

Adult and Community Learning

NEWS

Summer 2006



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Our successful inspection

Wigan Council's Adult, Community and Family Learning Service has received an outstanding inspection report.

Government inspectors thoroughly checked all aspects of the service. This included visiting core partners who provide learning opportunities for communities across the Borough. They interviewed staff and learners as well as reporting on the facilities available. ACL Managers Bernard Murphy and Beryl Colvin praised the hard work and professionalism of the tutors and everyone involved in achieving such a well deserved outcome. There isn't space to publish the whole report, but here's a taste of what the inspectors said:

- The service has very strong partnerships. The range of partners is extensive and reflects the providers' focus on reaching particularly deprived communities.
- The adult and community learning provision is managed well. The service makes very effective use of partners' strengths and skills to add value to its own limited resources. The providers' managers use partners' locations and networks to good effect.
- The service uses a range of outstanding strategies and processes to involve 'hard to reach' learners in adult learning programmes. These learning programmes link up very effectively with other schemes such as the Extended Schools and Sure Start programmes.
- The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Leadership and management is good, equality of opportunity is outstanding and quality improvement is good.
- Tutors are very effective at motivating and maintaining learners' interest. Tutors in many classes use a good range of teaching styles and strategies to meet learners' diverse needs, including appropriate methods to integrate learners who have disabilities.
- Learners quickly build up the confidence to take their skills back to their families and into the community. They develop self-belief, progressing to further learning. There are some very good individual progressions by learners.



In this edition of ACL News we have provided examples of just a few of our many success stories. We hope you will enjoy reading about the achievements of learners across the Borough.

National award for Wigan

A ground-breaking approach to helping parents back into learning has won a national accolade for Wigan.

The Council has been voted 'Step in to Learning Pioneer Authority of the Year' thanks to a partnership between Wigan Adult and Community Learning (ACL), Wigan Sure Start and Wigan and Leigh College.

The award was presented by Beverley Hughes MP, Minister for Children, Young People and Families, at a special conference in London. Family Learning Co-ordinator Justine Silcock and colleague Ann Boothroyd from Wigan & Leigh College told conference delegates how Wigan's 'Step in to Learning' scheme was making a big impact locally.

The team - Justine and Anne plus ACL's Doreen Ellison and Sure Start's Dawn Leigh - have worked with Wigan Sure Start staff, helping them to communicate better with the families they come into contact with. They have also trained staff to help parents and carers make significant progress with their own literacy or numeracy needs, and to gain nationally recognised qualifications. Adult and Community Learning Manager, Bernard Murphy said: "I am proud of what the team has achieved and the strong links between ourselves, Sure Start and the College really are making an impact in the community."

The scheme is proving so successful that we hope it can be extended, with further links through libraries and childminder groups."

David Hindley, Head of Community and IT Based Learning at Wigan & Leigh College, added: "We are very pleased to be part of the award and the progress to date shows that students recruited to 'Step in to Learning' are taking the first steps in numeracy and literacy. Many have enrolled on City & Guilds national qualifications in Maths and English to advance their careers and personal development."



Beverley Hughes MP with Wigan Council's Justine Silcock and Ann Boothroyd of Wigan & Leigh College.

Tyldesley's talented artist

Frank Bromwich was extremely interested in painting and had thought about joining our art classes.

He had no experience in painting at all but wanted to learn about painting with different techniques using different mediums.

Frank enrolled in 2004 onto two of our arts and craft courses - Colour Mixing for Artists and Portrait Painting, both funded by ACL with all the tuition and materials provided free of charge to the students.

They were extremely successful courses and resulted in a vocational course in Portrait Painting at NCFE level 1, being put into our course portfolio for the year 2005-2006. Frank enrolled onto the Level 1 Portrait Painting course in September and will be completing it this summer, moving onto Level 2 next year.

Wigan & Leigh College approached our art tutor Christina Martin and asked her to recommend a student who could paint a picture of a well known attraction in Wigan for Enid Jones MBE, a governor for Wigan & Leigh College. Enid was retiring after 13 years on the Board of the college. Christina asked Frank Bromwich if he would like to paint the picture.

He accepted the commission and then set about deciding on what to paint. He photographed different areas in Wigan before deciding he wanted to paint the well known attraction of Wigan Pier. After initial sketching, the acrylic painting took him a couple of days to complete.



Frank presents his painting to Enid.

Frank and his wife were invited to the special presentation evening at the Wheel Restaurant in the Pagefield building to personally present his painting to Enid Jones who was extremely thrilled. Frank was also nominated by Christina Martin for an NCFE Student of the Year award last year. Although he was unsuccessful on this occasion, he was extremely pleased to be nominated. All the techniques Frank has learnt at the centre have been taught by our tutor Christina Martin, who is a published writer and has exhibited several of her own art works.

If I can do it.....

