

**P**lanning for

**L**earning

A National Framework for Validating Learning



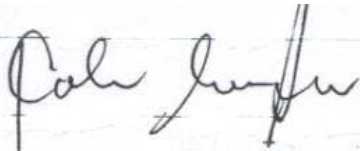
## Foreword

Validating learning is a strange notion. Why should learning be validated? Isn't it something that belongs to us as individuals, as our birthright? Something that can't be taken away from us, however much others may approve or disapprove? Yet, we live in a world where learning is a highly valued commodity, where knowledge and know-how are bought and sold in a growing global market. It has been called the Information Age and the Knowledge Society because information changes the way we think and behave and the way in which we influence others. Because knowledge is power.

The historic route to powerful knowledge has been through schools and universities, validating certain kinds of learning, providing a passport into the knowledge economy. However, the creation of a Children's University and its endorsement by Government is because we recognise that:

- 1 There is a rich source of learning beyond the National Curriculum
- 2 A wide range of learning opportunities exists in places other than school
- 3 Success in jobs, in university, in life is measured by a desire to go on learning and an ability to adapt to a range of contexts and social relationships

So, we need to think more creatively about the *'where'* and the *'how'* of learning for children and young people and to give credit and higher currency to learning which takes place in sites beyond the school walls - in museums, libraries and art galleries as well as other places, less obvious as knowledge sites but rich in potential - for example airports, broadcasting studios or sporting venues. Validating learning in those places is what this document is about. It is the starting point for something momentous and exciting. It may hold the key to a better future for hundreds and thousands of children and young people.



**Professor John MacBeath**

## Introduction

### *child*

*(pl. children) 1 a young human being below the age of full physical development. 2 a son or daughter of any age.*

Oxford English Dictionary

### *university*

*(pl. universities) a shortening of universitas magistrorum et scholarium "community of masters and scholars"; superseded studium as the word for this.*

Online Etymology Dictionary

Validating Children's University (CU) learning is not about passing a test; the validation process is one of continuous self and collective improvement. It places emphasis instead on agreed standards and expectations, exploring ways of raising the bar for children and young people and using findings from self-evaluation to plan for continuous (self) improvement. It aims to encourage creativity in learning.

The Children's University's key principles around learning are that it is about aspiration and inspiration, for 7 to 14 year olds, voluntary and out of school hours; its focus is on creating an excitement about learning, on encouraging inquisitiveness, on exploring subjects in breadth and depth, on a variety of learning styles and intelligences, and on individual and collaborative learning across the ages and abilities. Children's University learning is about becoming confident and independent learners drawing on local learning opportunities within a national framework. It is also about developing the recognition that learning - any time, any place, anywhere - can be a personalised 'satellite navigation system to better places' and that it should be fun!

*'Planning for Learning'* is part of a process that should end with a child's celebration of achievement and self-worth and begin with the intention to provide learning as a quality experience for children; a prerequisite is that those involved in this process should understand and own it. For now, the process contains the following five key elements: Children's University certificates or '*National Awards*'; the '*Passport To Learning*' and the '*Learning Destinations*'; '*Planning for Learning*' and '*Planning for Excellence*'.

The Children's University '*National Awards*' are achieved through the gradual completion of the '*Passport To Learning*' at a myriad of '*Learning Destinations*', validated through the use of '*Planning for Learning*' by and on behalf of the national Children's University. As the national organisational quality assurance tool for the Children's University '*Planning for Excellence*' ensures consistency across all the local CUs and '*Learning Destinations*', verified by the national evaluation in partnership with the University of Cambridge. The outcomes of the process are a national framework of quality assurance and insurance; a shared understanding which can form the basis of disseminating and sharing good practice; a continued widening of the family of affiliated learning destinations, including schools and a wide range of other organisations and sites which promote learning activities. These embrace study support initiatives and cultural offer agendas while leadership and management by local Children's Universities on behalf of the national CU allows for self-validation and encourages creativity and local ownership in providing out of school hours learning within an agreed quality assurance framework.

*'Planning for Learning'* aims to colour in the picture that Loris Malaguzzi painted in the title of the travelling exhibition of the Comune di Reggio Emilia '*When the eye jumps over the wall: Narratives of the possible*'. (Malaguzzi, L. (1984) *L'occhio se salta il muro: Narrativa del possibile* [When the eye jumps over the wall: Narratives of the possible])