

Adult and Community Learning

NEWS

Autumn 2005



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Our visit to Downing Street

Following a PPG Industries and Working Wonders Learners' Award ceremony, Government Minister Ian McCartney invited the organisers to lunch at the House of Commons. The visit was followed by a surprise tour of No 10!

The award ceremony had taken place at the company's premises in Wigan to celebrate the partnership between PPG, Wigan Council's Adult and Community Learning (ACL) and Working Wonders. PPG has an on-site Learning Room where groups of employees are offered Skills for Life courses delivered by Working Wonders and funded by ACL.

The success of the partnership was praised by Ian McCartney who also

acknowledged ACL and Working Wonders' other projects for adults in Wigan. These include free literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages courses at community venues across the Borough.

Note:- For contact details for all Wigan Council's ACL centres, please see page 2.



Ian McCartney with Working Wonders Manager Joyce Harlon, PPG Training Manager Silka Lyon-Fraser and PPG Learner Reps Sandra Daniels and Jim Talbot



Some of the learners involved in the course.

Step in to Learning hits Wigan

Wigan Council's Adult and Community Learning and Wigan and Leigh College have collaborated with Sure Start at Hindley to pilot a Step in to Learning course.

This is a programme designed to raise awareness of basic skills needs, so that people working with parents and children on a voluntary or paid capacity, would know how to help those families.

The pilot programme, funded by ACL, was held in May at the Sure Start Building. It was delivered by Doreen Ellison and Justine Silcock from Family Learning, and Ann Boothroyd, a Skills for Life tutor at Wigan and Leigh College.

Eight learners, all involved with Sure Start Hindley, took part, some of

whom are shown in the picture. The feedback was very positive, with learners reporting that they felt more able to identify basic skills needs and signpost learners. Six of the learners are currently seeking CACHE accreditation for the course.

Another programme is planned for September at Hindley and then, with the help of Sure Start Workforce Team, it is hoped to extend the programme to other Sure Start Children's Centres.

Learning leads to employment

By Tracey Cawley

I enrolled on the Foundation Literacy and Numeracy course when my second child started nursery.

I had been very busy when my first child was young and wanted to join in with everything I could with my second child. I helped out in the nursery at every opportunity. After finishing the Foundation Literacy and Numeracy courses I went on to do the Key Stage 1 English and Maths.

When my second child started school I moved on to helping out in school, making the toast in the mornings. This led to becoming a dinner lady. My older child was not very happy with this, so after speaking to the headteacher, I was offered a post helping a special needs child for 5 hours a week. I then moved on to being a classroom assistant for 17 hours a week working with Y1 and Y2 children.



Tracey helps children with special needs

I attended curriculum and behavioural courses whilst doing this job and worked mainly with the special needs children. I feel that these experiences have made me a much more confident person. I felt that I was beginning to lose confidence as a mum at home with young children. Attending courses and starting a new career working in school has helped me to gain in confidence and lead a more fulfilled life.

Learning for parents and children

By Louise Cooke

I attended the Foundation Literacy and Numeracy courses when my daughter Jessica was at Douglas Valley Nursery.

My son Ben was then only 10 weeks old and was looked after in the creche. I found the courses very enjoyable and informative and made many friends. We all decided to continue onto the Key Stage 1 courses in English, Maths and Science so that we would be well prepared to help our children once they started school.



Louise with Jessica and Ben

The last session of the science course was a workshop for the parents and children which was very enjoyable - even Ben joined in! Tutor Sue Williams made the sessions very relaxed and informative and I have remained in contact with many of the mums who attended.

When Sue told me about the Early Start course that was going to start in the Sure Start Building in Hindley, I was very keen to take part so that I could concentrate on finding out more to help my son Ben. This course was especially enjoyable and Sue and Dionne gave us lots of information in a very stimulating setting. We also had leaflets to take home and read and a gift which related to each session so that we could continue the play and learning project at home.

I am very keen to help my children in every possible way and am now looking for more courses to attend. The knowledge that I have gained has made me much more confident about helping Jessica at school and I am always ready to help at any school function.

A student's story

By Lisa Parr

Many of us will suffer with stress at some stage in our lives but so often it is left untreated.

There are many ways it can affect our physical bodies but we are not always aware of the problems it can cause.

How often have you awoken with a stiff neck and how many times have you had a headache that no painkiller can relieve? This was a continuous problem in my life. I blamed the stiff neck on a bad night's sleep and the headaches on my poor diet and loud children. I never associated them with stress.