My name is Gloria Boardman and I would like to tell you how I came to paint at Tyldesley Community Education Centre.

Seven years ago I was a working mum with a husband and three sons. I was having a little trouble with the vision in my left eye; I was referred to the eye hospital for tests. To my horror they told me I had a brain tumour and that they would have to remove my left eye, but in doing so I would lose part of the sight in my right eye as well. This left me and my family totally devastated.

After I had recovered from the operation, I spent a lot of time at home recuperating, feeling down and fed up with myself over not being able to do all the things I used to do. When I returned to the hospital for a check-up I was told again the devastating news that the tumour had returned.

After the initial shock had subsided, I decided enough was enough - I was going to get out and find something that would cheer me up.

I walked into Tyldesley Community Education Centre, not knowing what they had to offer. I spoke to the staff about the different courses they had starting, and decided I would join the art class. I was a total beginner as I had never done any painting before, but it was something I felt I would like to try.

My tutor, Tina Martin, who is an established artist and writer, opened my mind to the world of art and painting. I learnt many techniques, working in different mediums.

She encouraged me to paint large and small subjects, and not to be frightened to experiment.

I have now developed a style of my own and have produced many paintings - I love every one of them. Through taking part in these classes, my confidence and enthusiasm have grown immensely.

The Centre is a warm and friendly place which I enjoy going to. I look forward to my classes each week and to meeting and socialising with the other people.

I find that if I need any help with anything, there is always someone at the Centre willing to help me.

I recently passed my NCFE Painting & Drawing Level 1 and I am back this year doing my NCFE Painting & Drawing Level 2. I was also nominated earlier this year for NCFE Student of the Year by my tutor.

I didn't get through to the final stages, but was extremely pleased and honoured to be nominated.



These are some of my paintings

Currently, I am learning Miniature Painting on synthetic ivory and Drawing Techniques. These courses have helped me learn a lot of new techniques which is helping my art work in general. The courses offered at the centre are free, funded through Adult and Community Learning.

I have found I enjoy doing Pop Art and this has now become a family affair. My son Mark, fancied having a go himself. He found he had a natural flair for it and produced some stunning paintings. Mark has gone on to give up his job and paint full time.

I hope you enjoy my paintings. Remember - if I can do it, so can you!

Courses for all ages

Courses for parents/carers and their 3 year old children began at Sure Start in Hindley, 5 years ago.

These courses, run by Sue Williams and Dionne Blower from Family Learning, helped parents and children develop language and number skills, in a fun way, in preparation for starting school.

This proved very popular and parents who had younger children in the crèche thought it would be good to have their own courses.

Consequently, when the Basic Skills Agency developed the Early Start course, Family Learning in Wigan realised it would be an ideal course for the parents and babies in Hindley.

Following a very successful pilot in April 2004, Early Start has been a well attended and permanent feature of the Family Programmes at Hindley. Margaret Hodge, who was then Minister for Children, visited the Early Start course during her visit to Hindley in 2004.

Friendship groups which were set up during the Early Start programme meant that parents wished to continue with other Sure Start projects as a group.



Language and Play session.

A gap was identified in the Family Programmes for parents and for children between 12 months and 2 years.

Another programme, Language and Play, was developed by Sue and Dionne and successfully piloted at Shevington, recruiting 12 carers and children.

This programme will now be offered at Hindley and will be the much sought after link for parents and carers, between the Early Start and Family Literacy/Numeracy.

The programmes have had some notable personal success stories. One learner, Debbie, came with her twin boys to a Family Literacy/Numeracy course. She then became a Sure Start volunteer, welcoming and encouraging other parents to come to Sure Start activities. She brought Vicky, a mother of 4, to the Family Programmes.

Vicky has now completed Family Literacy with her 3 year old, Early Start with her baby and has become a volunteer herself. She is currently taking the Language and Play course.

Sure Start has proved to be beneficial for the parents/carers and children who have attended. It not only teaches fun activities which they can do with their children in the session and at home, but it also enables them to form lasting friendships, giving them opportunities to become involved with their local community. For more information please contact Justine Silcock, Family Learning Co-ordinator on 01942 828908.



Vicky has involved her children in the courses.

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Sharing Good Practice

Following its successful inspection, the Adult and Community Learning Service was requested, by the Learning and Skills Council, to host a Good Practice Workshop.

The workshop, delivered at the JJB Stadium by ACL Managers and key partners - including Westleigh Learning Village, Wigan and Leigh 'College in the Community', the Family Learning Team and Working Wonders - was well attended and received.

The Adult Learning Inspectorate Report had commented that:

"The provider has very strong partnerships. The range of partners is very extensive and reflects the focus on reaching particularly deprived communities..... Good, collaborative working takes place in the partnerships, and very good working relationships have been established. There is a strong emphasis on cooperation and mutual benefit..... Partnership arrangements are well managed."

