

Developing a practitioner research network

A practitioner research network is being developed by two Research Development Officers, working alongside Higher Futures Lifelong Learning Network and Aimhigher South Yorkshire management teams. The Officers are based within the Institute of Lifelong Learning at the University of Sheffield.

How are we developing and supporting the practitioner research base?

The research network was launched in March 2008 with a series of initial briefing seminars which all members of the Higher Futures and Aimhigher South Yorkshire networks were invited to attend.

Between April and June 2008 a series of four workshops were designed and delivered to:

- Outline the research process
- Showcase the evaluation work of other LLNs and Aimhigher networks
- Enable participants to share experiences
- Support practitioners to develop their own investigative project ideas

Ongoing 1 to 1 support is being provided for all practitioners conducting an investigative project (telephone, email, individual support meetings).

Providing the opportunity to gain accreditation via MA module in Applied Professional Studies in Education (APSE) at The University of Sheffield.

Dissemination events which will showcase practitioner research.

Our aims are to:

Raise the profile of research and evaluation activities within the Higher Futures and Aimhigher South Yorkshire networks.

Encourage a self-reflective approach to evaluation, consistent with the needs of the Lifelong Learning Network and Aimhigher.

Increase internal capacity for practitioners to undertake measurement and evaluation of practice.

Enhance knowledge transfer between partners to develop skills and techniques that can be embedded in practice and ensure sustainability beyond the funding period.

Enable the sharing of good practice and data on how to measure the effectiveness of different interventions.

Support practitioners to undertake investigative projects which fit with existing internal evaluation and quality assurance systems.



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Our approach is to facilitate:

- Learning from and with each other.
- Sharing ideas and experiences with colleagues across the two networks.
- Exploration of learners' views and experiences by practitioners.
- Enhanced working practices and experiences.
- Ethical research practices.

Contact Margaret Lewis, Research Development Officer at The University of Sheffield on 0114 222 8128 margaret.lewis@sheffield.ac.uk or Louise Richie, Research Development Officer at The University of Sheffield 0114 2228121 l.e.ritchie@sheffield.ac.uk