Last September I saw a poster in the shops about an Open Day at the local community centre. I decided to go along and see what it was all about. The Learner Support Co-ordinator, Jo Martland, introduced me to a range of courses for adults, on offer at the centre.

As I am originally from Milton Keynes and new to the area I thought this would be a good opportunity to meet people, at the same time take up one of these courses. I was thrilled when Jo mentioned an introductory course in Complementary Therapies, as it is something I had always been interested in and Jo spoke so highly of the skilled tutor. She encouraged me to come along to the next session.

The tutor/therapist, Christine Abrahams, has a more spiritual approach to her teachings. During the course I learned how to give and receive Indian Head Massage (beneficial for those stiff necks). I learned how to meditate and how to use crystals, colour and essential oil therapy to ensure a more calm approach to life. We even had an angel therapy workshop, which was a real eye opener for me.

I am amazed at the benefits this course has brought to my life. Before moving to Wigan, a year ago, I had no direction in my life and had given up any hope of a satisfying career.

Due to my sleep disorder narcolepsy, I have never been able to enrol on a course of my choice through fear of having a sleep attack. As this course is only for 2 hours per week, I have been able to stick virtually to a normal routine, without this problem affecting me. I no longer suffer with the aches and pains and it feels like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders and I have finally taken my first steps in the direction I wish my life to go.



Lisa Parr

At first I was under the impression that this course was a simple taster course and it would give me something to do with my day. However, the enthusiasm and confidence I have gained has given me the inspiration to achieve a Level 1 Reiki Healing certificate that I have studied under Christine's guidance. It has enabled me to also achieve my goal of helping other people in a natural way using my Reiki.

I will be continuing my studies in complementary therapy but also this new approach to my life has given me the confidence to brush up on my literacy and numeracy skills, so I will be enrolling on a Skills for Life course shortly.

Footnote:- Lisa has undertaken Unit 1 of a City and Guilds Certificate in Adult Learner Support to become a Learning Champion for her community. This means she will be promoting courses to people in her area. She will be able to draw on her own experiences to help break down the barriers which prevent people from returning to learning, by telling her own story.

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Successful first year for ACL at Lowton

Since the new Adult Community Learning programme began in October 2004, Lowton Community Sports College has organised 19 courses which in turn have attracted over 300 learners

The courses have included short taster classes and year long programmes in subject areas as diverse as; Floral art, Digital photography, Spanish and Indian head massage.

"The Adult Community Learning (ACL) programme has had a dramatic and immediate impact within the school. The number of adults attending the school as a direct result of the ACL programme has been beyond all expectations, to the point where we were able to meet our performance targets within the first 10 weeks. The willingness of the adults to learn and challenge previously held views surrounding their education, has been a joy to behold," reports Stephen Toole, Director of Community at Lowton Community Sports College.

With sights firmly set on extending and enriching its adult education programme, the

Community Sports College is pleased to announce two significant developments that will come on line in September 2005. A new Adult Education Centre will be opening, equipped with the latest technology that is sure to become the focal point for its future programmes.

The Community Sports College will also be modifying its sports hall to create a community reception and changing area for disabled people, that complies with the standards prescribed within the Disability Discrimination Act. This project, costing over £14,000, has been successfully funded through the partnership with Wigan Council's ACL Service.

Anyone wishing to receive details of the next Adult Education Programme at Lowton please see the Contact list on page 2.



Westleigh High Community Development Manager Paul Andrews reports on a course which unlocks keyboard confusion.

Keys to success

When 72 year old David Clark received a computer as a Christmas present from his children, there was only one problem - he didn't have a clue how to use it!

The keys seemed confusing and although his children tried their best to teach him, he ended up more confused than ever.

David decided to enrol on the ACL Computers Made Easy course at Westleigh High School. He found the whole course extremely useful and because of his rapid progress, he was soon enrolling on the next level.

He now uses spreadsheets for all his home finances and has enrolled on the New CLAIT course which he is well on the way to passing with flying colours! It's amazing to think that a year ago David hadn't a clue and now he is a computer wizard!



David is now a computer wizard!

Manager Sue Hanson paints a picture of one of the courses at Tyldesley Community Education Centre

Praise for Portrait Painting

As part of our ACL provision this year we decided to run a beginners Portrait Painting course and then progress to an advanced portrait painting course.