At the workshop, each of the presenting partners explained clearly and enthusiastically their success in engaging learners in deprived communities.

One partner, the Westleigh Learning Village, gave a particularly enthusiastic and entertaining presentation, to the strains of 'Amarillo', demonstrating very effectively the trust and risk taking essential to engage with disadvantaged communities.

The Learning Village embraces the Trees Estate Community Development Initiative, Westleigh High School's 'College in the Community', Extended Schools Area Co-ordinators, Twelve Apostles Nursery and committed Learning Champions from the Trees Estate.

The origin of the Learning Village was a Children's Fund project called Schools in the Community. The two project development workers, who are now Extended Schools Area Co-ordinators, were given the task of engaging a 'hard-to-reach' community, Westleigh, and involving it more effectively with the local primary schools.

From the outset, they went to great lengths to ensure that everything they offered and endorsed would be:

- Accessible for all
- Affordable to all
- Inclusive - involving all

From humble beginnings, offering taster sessions in the Methodist Primary School Chapel and other local school venues, the Learning Village moved onto the next level by taking learning to the learners. The residents were taken on a learning journey step by step. Local clubs were used for hobby sessions and activities in which the residents had an interest and which they could influence.

An ever increasing number of traditional non-learners are now actively involved in:

1. Taster sessions/workshops
2. Short courses
3. Accredited courses
4. Volunteering
5. Community Leadership

Some of these home-grown learners now have the aspiration and ambition to progress onto university education. These include Westleigh's very own NIACE North West Learner of the Year, ACL tutor and local Learning Champion, Wendy Lewis.



Sheila's success story

It's often said that going back to school as an adult can help with gaining employment, a place at college or university, or a promotion at work. Well, Lowton Community Sports College can do all this and more.

Sheila Bell from Golborne began work as an administrator for Lockie Envelopes Limited, a local printing firm.

When the company changed hands, Sheila, together with other members of staff, began to consider their futures. On investigating the jobs market, Sheila discovered that employers wanted to see certificates as proof that an individual had relevant business skills. Despite having undertaken several years of in-service training with Lockie, she had no certificates to illustrate her abilities.

So, Sheila enrolled on a basic computer course at Lowton to increase her job prospects. She secured a job with Business Link (Team Leader), advising and supporting local people who aspired to start a new business. The new role brought with it a considerable pay rise and enhanced prospects for the future. Every year since taking up the post with Business Link, Sheila has continued to gain further skills and qualifications and is currently in the second year of a degree course.

As a result of her new qualifications and experience she is now able to combine her daytime role as a Team Leader with additional work in the evenings, teaching basic computer skills to adults at Lowton Community Sports College.



When asked how she felt about her career progress, Sheila commented: "Without that initial stepping stone of the basic computer course, I would not have been able to achieve all that I have, nor would I have realised the value of adult education programmes. I love teaching adults new skills, encouraging them to progress and reach their full potential."

If you would like to find out more about Adult Education Courses at Lowton Community Sports College please contact Stephen Toole (Director of Community) on 01942 767040 or email Stephen@lowtonhs.wigan.sch.uk

Key Project opens new opportunities

Working Wonders, PPG Industries and the Key Project are working together to engage "hard to reach" learners and offer them first step literacy and ICT sessions.

The new initiative is being piloted at PPG Industries' Learning Room and is proving to be a great success.

One day a week, Adult and Community Learning provides a minibus to transport the Key Project's service users from their base in Wigan to PPG Industries' factory in Hindley Green. PPG provides a free lunch and allows the service users to have full access to the facilities in the company's Learning Room.



Working Wonders' tutor Ann Hirst is on hand to provide literacy and ICT support for the service users. Ann states: "The project is proving to be a great success and the number of people attending is increasing each week. The learners are really benefiting from the facilities available at PPG." PPG Industries' Contract Training Manager, Silka Lyon-Fraser, recognises that engaging adult learners is beneficial for the PPG plant and the community alike.

Silka states: "With the support of our plant management and our employees, we have developed our Learning Room. It has come to life and succeeded because people have used and supported it. We welcome the Key Project group and hope that they will continue to enjoy their learning with Working Wonders here at PPG."

Working Wonders has worked closely with the Key Project for a number of years, delivering basic skills sessions in the Salvation Army Citadel at Scholes and in the Methodist Hall in Wigan. This is in addition to providing basic skills sessions for staff at PPG Industries.

Working Wonders Senior Tutor, Joyce Hanlon, says: "Our aim is to work in close partnership with community groups and industry, to provide flexible, high quality, first-step learning opportunities for adults living in the Borough. The success of the new initiative is due to strong, close partnership working."



Adult and Community Learning NEWS



Emma's charity climb

A learner from Orrell Community Education Centre has successfully climbed a mountain in Morocco, to raise money for the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Battling strong winds, blizzards and altitude sickness, local student Emma Guest and her group managed to reach the 4,167 metre summit of Mount Jebel Toubkal, in the Atlas Mountains.

