



Final Evaluation Report: April 2010

Section 1

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Key features:

Thinking Spaces: was based in the Erewash District of Derbyshire. Its aim was to inspire and develop self-organised learning in workplace or community settings by creating resourced spaces and appropriate time for groups to explore and expand their interests through reading, activities and ICT.

The project was made up of a partnership across different sectors: Wash Arts, Erewash Partnership Ltd, Erewash CVS, Derbyshire Adult Community Education and Derbyshire Library Service. The purpose of the work was to create a new local culture of self-organised learning. Employers, community groups and public sector service providers would be supported in setting up 'Thinking Spaces'.

This work expanded the reach of informal adult education by encouraging people who are mainly non-participants to use this, 'space', to create small groups who want to explore a topic of their own choice. It did this by inviting people into taster sessions to initiate ideas, offer facilitation, advice on learning resources, and a visiting programme of speakers, poets, storytellers, or arts activities.

The partners aimed to sustain this non-directed approach to learning by identifying and training 'learning leaders and buddies' and by creating support, through the re-modelling of services within existing infra-structures, to meet this different demand.

The cross sector partnerships, creating space and time for learning, aimed to open up demand from people who would thrive in groups but do not want to be 'taught'. It aimed to create a new customer group and make different demands on existing structures.

The Project Plan:

The initial phase of the project drew together the six partner organisations from the private, public and voluntary sectors as a basis for the activity which was to follow. Each partner was asked to join the steering group and sign an agreement which outlined the project and their role within it. The steering group plans to meet four times during the course of the project.

Through the partners networks the project then held five roadshows to publicise the opportunities presented by the project and to seek information about what activities would meet the interests of individuals and groups in Erewash. The contacts made through the roadshows were followed up by the establishing of the ten **Thinking Spaces**, and the groups who wanted to use them. Each space was planned with a view to hosting two groups of five people.

Erewash has large pockets of social and economic deprivation. Our main target groups were adults (people over 19 with no upper age limit) who are not currently active participants in adult education. These people may be described in one of the following ways; low aspirations, low levels of qualifications, unemployed or in low paid work, poor experience of education. In our experience these people benefit personally, socially and economically by extending their education but they are under represented in participation statistics.

Key Points:

What Went Well:

- The partners were keen to support the project and have been valuable in sharing their networks and expertise
- Partners gained increased understanding of each others priorities
- Community venues were keen to host a **Thinking Space**
- Groups were clear what they wanted to do within a **Thinking Space**
- A wide range of learning opportunities have been created; one local library is offering a new service which is an opportunity for community cohesion and the sharing of skills

What Did Not Go Well:

- Despite all efforts no employers agreed to host a **Thinking Space**
- The idea of learning for its own sake clashed with other priorities for young mums
- Building a culture of self-organised learning - this was difficult to do in such a short time scale

- Difficult winter weather did not help! People stayed indoors more
- Bringing everyone together for meetings was also difficult to organise in such a short timescale - rather frustrating at times

What Lessons Have We Learned/What Would We Do Differently Next Time:

- Avoid trying to do anything the day before Mothering Sunday
- There are a lot of demands which had to be prioritised and judged against the aims of the project
- There was no difficulty in finding community venues who welcomed the opportunity to adopt a Thinking Space
- There was no difficulty in finding groups who were keen to identify activities which they could undertake as a group
- It would take a lot longer than the six months of this project to recruit individuals and weave them into a group which could access self organised learning

Hints and Tips for Others:

- Identify and link with partners as soon as possible - share vision and aims of project with them
- Engage learning champions early on - ascertain any training needs they may have
- Carry out research regarding what learning is already taking place in the area and check out existing local group and organisations to establish who meets where, when and what for
- Hold a number of roadshows to gauge local interest. Speak directly to local people to find out what they currently enjoy doing socially/for leisure and also what they would like to do in the future. Try to establish what is currently preventing them from fulfilling this desire
- Become familiar with the neighbourhood, community and social venues and explore less obvious local venues that could double as a positive learning environment
- Keep evidence of all activity ready for evaluation stage - minutes of meetings, photographs, questionnaires, publicity/display items etc.
- Project manager to visit all groups on start up and re-visit as many as possible in the time allowed to gauge take-up/interest and troubleshoot any concerns or problems
- Communicate regularly with partners, hosts and learning champions!