We decided to run both courses over 2 x 10 week blocks, as this would give the learners a very good insight into the subject and what could be achieved.

We advertised the course through the local press and on posters around the college. It was a free, 10 week course, introducing budding artists to the subject of portrait painting. All tuition and materials used on the course would be provided free of charge.

There was an excellent response and when we calculated our numbers we decided to run 2 beginner groups, Monday mornings 10.00 to 12.00 and Monday afternoon 1.00 to 3.00 pm. On the Monday mornings beginners group we had 14 learners and in the afternoon we had 15 learners.

The tutor for these courses was Christina Martin, who has been teaching art for over 20 years at Wigan and Leigh College and many other educational establishments throughout the North West. She is also a published writer, who is due to have her second book published in America this summer.

She began teaching the learners a few simple techniques - how to lay out a portrait, where to start etc. She then had them drawing faces using pencils, and learning about correct proportioning, placing of people's features, techniques in drawing eyes and noses.

The learners began by using cartridge paper which enabled them to practise and improve their skills before progressing onto canvases or Daier boards.

As the 10 weeks progressed they were asked to pick a subject that they would like to paint. Quite a few picked their pets, a few their grandchildren and the others picked themselves or partners.

They began by sketching the subject they had chosen onto the canvas. If they didn't like certain areas or Christina found something she thought might be improved, then slight adjustments were completed in pencil at this stage.

The learners progressed into painting with whatever medium they decided on. The majority chose watercolours but some who had been taught oil painting in the past, chose to paint in oils.

All the learners who had completed the 10 week beginners' course were very proud of their paintings and were very enthusiastic about starting the next 10 weeks advanced portrait painting course.

On the advanced course we again had 2 groups. They all wanted to learn about portrait painting in much more detail. Christina went into detailing techniques and explained to the learners about different light effects on the portraits, also about shading and definition using colours.

The portraits were really good, considering many of them had never tried to paint one before. The feedback from the learners was excellent and they couldn't praise the tutor or the course enough.

Comments included:-
"It was wonderful to be able to learn a new subject within the world of art".

"To see how far I have progressed over the 2 courses has helped my confidence no end and I feel I would like to continue in this subject".

We had run an Oil Painting course last year through ACL funding, which had progressed onto a Level 1 vocational course. This has just been completed with tremendous results and will now be progressing onto a Level 2.

We have looked at our course portfolio for September enrolment and decided that we could run a Level 1 NCFE course if we had enough interest in it.

We already have 19 names on the list so this looks like Portrait Painting could be following the success of the Oil Painting course last year.

Good news for aspiring Teaching Assistants

Family Learning, supported by Wigan Council's Adult and Community Learning Service and Wigan and Leigh College's College in the Community, have collaborated and developed a programme for people wishing to explore the role of the Teaching Assistant.

The course has been carefully designed to give the learners information about the role and to start equipping them with the necessary literacy and numeracy skills. The only qualification needed to join this course is a desire to become involved in children's education.

Since its launch in October 2003 about 300 learners throughout the Wigan Borough have joined this programme. Most of these have gained Adult Literacy and Numeracy qualifications and many have secured work in schools and/or have progressed to Level 2 courses or NVQs for Teaching Assistants. The course has also provided a much needed progression route into voluntary or paid employment in

schools, for parents/carers on Family Programmes. On one of the programmes held this year at Tyldesley Community Education Centre, tutor Pam Rimmer reports that 14 joined her course and all achieved a literacy qualification at Level 1 or 2. Following their success, 11 learners went on to complete the numeracy part of the course and are currently waiting for their maths results.

Since starting the course, one of the learners, Jane Mulford, has worked regularly as a supply Teaching Assistant. Another, Lisa Woodcock, now has a job working in a before/after school club and is helping to run a holiday club. Both of these students say that they would not have been able to secure these positions without doing the course.



Learners involved in a practical maths session

Teaching Assistants Course

Tutor Judith Lawson provides learners' comments from some of her Cansfield group.

Shirley S - had worked for Barclays Bank for 16 years since leaving school. She worked 3 days and often helped at her daughter's school on her days off. 'I often thought of leaving the bank but had never been brave enough to do it.'

She was unexpectedly made redundant at Christmas, saw an advert for the Teaching Assistants Level 1 course at Cansfield in January and began the course on 1st February 2005.