She has completed the Level 1 Sign Language course, passing the examination last summer. Emma is now preparing for the Level 2 exam and thinking about which course to do next year.

The story began last year when Emma enrolled on the Gift Card Design course at the Centre, as an addition to her Sign Language course.

She said: "I started selling my cards to raise money for my chosen charity, for which I had also committed to take part in the mountain climb. Rather than just asking people to sponsor me, I thought it would be worth trying to raise some money from my cards. I raised approximately £700 from making and selling the cards which is far more than I ever imagined I would."

The mountain trek was extremely challenging and several members had to turn back because the weather conditions made it so difficult. The group was up to its knees in snow and the icy rocks were treacherous.

Emma added: "Although it was very hard going, the feeling of achievement when I reached the top was worth it. In total, including sponsorship, I raised £1350 which I have sent to the MS Society."

Since the trek, orders for Emma's cards have been coming in thick and fast. Over the last two years she has completed bulk orders of over 100 Holy Communion cards for a local church. The money raised from her cards now goes to Wigan and Leigh Hospice.



Some of Emma's cards



Mount Toubkal in Morocco

A welcome lift

Tyldesley Community Education Centre has undergone a major building refurbishment.

The Centre was 100 years old in 2003. After a long period of neglect and being left derelict, Tyldesley Top Chapel bought the building from Wigan & Leigh College and set about reopening it. The aim was to improve the facilities available for adult education and have a focal point for everyone in the community.

Over the last 4 years the Centre has undergone massive building works including a new roof, electrics, repointing, new windows and dry rot treatment.



location and design of the lift. In the past, we were limited to the ground floor rooms for our courses. Now, with our new state of the art lift, we can accommodate all students with accessibility problems who now have full use of facilities throughout the Centre.

We would like to thank ACL for their help in funding this project. It will have a tremendous impact on the way we implement future courses and the day-to-day use of the Centre.

When all the work on the Centre is completed, we will be having an official Open Day to celebrate.



As a partner of ACL, we were asked to submit a bid for funding to DDA Works to bring the Centre in line with the new disability legislation. Our priority was the installation of a lift and the modernisation of all the toilet facilities in the Centre. After many consultations with the builders, we decided on the

Community development

Community learning on the Trees Estate and surrounding area has been going from strength to strength.

The Estate is based in Westleigh and is within the top 10 of the most deprived areas in the Borough. It has proved difficult to gain community participation in learning.

Last December, a Christmas Crafts course was run at St Paul's Labour Club on the Estate, as a joint project between Wigan Council's Adult Community Learning (ACL) and the Trees Estate Community Development Initiative.

This was a starting point to engage with possible learners in the area and fifteen people attended the six week course. The response was brilliant as only thirteen people from the Trees Estate had ever attended classes at Westleigh High School's 'College in the Community'.

The success of the Christmas Crafts course has quickly been built upon and courses are now being run, not only on the estate, but at community venues within Westleigh.

There is a Basic Maths and English class running, with residents taking Levels 1 and 2. This is in addition to a Creative Crafts and a Basic Computer course. A First Aid and Basic Skills course is being offered to the Westleigh community at the Twelve Apostles Club - quite an achievement in six months!

The success of community involvement in the courses has been a result of key individuals in the locality, who have seen opportunities for local people to get involved and do something for themselves.

Sarah's success

One of these key individuals who encouraged friends and neighbours to 'have a go' is Sarah Ball, a 27-year-old resident who lives on the Trees Estate. When she initially contacted the Trees Initiative in April 2005 to volunteer, she couldn't have possibly known what lay ahead. Her confidence was low and she had been out of education since she was 16 when she'd had her first son.



When the Craft course was suggested, Sarah jumped at getting involved and felt that others in the area would also benefit. She became a valued member of the Creative Craft course, which still runs every Tuesday, at Westleigh Methodist Chapel. She learnt several new skills, which she was able to share with her own children at home.

The Craft course had increased Sarah's appetite to learn. Recognising that she needed Maths and English qualifications in order to look for paid employment, she was instrumental in getting Basic Skills classes up and running around the estate. Six people currently attend the Maths class and there are seven on the English course.

Not only has her confidence grown but she has developed new skills in community development, equality, diversity and health initiatives. She has also run an eight week Family Learning craft session, to encourage local families to learn together. All this has come from that initial involvement in Christmas Crafts.

Sarah's days are now full and, from the look on her face, she is beginning to believe she can achieve anything she puts her mind to. She is a great role model for other young women in the area. Community courses run in local venues as part of Westleigh Learning Village and are intended to provide those first steps into life long learning.

Westleigh Trees Initiative Community Board and ACL have supported these initiatives.