Section 2

Links with Other Areas of Work:

The project featured:

- Developing learning champions
- Involving the library service
- Partnership working
- Self organised learning
- Effective out reach

Wider benefits of the project have been:

- Increased participation in art and culture
- Participants reporting improved mental well being
- Improved intergenerational understanding and engagement

Steps taken towards securing the future sustainability of this kind of work:

- This varied depending upon the Thinking Space see Section 6

Section 3 Project Partners	Type of organisation <i>(e.g. Local Authority, Charity, University)</i>	Contribution made <i>What did this organisation do?</i>	Match funding provided? <i>Please state amount and what for.</i>	In kind support provided? <i>(e.g. free premises)</i> <i>Please state value and what for.</i>
Read On Write Away!	Local Authority	The lead partner and providing project coordination, promotion and facilitation. Advising on the creation and resourcing of 'Thinking Spaces'.		£2325 - management of project
Erewash Partnership Ltd	Private	Providing a venue for a Thinking Space and providing access to and support for small to medium business who take part in creating a Thinking Space.		£1000 free premises, £500 admin and office costs
Erewash CVS	Voluntary Sector	Providing communication to VCI groups, and encouraging community participation. .		£1000 free premises, £500 admin and office costs
Wash Arts Ltd	Community Arts Company	Providing community artists who will either directly facilitate		£1000 free premises, £500 admin and office costs

		learning in creative arts or use drama /role play to help groups to identify learning goals and overcome obstacles.		
Derbyshire Adult Education	Local Authority	Helping to source the resources needed to meet the interests expressed by groups; looking for ways to sustain learning activity after the project has ended.		£800 staff support for learners
Derbyshire Libraries	Local Authority	Providing access to a vast range of learning resources and staff able to advise groups on how to access these. Support from existing Community learning and information librarians The service will be able to provide venues for events.		£1000 free premises, £800 staff support for learners

Section 4: Evaluation

Objective 1: *To create and establish a shared partnership approach to informal adult learning consisting of partners from the public, private and voluntary community sectors in order to create and support 10 "Thinking Spaces".*

The six partners who were invited to join this project and form a Steering Group are listed in Section 5 above. They attended an initial meeting in September 2009 where they discussed the initial work plan and suggested strategies to be adopted by the project. Following this meeting each partner signed an agreement which outlined their role and their relationship with the project and other partners. They were asked to provide their organisations aims for involvement with the project so that these could be re-visited at the end of the project to evaluate to what extent these had been met.

During the course of the project the Steering Group met on four occasions and discussed the progress and issues raised. Notes of these meetings are available.

The aims of the partners were:

ROWA! (lead partner)

- Inspire and develop self-organised workplace and community learning
- Create resources space and time for groups to meet
- Develop a partnership of private, public and VCI sector agencies
- Expand the reach of informal adult education to non participants
- Sustain this approach

EVA CVS

- Attract innovative quality projects to the Erewash area
- Attract projects which increase opportunities for local voluntary and community organisations and volunteers
- Provide opportunities for the increased use of community assets
- Support activity which contributes to the Derbyshire Local Area Agreement and the county and district Community Plans
- Encourage projects which provide resources for developing EVA CVS activity
- Promote lifelong learning and routes for progression
- Work towards sustainability of this concept

DCC Culture and Communities

- Gain new library members
- Increasing library visits and visitors
- Introduce new learners to the library and its resources
- Raise the awareness and profile of the library service
- Encourage an awareness and enjoyment of informal learning

Wash Arts

Gain information as to how people learn through getting involved with creative activities

Gain information what the value is of linking professional artists with learning activities

Increase the number of creative opportunities in Erewash

DCC Adult Community Education

Provide further opportunities to engage people in learning and to progress them to more formal learning

Explore models for engagement that are sustainable

Erewash Partnership Ltd did not provide any aims at the outset of the project and found it the most difficult to be engaged in the activity of the project although they remained interested and enthusiastic throughout. They hosted the final (additional) roadshow for the project which allowed the people who took part to reflect on and publicise their own achievements and provide comments on their view of the project.

