

## **Cross-sector collaboration**

**Paula Davis**

In October 2005, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned the Subject Centre to carry out a mapping exercise into cross-sector collaboration between universities and schools in England in promoting the take up of languages. The study was commissioned in response to recommendation 10 of the Footitt report (2005) and aimed to identify and encourage the sharing of good practice by:

- surveying the current range of language outreach activities
- mapping current outreach provision
- identifying which outreach activities have the greatest impact

The project drew on three main sources of information:

- analysis of a questionnaire survey with respondents from schools and universities
- case study interviews
- background research into outreach activities in languages and other subject areas

### **Conclusions/key findings**

#### ***Range of activities***

We found evidence of much excellent cross-sector collaboration involving a wide range of activities. The key findings from the questionnaire survey were:

- most common cross-sector collaboration activity: initial teacher training
- the activity perceived to be the most useful: collaborative staff development/in-service training
- most common aim: promoting languages
- most common difficulty: lack of time

#### ***Coordination***

- Many outreach activities are *ad hoc*, uncoordinated, and dependent upon enthusiastic staff and students
- There is insufficient time built into the school and university academic timetable for outreach activities
- Consortium/strategy groups at regional level are a useful means of coordinating outreach activities
- In universities, language departments are able to benefit from using the expertise of widening participation and schools liaison teams
- There is a role for a dedicated member of staff in higher education institutions to coordinate language outreach activities, preferably someone with school teaching experience

#### ***Awareness***

- Colleagues in the non-specialist language college secondary sector report lack of information about outreach activity as being a major difficulty

- There is some confusion over the range of schemes on offer (e.g. the range of 'student ambassador' schemes)
- Outreach activities need to reach parents as well as school students
- Information about activities carried out by individual higher education institutions is not always easy to find on institutional websites

### ***Fitness for purpose***

- Schools want outreach activities that are integrated into the curriculum
- Schools and universities do not necessarily share the same outreach aims and it is important for universities to take schools' needs into account
- Good practice occurs where there is a team of enthusiastic staff providing fun, relevant, educational activities for school students

### ***Evaluation***

- There is little formal evaluation of the impact of outreach activities, so methods need to be developed for measuring impact/long-term tracking of students

### ***Sharing good practice***

- Languages shares many common issues with other subjects, such as the Physical Sciences, and can learn lessons from other subject areas as well as other sectors
- More events to encourage the sharing of ideas, expertise and good practice across different subject areas and sectors would be welcomed by those involved in cross-sector collaboration

The full report, containing many examples of good practice and detailed case studies is downloadable from [www.llas.ac.uk/resources/publications.aspx](http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/publications.aspx)

### **Reference**

Footitt, H., 2005, The National Languages Strategy in Higher Education (Nottingham: DfES)