





## *Preface*

Service learning develops people and builds stronger communities.

Service learning is an education method which links meaningful student community service with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility.

Service learning can be used to promote standards, skills, and social values in education. It complements initiatives to promote effective education and community partnerships in schools, colleges and universities throughout the UK.

Service learning treats young people as a resource to their communities.

This Guide provides an introduction to the philosophy, principles and practice of service learning. It draws on work done in the USA and the UK. We welcome comments that will help us to improve it.

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## *Definition of Service Learning*

Service learning is an education method which links meaningful student community service with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility.

### ***Service learning:***

- offers concrete opportunities for young people to learn new skills, think critically, and test new roles in an environment that encourages risk-taking and rewards competence
- is incremental, and progresses from one year to the next
- is appropriate for use with all students and in all curricular areas
- is integral to the taught and whole curriculum (and not a bolt-on activity)
- provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on what they have learned from the experience
- is accredited and celebrated
- responds to a wide range of needs in the school, college, university and wider community

### ***Service Learning Activities***

There can be as many service learning activities as there are needs in the community and opportunities in the school, college and university. Typically projects involve peer learning, community service, work on the environment, intergenerational projects and initiatives to develop communities through the arts, sciences and sport.

## *An Important Distinction*

### *Community Service versus Community Service Learning*

Community service has a long and honourable tradition in British education. Large numbers of young people have greatly benefited their communities, schools, colleges and universities through voluntary activity to benefit others.

Community Service Learning, often referred to simply as Service Learning, links service with learning and learning with service.

A simple example makes the distinction clear. Young people engaged in a clean up campaign in their neighbourhood will do useful service, but they may learn little or nothing from it. Students in a south coast Community College linked their litter campaign with a piece of real learning. They undertook simple research, made videos, and presented their case to their peers and to the local authority. In doing this they tackled the problem at its roots. They also added significantly to their knowledge and ability to make good things happen.

By linking learning with service and service with learning, schools, colleges and universities can devote serious energy and resources to activities that have real learning outcomes.

Service learning is a strategy that can make a significant contribution to making Britain a learning society.

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## Quality Practice

The following check list has been distilled from experience in the United States and the UK.

### ***Does your service learning programme:***

- Strengthen service and academic learning through integrating the work within the mainstream taught and whole curriculum ? (Service learning cannot usually be delivered as a bolt-on to existing activities.)
- Feature in your Development Plan and publicity?
- Provide concrete opportunities for young people to increase their knowledge, learn new skills, think critically and to test new roles in an environment that encourages risk-taking and rewards competence?
- Involve students in planning the project?
- Involve students in preparation and reflection?
- Offer students skilled guidance and support?
- Recognise the students' achievements?
- Offer a meaningful contribution to the community?
- Develop purposeful partnerships with the community and others involved in the project?
- Provide staff and tutors with the appropriate training and professional development to promote effective service learning activities?



## *The Service Learning Process*

Learning through community service usually involves a four step process:

**Preparation:** This consists of learning activities that take place prior to the service itself. Students must understand the purpose of the project, what is expected of them as well as what they can expect to gain from the work. This includes:

- identifying and analysing the challenge
- selecting and planning the project
- training and orientation

**Action:** The project itself must:

- be meaningful
- have academic integrity
- be supervised well
- provide for student ownership
- be developmentally appropriate

**Reflection:** Reflection enables the students to think critically about their service experience. They can reflect through:

- discussion
- reading
- writing
- developing a portfolio

**Celebration:** This is an occasion to recognise what the students have achieved. It may include media coverage, a special event, the award of certificates or other ways of marking the end of the project.

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# CSV and Service Learning

*CSV Education is part of CSV (Community Service Volunteers) which creates opportunities for people to play an active part in the life of their community through volunteering, the media, training and education.*

## **Our Mission**

Our mission is to promote and support Community Service Learning in schools, colleges and universities throughout the UK.

## **Our Objectives**

- Every pupil and student to undertake a minimum of 10 hours service learning each year
- Every school, college and university to include service learning in its development plan and activity

To achieve our objectives we aim to provide:

- educators with materials, training and support for service learning
- policy makers, opinion formers and practitioners with evidence of the benefits of service

## **Our Programme**

In higher education we support service learning through CSV Working Together, and we manage the UK's largest student tutoring initiative, CSV Learning Together. In schools our work includes two flagship initiatives on service learning: Barclays New Futures and, in association with other organisations, Changemakers. CSV is also promoting community volunteers in schools and service learning initiatives with local government. We are in partnership with the Pennsylvania Institute for Environmental and Service Learning.