Feedback from partners:

EVA CVS responded that: this had been a quality project with valued activities. It had increased local opportunities to engage and increased the use of community assets. It had contributed to the Local Area Agreement, specifically NI 1 and NI7. The need for further work in this area had been demonstrated and the CVS have offered to continue to work with partners to look for ways to meet this need.

DCC Culture and Communities responded that: they did gain new members as a result of this work and extended the reach of one of the libraries in the district to other communities. The group using the library increased the visits they made and the activity gained momentum. Some of the people who joined the activities were new to the library. Overall it has definitely raised the awareness and profile of the library service creating an expectation amongst customers that there will be something going on at Sandiacre.

Working with ROWA has boosted the library profile and we have also learnt how useful advertising in a local magazine can be. The group in Sandiacre are now coming every week, it is sustainable and we think it will grow. The project has enabled us to offer the library as a social and cultural venue. There is a buzz about Sandiacre with greater awareness that a library is more than just books.

Wash Arts **DCC Adult Community Education**

Objective 2: *To develop and deliver 5 roadshow events throughout the Erewash area to create and promote Thinking Spaces.*

Roadshows were planned to be held at venues which reflected the different sectors represented by the Steering Group. These aimed to promote the project as a whole and to invite participation by individuals and groups in Erewash either by using or hosting a Thinking Space. The number of people expressing an interest in the project was monitored by the number of people completing a questionnaire from the roadshow stall. These questionnaires asked for information about preferred times and venues (in terms of the different areas of Erewash) and also about interests which people would like to pursue.

Erewash CVS Open Day and AGM (Long Eaton Art Room): This was our first roadshow. The venue was chosen because the CVS was a partner of the project, and also because they had recently moved to premises shared with a community project called Long Eaton Art Room. This is sited in a residential area close to Long Eaton town centre. Conversations were held with groups who attended the day, although only 2 questionnaires were completed. Interestingly the responses on these do reflect work that the project covered in terms of pottery, family history and mental health issues.

Long Eaton Art Room: A second roadshow was held at this venue to support its promotion in the area. This was part of a weekend exhibition of work produced through the Art Room. At this event the roadshow was visited by 20 people, 10 of whom were willing to complete a questionnaire to express an interest in a wide range of subjects. Unsurprisingly, given the venue, the most frequently requested topics were related to arts and crafts. Local history and family history topics were also high on the list.

Erewash Partnership Network Event: this was for local businesses and the private sector. The stall caused a lot of discussion and interest but no questionnaires were completed. Many of the delegates were small enterprises or sole traders and mainly from the service industries. The Mayor of Erewash visited the stall and urged us not to ignore Little Eaton or see it as an affluent and leafy suburb; subsequently we did establish a Thinking Space there. One of the businesses expressed an interest in hosting a thinking space but this would have been limited by its rural location to people who could access it by private transport and would have been secondary to the main purpose of the business which was as a farm manufacturing ice cream.

Sandiacre Library: this venue had been proposed by the Culture and Communities partner because it had a developing role in linking with community groups and the staff had received requests for activities such as the project could support. The roadshow was well received and 11 questionnaires were completed by people from different age groups. The interests most enquired after by this people at this roadshow were family/local history and craft activities.

The Arena: this church complex is close to the centre of Ilkeston which offers facilities to the community. The roadshow was held on a Saturday morning during which time local children attend dance classes. The parents of the children wait for them in the building while the classes are held. The interest in a Thinking Space was keen from these parents and 17 responses to the questionnaire were elicited from this event. They welcomed the idea of a Thinking Space being established here as a way of positively using the time they spent waiting for their children.

