**Community of Practice methodology**

The proposed learning approach draws on the concept of the Community of Practice developed by learning theorist Etienne Wenger.[[1]](#footnote-1) The diagram below illustrates the rich diversity of learning methods that can be employed. The diagram shows seven types of informal activity (in the top half) and formal activity (in the bottom half). Wenger differentiates between learning from outside sources in the outer ring of the diagram and learning from each other in the central ring.

The seven ‘islands’ in the diagram cover:

1. Exchanges: e.g. news, information, stories, tips, document sharing, pointers to outside resources;
2. Productive inquiries: e.g. case clinics, project reviews, exploring ideas, broadcast enquiry;
3. Building shared understanding: e.g. hot topic discussions, reading groups, joint events, joint response;
4. Producing assets (or products): e.g. documenting practice, collections, problem solving, learning projects;
5. Creating standards: e.g. mutual benchmark, external benchmark, models of practice, warranting (certification);
6. Formal access to knowledge: e.g. help desk, training and workshops, formal practice transfer, systematic scan (of knowledge), invited speakers;
7. Visits: guests, field trips (to other practitioners), e.g. practice fairs (policy fora), visits (to each other).

A network that seeks to interest, involve and stimulate its members will use a variety of these methods, though rarely all. Some activities such as benchmarking or formal transfer are of a higher order and require more maturity and structure within the network than other activities such as field visits. In this project it may be appropriate to do the easier and more straightforward activities that build understanding at the start of its work programme and then to focus on the other more sophisticated activities later on.

1. See: <http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)