

Adult Learning Provision in Bute and Cowal

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Area Community Planning Group members about the Council's Adult Learning and Literacies service provision across Bute and Cowal.
- 1.2 This is intended to form a part of members' focus on the local dimension to Single Outcome Agreement Outcome 3: 'Education, skills and training maximise opportunities for all'

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Area Community Planning Group members are invited to note the contents of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 Adult Learning and Literacies staff have a person-centred, needs-led, friendly and informal approach to learning, to which adults respond well. By taking the time to get to know people, we come to understand their individual circumstances and skills levels, and can tailor a 'learning package' that suits their aims and their own 'learning style'. We aim, *not* to do things for people, but to help them reach a point where they can do things for themselves.
- 3.2 We provide a wide range of high quality lifelong learning opportunities in our communities. The overall aim is to increase participants' skills and capacity to contribute to their family and community lives, access training and employment, and realise their personal, social and economic potential. Adult Learning and Literacies staff are based in all six main towns, plus Islay and Mull, and, with the help of specialist bank tutors, deliver courses, drop-ins, and 1:1 support in each geographic area.
- 3.3 The service is designed to be very responsive to community needs, so much of our current focus is on digital skills, mitigating the negative impacts of Welfare Reform, and increasing the confidence and basic skills of people who wish to move into work, further learning, training or volunteering.

3.4 We have an inclusive approach, but actively target those most at risk of exclusion, such as people who are unemployed, on a low income, experiencing health, mental health and addiction issues, or who have barriers to accessing learning.

3.5 The Adult Learning and Literacies service is the only service in Argyll and Bute that delivers, amongst other things:

- Regular and consistent absolutely basic IT skills and employability provision.
- Adult literacy and numeracy help across all areas.
- Regular in-depth help with writing CVs for adults over 25yrs.
- Tutored basic-level SQA accredited courses for adults (including people with mental health issues, learning and literacy difficulties, and people on ESA) in employability and IT skills.
- Help with the Universal Jobmatch website outside of Job Centres.
- Basic IT skills drop-in programmes targeted at vulnerable adults in rurally isolated areas (using primary school premises).
- Beginner level English for Speakers of Other Languages.
- Information sessions in Job Centres to new claimants, alongside JobCentre Plus staff.

3.6 In order to engage with a whole range of people in our communities, and avoid stigmatisation for attendees, or pre-conceptions about who can participate and benefit, we often take a 'social practice' approach – that is, we host activities that people find interesting and enjoyable, and embed learning into these. All our staff and tutors are expert in packing a great deal of learning into informal and engaging sessions, such as manual skills and crafts-based courses.

3.7 As a result of our work, the most significant impacts are that people:

- Are more able to access information, particularly written or web-based, that helps them communicate socially, manage their budgets, source work or further learning, and find new interests.
- Become more independent of health, social and other services.
- Have a better understanding of their benefits requirements and are less likely to incur sanctions.
- Feel they have someone to turn to, feel listened to, and better about themselves.
- Are more ready to take part in ongoing learning, or make small but significant positive changes in their lives, try new or different activities and explore new avenues.
- Progress into employment, further learning or volunteering.

4. Detail

4.1 In Bute and Cowal, typical Adult Learning and Literacies service programmes in a quarter might include:

Digital Skills

- Beginners Computing – Introduction to Internet and Email
- Over 40s IT Computing Drop In
- ICT (SQA accredited), Level 2 Computing: Introduction to Internet and Email, Level 3 Word Processing and Using Databases
- Computing Drop-in evening sessions in rural outreach locations
- Digital assessments for jobseekers, assessing their computer and other digital skills, and sharing the results with JC+ staff (this helps to avoid their being required to perform tasks for which they do not possess the skills, thereby helping to avoid potential sanctions).

Literacies and language

- 1:1 Literacy Tuition
- English for Speakers of Other Languages - beginners or intermediate

Employability

- Work Club and 1:1 support Drop-in
- CVs and Cover Letters (to potential employers)
- Interview Skills
- Employability (for HELP clients 19-24yrs)
- Preparing for Employment (SQA accredited) (also runs in Dunoon Grammar as part of the EXITE programme with 16-yr olds)
- Building own Employability Skills (SQA accredited)
- Responsibilities of Employment (SQA accredited)
- Dealing with Work Situations (SQA accredited)
- Preparation for Driving Theory Test
- Preparation for CITB CSCS Card Test
- Job Centre and Adult Learning joint presentations

Confidence and wellbeing

- Cooking on a budget; Grow your Own Food
- Craft and arts-based learning: Yarn Bombing, Upcycling, Beachcombing Recycling, Beginners Introduction to Drawing and Sketching, Animation
- SQA Wellbeing Award
- Confidence Building

4.2 A survey of participants in Dunoon found that of the people we worked with on employability issues:

- 20-30% found work within a year as a direct result of our interventions (given that these are people furthest removed from labour markets, and long-term benefits claimants, this is a significant proportion)
- Around 80% improved their IT skills and become independent of our service within a year

- Around 40% learned another skill, gained an accreditation, or took further courses, to improve their chances of obtaining work
- However, around 5-10% are unlikely ever to be able to manage the digital requirements of their claims, and will always require intensive help or face sanctions

4.3 It is only by spending intensive quality time with individuals that we can achieve real and sustainable improvements. For each individual we see in Job Clubs, for example:

- Getting someone signed up to Universal Jobmatch and an email account takes 1-2hrs
- Putting a CV together takes 2-6hrs; helping someone to fill in an online job application and upload their CV takes 2-3hrs
- Coaching for interview skills takes 2-3hrs at least
- Teaching someone to use a computer from scratch, or to become independent at using Universal Jobmatch, takes at least 20hrs, more if they have learning difficulties or literacy issues

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Adult Learning and Literacies Service in Bute and Cowal makes real differences in people's lives by offering learning that helps them to gain confidence, mitigate hardship, and make positive changes to progress and achieve their personal goals.

Name of Lead Officer

Cleland Sneddon, Executive Director, Community Services

For further information please contact:

Jeannie Holles

Community Learning Manager

CLD Area Office, Lochgilphead Community Centre, Manse Brae

Lochgilphead

Argyll PA31 8QX

Tel: 01546 604753

Email: Jeannie.holles@argyll-bute.gov.uk