The aims of this part of the project were met in that the project was publicised across the various communities of Erewash and information was gained about the kinds of subjects which would be investigated through the Thinking Spaces. The latter events were more successful because they engaged more closely with individuals whereas the initial events were about creating an awareness of the project across the various networks in Erewash.

A final roadshow was held at the end of the project. The opportunity to do this came from the fact that Pass the Source, another Transformation Fund Project, based in Ilkeston had planned an exhibition at the end of March. Wash Arts offered the opportunity for Thinking Spaces to join in with this and to use it as a final roadshow venue where the achievements of the Thinking Spaces could be publicised, the different groups could meet and final reflective comments on the project as a whole could be gathered. Individuals from each group were asked to tell us what they had enjoyed the most and what they had least enjoyed about the project. Each participant was asked what they had enjoyed the most, what they had least enjoyed and what they hoped to do at the end of the allocated project time i.e. 31st March.

A selection of participants' comments are included here:

What have you most enjoyed?

- Meeting new people and all the new ideas.
- See new people mix with others they didn't previously know
- The finished result of the cast of my face
- Made a 'twirl' scarf!
- It was available whilst I was already in the building for dance classes and was very relaxing and enjoyable
- Had fun and forgot about everything else for a couple of hours
- Learning about different spices and tasting Coronation Chicken
- It was the most enjoyable afternoon I have had since I don't know when!
- Finding out I can make something all by myself
- Playing together reduces loneliness
- Having some ME time and learning new things to try at home

What have you least enjoyed?

- Would have liked handout on how to do massage and what different oils are good for
- Keeping wool tidy and needles in pairs!
- Helping to put tables and chairs away!
- I enquired about a group knit for charity but others seem keen to continue with individual projects
- The mess!
- Only 4 sessions - I couldn't make it to the first two. It had just started to pick up steam when it was over!
- Some people were unable to take part as numbers were limited. More activities were needed.

What next?

- Would like sessions to carry on and work towards a community project
- I would like to make more jewellery and I love card making. I would enjoy doing it all again
- Learn about more sessions, try something new. I think this is a great idea for mothers
- Look at further creative courses
- Try to get involved with other activities eg chair exercises and walking whilst continuing to enjoy playing the games together

Comments from Facilitators and Thinking Space Hosts:

- Members now in double figures - name remembering challenge included at no extra charge!
- Being given the opportunity to communicate with local people about their history and hearing all the positive responses.
- Be great to do more courses like this as there has been a great interest shown in the Thinking Space project.
- Very happy with the way things are progressing with this group. New storage cupboard put to good use. Group steadily increasing in size and variety of people now attending. Happy to keep things as they are at present.
- Would like to attract more younger people - will think of ways to promote - feel there is definitely potential to attract young mums

Objective 3: *To establish 10 resourced, sustainable workplace and community Thinking Spaces within Erewash.*

Objective 4: *To enable groups of adults to use the Thinking Spaces to pursue informal learning.*

Objective 5: *To identify 5 learning leaders/champions.*

These three objectives were inter-related and so it is appropriate to comment on them together; they are concerned with the main detail of the project and were the main focus of evaluation.

Evaluation was planned in terms of collecting data about how many people made use of the Thinking Spaces, how many different learning activities were held there and what the content of these were. Individuals and groups were also invited to give their reflections on the various activities at the end of each session through a group log, at the end of that particular activity through an individual log and at the final roadshow through collecting responses to key questions and asking for a single word to describe their experience.

Overall

10 Thinking Spaces were established by the project. These were based in a library, a community art room, a small local cinema, a village hall, a community enterprise room and four in buildings owned by church groups. Each Thinking Space was used by at least one group, usually by more than one, and in five of the spaces a learning leader was identified and supported.