'I used a lot of knowledge gained on the course to help me with the children. I was helping in school and told the teachers about the course and how I was enjoying it. Then, out of the blue, the Deputy Head rang me and asked if I would help every morning in Year 5 and be paid for it! This course has helped me gain a new career that is very rewarding and makes me smile everyday.'

Amanda S - 'Through the course and my school placement experience I have gained confidence and a new career! I have found it beneficial, enjoyable and rewarding and would recommend it to anyone interested in becoming a Teaching Assistant.'

Sharon D - 'I started the Teaching Assistants Level 1 course in February 2005 after learning about it from an advert. I had been thinking about helping out in schools for a while and this was just the incentive I needed to get me started. The week after starting the course I also started helping out at my daughter's school and am now working with a class of Year 4s.'

Computer course champions

These learners started studying a basic computer course through ACL funding at Dorset Road Enterprise Centre.

They had not used computers before and were keen to learn the basics. After successfully completing the ACL course they were confident enough to enrol onto an accredited course, the OCR Introduction to IT, which they have now completed. The learners are now waiting to receive their certificates.



Hesketh Fletcher in the community

Report by Josie Carter

ACL staff at Hesketh Fletcher High School have been teaching a residents group how they can bid for Lottery funding to convert empty shops into a community resource centre.

Worsley Hall Tenants and Residents Association are hoping to develop 3 empty shops on Ridyrd Street, in the heart of the community, into a community café with meeting and training rooms for all age groups.

The residents group has also been supported in its learning by Wigan and Leigh Housing, who have enabled the group to rent the properties which they wish to develop. The Residents Association meet in Bramble House on the Worsley Hall estate and the new centre will compliment and expand provision for the community.

ACL staff see the project as an innovative way of bringing adults back into learning whilst giving them practical skills that can be utilised for the benefit of the whole community. Once the bid has been submitted, the group will be able to use their newly acquired skills to bid for funds from other sources.

The variety of backgrounds and cultures within the group has equipped them with a range of knowledge and skills. This has given them an insight into the needs, problems and pressures of their community.

The group have also developed a link with Pembec at Kingsdown High School, taking part in its launch as an Extended School. A recent consultancy day, hosted by the school for the Tenants and Residents Association, was connected to learning about the needs of asylum seekers and Black Ethnic Minorities in the local community.

Hesketh Fletcher has been honoured to provide the training for such an innovative and enthusiastic group who deserve all the help and support they can get from public and voluntary agencies.

Working Wonders' successful outcomes

Case studies of some of our learners

Anna
Anna is a 33 year old Social Services Care Worker. She was referred to Working Wonders by her manager.

An initial interview took place and she was extremely nervous and shy. Anna didn't gain any qualifications at school and she felt she would be unable to gain any as an adult. This made her very unsure of her ability to cope with the NVQ. She was concerned about losing her job if she failed to complete the course. A Target Skills assessment showed that overall, she was working at Level 1.

In terms of literacy, Anna's main concern was her spelling, which she felt was very poor and also her knowledge of the use of punctuation. However, she was unsure about working on her literacy skills as she felt she wouldn't be able to cope. She expressed an interest in computers as her children could use them and she thought it would be good to be able to use them as well. Her lack of confidence resulted in her asking for individual tuition as she felt she couldn't work in a group.

Anna attended the weekly sessions regularly which were held at her place of work. Anna made steady progress in terms of skills and confidence. She sat her National Standards Literacy Level 1 test and passed. She is delighted with her achievements.

Her manager reports that Anna has grown in confidence and this has had a beneficial effect on her work. She has also reported to her manager that she feels much more confident in the written work that she has to produce for her NVQ. Anna has now completed several units of her NVQ and is confident that she will be able to complete the whole course successfully.

Susan
Susan is aged 45 and has worked for Social Services for over two years.

Her manager noticed she had problems completing forms and signposted her to Working Wonders. She started attending sessions at PPG, which is near to where she lives. The time of the sessions was adjusted to fit in with her work pattern and that of others attending the group. She says she really enjoys the sessions. She has gained in confidence and skills and has recently passed an Adult Literacy Level 1 test.

Susan says she would not have attended college as she would be put off by the thought of working in a large group.

She has recently started her NVQ in Care and says the literacy sessions at PPG help her enormously with the report writing she has to do. She previously thought she was too old to learn but now knows this is not the case and she is keen to continue onto Level 2.

Her confidence has grown to the point where she has recently enrolled on a SurfDirect basic computer course, through Learn Direct at PPG.