of making SKiLD's work sustainable. Action Learning Sets mean that development workers will be supporting each other in future, and PLA offers another way of sustaining learning. The new competency framework will be a long-term resource for both development workers and their managers.

"I was really alarmed to hear that there is a chance the SKiLD programme may not continue after March next year! I think it's invaluable, and I've been encouraging my staff to attend some courses." Jane Thompson, Information Services Manager, Hull CVS

Just the beginning...

SKiLD has achieved much in 12 months, with a small staff team and on a modest budget. Between October and March 2007 we're planning to run many more learning days for 500 development workers.

We've also learnt that there's a lot that still needs doing. With secure funding, we could...

- run tailored training for specialist umbrella organisations
- encourage more development workers and their managers to use the competencies framework by developing it as a searchable database
- get accreditation for our training
- expand our peer learning (Participatory Learning Action, Action Learning Sets and other methods) to all the regions
- support development workers to network effectively with each other.

"I learnt how to pass on techniques and support groups in implementing them."

Learner attending SKiLD's *Consultation Techniques* course

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"It was amazing. A lot of group work and discussions so that you could pull on other people's experiences to prepare you for the future."

Learner attending SKiLD's *Working with Black and Minority Ethnic Communities* course