What We Did Not Do:

The project was not able to establish a Thinking Space in a local business or gain the support of a local employer. Approaches were made to two local businesses and detailed discussions were held with one of these. This discussion included plans to hold a roadshow at the business and promote the idea to the workforce.

The discussions highlighted what the employer perceived as difficulties. These were:

- They felt that the work force would question why finance was available for these activities when they would prefer the "benefits" to be received as money in their wage packet.
- They felt that if some of the work force made use of the Thinking Space and others did not that this would be seen as "unfair".

Nevertheless the employer appeared to be keen to do this by allowing an additional 30 minute break to participants. Other positive factors were that there was an active Union Learning Representative in the company, and the employer was able to offer a venue within the work place. , nothing was ever finalised and contact with the employer was lost.

Following this meeting it was proposed that a roadshow was held at the site but despite numerous attempts no further contact was possible with the company.

The Thinking Spaces:

1. **Sandiacre Library:** This Thinking Space has been used by two different groups. The first is a "Knit and Natter" group which meets monthly. Initially there were three participants but this has grown to fifteen with ages ranging from 19 - 75+. It will continue after the end of the project because it was self-organised, has been well resourced through the project, is well supported by the library staff, and has an active Learning Champion. The second group met once, with twenty six attendees in response to a request for a local history event. The majority of learners were 50+. This group lack the core and leadership of the first group but the library are keen to build on this initial interest and are seeking to develop similar events following the end of the project.

2. **Little Eaton Community Centre:** This Thinking Space has been used by 2 different groups. The first is a Mother and Toddler group and the second "OAPs".

The opportunity to establish this space came from a need identified by the local Children's Centres to provide support for a group of teenage mums who needed "something to do that was about them". The venue was found and a group of twelve mums met with a facilitator who explored with them what they would like to use the space and time for and what resources they would need. The anecdotal feedback from this was excellent and the group had planned the way they wanted to go; the key quote being that it was, "Better than Jeremy Kyle". The group was supported for a further three weeks; only one person attended the next week and then no one attended. The reason for this we are unsure of apart from reports back from the Children's Centre that the mums were discouraged from their involvement with this by a health worker.

Having established this as a Thinking Space we were able to recover ground by supporting a group of women, 50+, who had experienced one art form to explore different art and craft activities. Ten people attended three sessions to do this and they are committed to staying together to explore arts and craft skills.

3. **Norman St Church:** This Thinking Space was created following a discussion with a community project in Erewash called Bright Street Laundry, who asked us to talk to a women they supported through meetings at Norman St Baptist church. Lynn our project manager worked with the group and the identified three things they would like to find out about: aromatherapy, body sculpting and how to arrange and enjoy a trip to a bowling alley. The three activities were carried out by eight, ten and seven women respectively. The

group will continue to meet supported by the community project and hopefully have a wider perspective of ways they can continue to develop.

- 4. Arena Church:** This Thinking Space was created in a church which provides space for community events including Saturday morning dance classes. The adults waiting for their children at the dance class expressed an interest in having Thinking Space made available to them. They were keen to learn about aromatherapies, family history and Indian cooking and consequently learning events were built around these. The initial session (aromatherapy) was attended by six people and the final session (Indian cookery) by nine. The middle session, Family History, was not attended by anyone; the reason given for this by the parents was that because this was on the Saturday before Mothering Sunday they needed to shop for family celebrations on the following day.

It is unlikely that self-organised events will happen here since the people were individuals who shared a space and did not naturally form a group. The local Adult Education Service were closely connected with this group however and it is hoped that they will continue to see this as a place where they can offer their learning opportunities.

- 5. St Mary's Church Sawley:** This Thinking Space arose from the need for a church group which was seeking to gain external funding to establish its building as a community resource. The church asked if they could host a Thinking Space and linked this to a group which wanted to set up a self organised activity for all members of the local community which would learn about needle crafts of all kinds. The group recorded thirty different participants with over twenty attending each of the four sessions. The group are very clear that will continue to use the Thinking Space and have a plan for their activities linked to community events such as an Autumn flower festival.

