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## City Learning Centres for the 21st Century

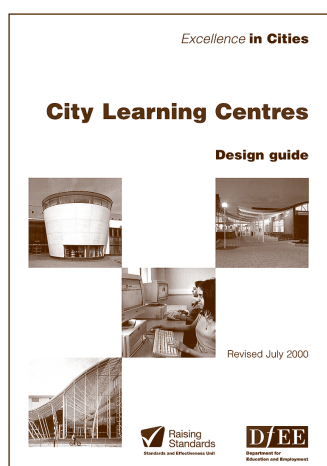
**Jonathan Ibikunle**

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# PROJECTS

## CITY LEARNING CENTRES FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

The Department for Education and Employment in England has launched the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative, aimed at driving up standards in inner city schools. A key element of this initiative are the City Learning Centres (CLCs). By providing outstanding local facilities, the centres will improve education standards and skills levels, promote employment opportunities and counter social exclusion.



Initially 66 City Learning Centres are planned. They will all be located in secondary schools in urban areas. The aim of CLCs is to enhance learning opportunities of pupils in major cities. To bring this about, the objectives of each CLC must include:

- improve access to, and use of, the latest education technology by pupils and adults;
- improve attainment levels through use of that technology;
- increase staying on rates;
- reduce truancy figures;
- improve employment prospects;
- act as test beds for innovation and new ways of teaching and learning.

While the core client group for these centres will be pupils and teachers, the centres also have a role to play in providing opportunities for the wider community to promote lifelong learning, including supporting the work of the network of Information and Communication Technology Learning Centres. This role will be reflected in each CLCs' objectives.

City Learning Centres must also serve at least five other secondary schools in the area and offer support to primary schools and to adults and businesses in the catchment area.

### Links to other EiC initiatives

The CLC will play an important role in the delivery of other linked initiatives. In particular, the National Grid for Learning; Gifted and Talented, Specialist Schools; Beacon Schools and Education Action Zones.

### Business involvement

CLCs will be expected to have a key role in developing new ways of learning and teaching using the very latest information and communication technology (ICT). This means identifying and testing out often radically different approaches to the traditional ways of learning and teaching. In particular, City Learning Centres should explore the impact and potential of ICT on home-school learning. For example, can ICT help to create more flexibility in where, how and when children learn; can ICT be used to improve support for children who do not easily fit into the school system; or, more generally, can ICT improve the interface between home and school?

Business partners and individual centres will therefore be free to establish their own links and partnerships. These would involve key companies or consultancies providing individual CLCs, or groups, *pro bono* "Business Process Re-engineering" expertise to help create new models for home-school learning that will remove learning barriers for individuals and raise standards for all.

### Funding

Government will provide GBP 1.2 million per centre for design and capital works. This funding can be used for recruitment and training of staff, for purchase of hardware and software and also for contribution towards running costs. Each centre will also receive GBP 220 000 per year for recurrent expenditure. CLCs will also be expected to generate income through nominal charges to adult learners and "start up" businesses that use the centre.

### Technical advice

The Department for Education and Employment has issued a "City Learning Centre: Design Guide" (revised July 2000), which covers building design, layout, equipping of CLCs, etc. The key issues for CLC buildings are:



**High quality architecture** – The purpose of a CLC is to deliver high quality educational and communication services, and the architecture should reflect this purpose through imaginative and innovative design solutions. It should look modern and lively. Entrance areas should be visible, capacious and welcoming. Finishes would be similar to those associated with an office building.

**Green architecture** – Whether rehabilitation or new building, it is a requirement that all building work should be carried out to the highest environmental standards, with excellent insulation and low energy use. Materials should be recycled, recyclable or from sustainable sources. Elements such as natural stack ventilation and PVC-free cabling are encouraged.

**Flexibility** – The space provided within a building will need to be capable of rapid reorganisation, both on a day-to-day basis and in the longer term. Centres will on a daily basis provide for a range of clients with different needs. They will also cater for both individuals and different sizes of groups. And in the longer term, the future of technology for education can only be guessed. Over time the ICT hardware will change dramatically and teaching methods and arrangements will be subject to frequent reassessment.

**ICT Resources** – Each CLC should provide individual computer workstations that have new educational software: Computer Assisted Design engineering and architectural programmes, graphic and Web site design together with digital communications equipment, scanners, laser printers, colour printers, plan printer and photocopier. All workstations should be Internet-connected. ICT

systems should be robust, flexible and adaptive. They should be fast and forward-looking. They should make extensive use of communications, to the Internet, to the schools and to the local community; and wherever possible high broadband connections should be used. They should offer full access to technology for the disabled and special needs groups.

### Timetable

The first 32 City Learning Centres began being established in September 2000; 34 more CLCs will be established from September 2001.

**Contact for CLC design guidance:**  
**Jonathan Ibikunle**  
Architects and Building Branch  
Department for Education and Employment  
Caxton House  
6-12 Tothill Street, Westminster  
London SW1H 9NF, United Kingdom  
Tel.: 44 207 273 6704  
E-mail: [jonathan.ibikunle@dfes.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.ibikunle@dfes.gov.uk)

