

What have I learnt today?

Participants we invited to answer the question:
'What one thing have I learned from today which will
be most useful in taking PLE forward?'

Verbatim responses are grouped below.

Don't worry about the definition

- PLE is difficult to define – perhaps it's best not to.
- PLE is not about leaflets.
- I've heard about some imaginative examples of PLE, illustrating that it is not easy to define what it is, but also illustrating it's potential effectiveness.
- It's just something we know we're doing when we are doing it.
- Stop worrying about an overall definition and evaluation framework. Select an appropriate educational method and it will have its' relevant education method.
- New wine and old bottles – Is PLE a new fashion label for public legal services? Are we still grappling with the same problems from the past?
- PLE means different things to different people at different times.
- There are lots of things we do already that are PLE.

Be clear about the beneficiaries we are targeting

- Specific groups with specific issues
- Targeting your public.
- Listening to needs of local communities and target PLE to meet those needs.
- The target beneficiaries must be included at every stage.
- Importance of creating right 'learning' environment for target audiences – and making sure that they are ones that meet people's needs. There isn't a 'one size fits all' solution.
- How and who do we target for PLE delivery (from AM session – unanswered.)
- PLE should be targeted and focused on helping marginalised groups. Only then will PLE be effective. (A matter of debate)

- The value of targeted and effective PLE in conjunction with well resourced advice and representation work. Also ideas about how to produce and deliver effective PLE
- That we need to think in terms of publics – national funding, national approaches unlikely to work. A collection of projects from a range of providers may be a better way forward and intermediaries are key. Define outcome desired and target group first.
- If most vulnerable and hard to reach are those that require assisted help maybe the target audience for PLE is different?

The value and potential for networking/collaboration/linking

- The value is in making link/networks rather than inventing products/services
- PLE role back into government institutions and assist instead of threatens, thereby enforcing collaboration.
- Networking can prevent the re-invention of the wheel.
- Proactive and focussed approach to advice work: linking in with other groups to reach the seldom heard.
- Finding out about other people and organisations that would be interested in working together in the future
- Collaborative working is essential for PLE to be high quality and to have maximum impact.
- The potential for partnership working.
- Collaborative working – getting people round the table – local awareness.
- We need to connect with others doing similar work.
- Connection is key but it will take time!
- ‘Collaborate, Collaborate, Collaborate’
- The willingness to collaborate
- Sharing resources – because there are a lot of useful materials, methodology and practices.
- The variety of organisations doing or interested in PLE work.
- The range of organisations involved in or interested in PLE.

The importance of equipping people with the necessary skills to act

- Skills and attitudes: PLE must include anger management/how to cope with stress – type elements especially, but not only for young people – the education will be wasted if people get too frustrated and angry to use their knowledge.
- That there is a need not only to equip people with the basic knowledge of their legal rights, but also to help them in gaining the confidence and correct level of assertiveness to act on those rights.
- Knowledge being power to resolve problems.
- PLE not solely about legal capability but about having basic life skills (confidence and assertiveness, emotional intelligence) to do something about a problem.
- What role citizenship education plays within the larger field of PLE and thus I have a better sense of what kind of knowledge and skills we should focus on imparting (and what kind of knowledge and skills are better addressed elsewhere).
- That the key to effective public legal education is to ensure that the people others trust with their problems need to know how to help, not just teaching the people who have problems...

The need to work through intermediaries

- Using intermediaries for greater impact.
- Importance of working through trusted intermediaries to reach vulnerable groups.
- Other intermediaries.
- Really useful starting point to bring together all those disparate groups engaged in PLE already. NEXT STEP: find more ways of identifying those able to deliver PLE services and those intermediaries able to organise the users and inform the deliverers about what's needed.
- Impact of potential tuning intermediaries.

The need for proper financing & support

- PLE should be part of the services provided by advice agencies – but it needs to be properly financed, resourced and planned. (Not just an add on or afterthought)
- Isolate resources for it within an agency. Funders eg LSC need to specify service standards.

The value of theoretical and intellectual frameworks

- Use of theory and practice from other jurisdictions such as Canada. Key issue is achievements made rather than the recognition of a 'brand' by public(s)/citizens.
- The importance of theory and intellectual frameworks. Fascinating that this was the view of our Canadian colleagues after all these years.

Care in use of the term 'vulnerable'

- That the term 'vulnerable' is over used and nobody knows what it means

Its not necessarily about brand

- That branding 'PLE' may not be helpful

The need for effective marketing and promotion

- We need to promote what we do in order to protect it.
- The need for good marketing skills.
- Need for civil law to be 'sexed up' compared to knowledge and popularity of criminal law.
- Realising that we're already doing it – but by naming it and putting it into a wider context we can have more ideas and more effective ways of doing it.

The need for greater clarity

- Clarity is still required as to levels of knowledge, skills, confidence, and practical operation.

Can it be evaluated ?

- Reminded of importance of:
 - Evaluation
 - Collaboration
 - Multi disciplinary approach
- I know it works, but can I evaluate why it worked?

The impact and scale of the problem

- Most common issues faced by members of the public and groups of people most commonly facing legal issues.

- Impact and spread
- Financial burden on individuals and state when PLE is not in place and problems go unresolved.

The need for pragmatism

- Also realistic limited aims are essential if it's to work. High flown idealism is likely to lead to disappointment.

Other learning

- Wide range of activities going back on need to build on this.
- Very positive event of what achieved so far.
- Much of learning can be taken back into my own area of work and provision of information/advice/education
- Empowerment and engagement key outcomes.
- I've been inspired by the village in Salford.
- Civil law is abandoned in favour of criminal law – because it's more accessible and perceived as more interesting.
- Access to justice through education of legal rights must be addressed – develop on Woolf reforms.
- Advice agencies may not always be the most appropriate organisation to deliver PLE.
- It's not all about funding – it's also about hope and creativity!
- Law formation and structure
- Seeing PLE in action in our workshop. A practical example is key to understanding what 'it' is or at least an example of what it is.
- It is time to say – 'PLE is the only chance to access justice?'
- There are lots of opportunities to mainstream PLE including:
 - EAP at employers, in workplace
 - Govt. Funded training and learning especially programmes for unemployed eg WBLA/New deal
 - Faith leaders CPD programmes
 - Health sector and other problem receivers
 - Soap operas and other local media

- PLE is a rich resource with tremendous potential for good across a spectrum of the public/community. Does it need to be coordinated? Will a central coordination lead to a lack of neutrality and prevent development of empowerment?
- Needs assessment
- For profits vs. not for profits.
- The day has highlighted the important links to be made between PLE and social policy
- Community education is a vital discipline to inform what it is.
- PLE operates or could be made to operate at various levels, depending on aims and objectives if your project 'raise awareness or change attitude/behaviour of a notorious bad employer.
- Will think about how street law might be able to help my organisation deliver on PLE.
- Is the recession a real opportunity for PLE funding and appreciation of its' potential impact? (See Lord Bachs' speech for example)
- PSA's
 - Matching PSA's
 - New tailored PSA's