- 6. Long Eaton URC:** This Thinking Space was created at the request of an Asian Community Group. It was used by the group for three different activities; two of these were one off, facilitated learning opportunities First Aid in the Home, and Safety in the Home. The other activity was self organised and self motivated. The group asked for help to put together board games which the group could use as a means of English language development. They plan to build leagues and competitions to encourage engagement with these. The group will continue to develop the board game activities and meet regularly. They have thirty seven regular attendees, fifteen male and twelve female.

7. **Long Eaton Art Room:** This Thinking Space has been used in three very different ways.

The CVS, who are based in the same building, used the Thinking Space to invite local people to find out about the night sky above them. This event was attended by twenty people, eleven men and nine women. Some members of this group then went on to form a Book Group which has continued to meet.

The space has also been used for a group to pursue art topics including pottery, glass painting, bead making and weaving.

A group of women who have experienced mental health problems also wanted to use the space to find out about Talking Therapies. Because of the sensitive nature of this work the group did this as part of the Thinking Space but met away from the site in a room which gave them more privacy to discuss sensitive issues. This group met three times and have continued to meet as a mutual support group. They also plan to use the opportunities presented by the other activities in this Thinking Space.

8. **Oasis Church Centre:** This space was used by a group of thirty six mums who wanted to explore arts and craft activities. They tried their hand at card making, Easter crafts, jewellery making and to round it all off, a pamper session which allowed the mums quality 'me' time away whilst their children were being cared for in the crèche. They learned about the different oils used in aromatherapy massage plus the history, art and benefits of massage for good wellbeing.
9. **Scala Film Club:** This group started out as an idea from one of our Learning Champions and involves the local independent cinema - the second oldest in the country. The group meet monthly in a local café adjacent to the cinema, visit the cinema to enjoy a film and then return to the café for a review and discussion about it. They were quite late in starting and have only managed 3 visits during the period of the project. Finding days/times of the week that suit all members of the group has also been a challenge and some people have been disappointed that they couldn't join in due to other commitments on their time on certain days or times of day. However things seem to have now settled down and the group is continuing to grow.
10. **The Enterprise Centre:** Another Knit and Natter group meeting weekly. All age ranges, all abilities and lots of skill sharing - the group now totals 12+ members. A crèche is provided for those mums with babies and pre-school children. They will continue to meet and pursue their interests with the support and encouragement of the Enterprise Centre where other community learning takes place.

Section 5: Case Studies

Sandiacre Library Knit and Natter:

In the summer of 2009 a library user asked the librarian at Sandiacre if she would allow her to start a knitting group in the library. The librarian had no objection to this idea and gave the go-ahead. Unfortunately the lady had difficulty in promoting the new activity and for the first couple of months numbers were extremely low - only 2 or 3. Thinking Spaces started in September and Sandiacre Library was identified as a venue to try and kick start the knitting group. With excellent marketing by the Librarian and ROWA! holding a Roadshow in the building at the start of the project, numbers slowly started to rise.

At one of their monthly meetings a group of six ladies, aged between mid-50s to late 80s were busy with their knitting and crochet, chatting and sharing expertise. It was half-term and the library was busy with families and young people. A group of girls came into the library, the lead, a 16yr old being well-known in the community as being 'difficult' and a 'bit of a troublemaker'. She had been excluded from school and had dropped out of college. The librarian waited with baited breath as the group of girls made their way over to the 'knitting corner'.

The girls demanded to know what the women were doing. The ladies, keeping calm and taking it all in their stride, invited the girls to join them and soon a discussion was underway around the table about the various garments being made and a demonstration delivered on how to do easy stitches. Soon the leader of the gang had needles in hand and with the guidance of one of the oldest members of the knitting group started to learn a new skill - no-one had ever taken the time to share the pleasure of knitting with her. She left with a new mobile phone pouch, proud in the knowledge she had made it herself and vowed to be back for more at the next meeting! A wonderful example of intergenerational working. The groups' membership numbers have almost trebled (averaging 12-15 each session) and they love it so much that they now meet weekly and have had a gentleman join the group too!

Scala Cinema Film Appreciation:

Thinking Space Learning Champion Zee Sheldon used social networking site Facebook to inform people of Scala Cinema in Ilkeston - the quaint old building and the uniqueness of the cinema - and asked if any other people in the area would be interested in forming a film appreciation group. She was thrilled to be contacted by many interested adults from Ilkeston and the surrounding towns and villages. At the first meeting the group discussed their love of cinema and the films they had seen recently. They drew up a list of forthcoming films and made a decision to see a film once a month as part of the Thinking Space

project. The aim was for people to explore and try new genres of film that they might otherwise dismiss as 'not their type.' After the cinema visit the group spend time together to discuss and review the film and plan their next visit.

St Mary's Church Knit and Natter:

The feedback from this large group of ladies (25-30 attending each weekly session) was very encouraging from both a skill sharing and socialising point of view. Many had said that they were really enjoying the sessions, meeting new people, sharing skills, learning new techniques and being involved in a forthcoming community event. One lady had re-met a friend with whom she had lost contact with a number of years ago. They are now catching up whilst working on their latest creations. Some ladies are working on items for charity, others on their own garments and many are designing and producing knitted/crocheted 'flowers' which will be used for the summer flower festival. All this takes place in a church hall full of chatter, laughter, friendship, biscuits and a good cuppa! One person has joined the group whose only other social activity was to go to the newsagents.

Arena Church Indian Cookery:

The Indian Cookery sessions were well promoted, eagerly anticipated and the first session very well attended. The second session of the day (a repeat of the first) was less attended as most of the parents had collected their children from dance class and had left the centre. However there was one young father who was keen to join in the session, despite the rest of the group being young ladies. His wife and her friend initially said that they too would like to come into the demonstration room but changed their minds at the last minute saying they had too much to do regarding the planning of a concert and couldn't spare the time. The father joined in and thoroughly enjoyed himself especially undertaking the spice test! He was enthusiastic, interested and asked many questions. His parting shot was that he knew what the family were having for tea the next evening - his homemade chicken curry, taken from one of the tutor handouts! He said he now felt confident enough to give it a go!

Section 6: Exit Strategy/Legacy

The lasting outcomes of this project differ across the different Thinking Spaces and are described in the account given of each above.

The partnership has not secured any funding as a whole for the project. An attempt was made to develop each Thinking Space in such a way as to ensure they could continue to function once the central project ended. This is the case for seven of the Thinking Spaces. Where groups thought that they would require additional funding, resources or facilitation we have attempted to ensure that they are aware of how the different partners on the Steering Group could support them in these areas.

This project cannot continue in its present form. The Steering Group discussed ways of doing this and saw the development of Learning Champions, using the toolkit which unfortunately was not available for use within the life time of the project. The Learning Champions were a key part of the promotion and sustaining of informal learning groups. Unfortunately this was not possible since Erewash was not eligible to bid for this funding.

The actions that the Steering Group are able to take are:

- To disseminate and promote the approach to local groups such as the County and District councils including officers with responsibility for community development and cohesion
- To meet again in 3 months to review the way in which the Thinking Spaces have continued and to discuss ways of strengthening them by creating links with activity planned by Partners for the Autumn.
- To promote the model in other areas of work that partners are involved in e.g. Read On Write Away! is involved in piloting a strategic approach to encouraging language rich homes in order to raise levels of literacy. The Thinking Space approach has lessons that we can share with this project.

The project has highlighted that the partners involved in this project are well equipped to meet the interests and areas of informal learning which groups and individuals are likely to be interested in. The difficulty is that they do not have the time and resources to seek out people who do not come directly to their premises and to build the bridges and confidence necessary to help people shape and organise their interest in informal learning. It is this gap that the project allowed us to fill for a very short period.