

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 2 March 2021

Lifelong Learning - Community Based Adult Learning

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the Lifelong Learning - Community Based Adult Learning offer to vulnerable adults and families during lockdown
 - 1.1.1 Note the challenges and progress made to establish an online learning option for community-based adult and family learning on the Council's recognised and authorised platform, Microsoft TEAMS
 - 1.1.2 In compliance with Scottish Government guidelines for adult learning due to Covid-19, to note the restrictions and progress made by Strategic and Localities Lifelong Learning Officers toward providing a new blended adult learning offer for Edinburgh, with associated longer-term benefits to vulnerable adults and families
 - 1.1.3 Note that face to face community adult learning will safely resume as soon as Scottish Government guidance and Council priorities allow

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Lifelong Learning - Community Based Adult Learning

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report summarises the development and progress of Strategic and Locality Lifelong Learning - Adult Learning teams to support all forms of adult and family learning during lockdown and include:
- 2.1.1 Maintaining contact with vulnerable adults and families with low literacy, longer term mental health issues, low or no English language skills, adults living alone and the elderly.
 - 2.1.2 The creation of new blended learning opportunities to support and benefit vulnerable adults and families with home learning
 - 2.1.3 Establishing a new and accessible online learning platform for adult and family learning on the council's approved online platform, Microsoft TEAMS
 - 2.1.4 Roll out of 'Teaching on TEAMS' training to Lifelong Learning Development Officers, tutors and business support colleagues

3. Background – Community Based Adult Learning

- 3.1 There are many adults who live alone in our city with little or no regular contact with others. *Edinburgh by Numbers 2019 reports 83.08% of the population is over 16 years of age of which 18.91% are over 60 years of age and 16.91% and under 16 years.* Our communities include parents, grandparents, the elderly, single adults, refugees, migrants and students.
- 3.2 Preventative services such as adult learning provide regular social contact and learning support for learners within local communities. Adult Learning builds confidence through reading, writing and English language skills and contributes to keeping mentally active. Additionally, education classes support adults with longer term mental health issues and can make the difference from someone managing their own mental health to requiring further support from mental health services. In that sense it has a preventative role.

Over 16,500 adults per annum participate in Community Based Adult Learning in Edinburgh. This service provides adults and families with learning support to develop:

- 3.2.1 Basic reading, writing and maths skills

- 3.2.2 English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) to fully engage and communicate with services in their local communities
- 3.2.3 Syrian ESOL for adults/families recently resettled in Scotland via Home Office Resettlement Scheme, includes English language with literacy classes, family learning, homework clubs for secondary school age children
- 3.2.4 Outlook – return to learning for adults who use mental health services
- 3.2.5 Early years literacy programmes for adults/families through Family Learning
- 3.2.6 Fee based advertised Adult Education Programme (AEP) of up to 450 classes per term in 43 venues for 13,000 adults

3.3 In addition to literacies provision, which is funded through Lifelong Learning sessional budget, we receive annual external ring-fenced funding of £250,000 to cover operational costs for ESOL and Syrian ESOL as well as part funding for Outlook classes. The Adult Education Programme has an income target of £230,000 over and above operational costs

3.4 Prior to Covid19, all community-based adult learning was delivered face to face in classroom spaces within 70 venues citywide, including community centres, community high schools, libraries, voluntary sector venues and college. From 19th March 2020, with no access to community venues, the challenge for Lifelong Learning staff was how to maintain contact and support adult learners.

Given the wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities, levels of vulnerability of some people regarding English language skills, we were aware that our learners would face heightened anxiety and additional barriers to navigating daily information and access to services. Some of our learners also lack the confidence sometimes present in the younger generation in the use of digital devices, online platforms and smartphones.

3.5 With Scottish Government Guidelines advocating a blended learning approach for adult learning during lockdown and the foreseeable future, the Strategic Lifelong Learning - Adult Learning team embarked on lengthy discussions with ICT colleagues on how to establish an online learning tenancy for adult use on the council's approved platform Microsoft TEAMS.

In September 2020, we had hoped to get permission to reinstate some face to face adult learning when some buildings reopened, in particular for Outlook and Syrian ESOL learners. Unfortunately, this was not possible as the resources were diverted to other priority buildings including schools.

The main report outlines the adult learning offer we were able to put in place and some of the challenges we met and overcame along the way.

4. Main report

- 4.1 In April 2020, the Strategic Adult Learning Team in conjunction with locality Lifelong Learning Development Officers (LLDO's) conducted learner surveys and needs analysis to identify how we might continue to support these adults and families during the lockdown.

Our priority was to establish and maintain contact with existing vulnerable learners and subsequently identify who felt able and would like to continue learning over the lockdown period. For many adults, including those who lived alone or had longer term mental health issues, the desire to maintain some contact with others was key to maintaining good mental health. Working from home and using their own digital devices, LLDO's produced a range of resources for learners to continue learning from home, in addition to supporting Key Worker Hubs.

Strategic Adult Learning staff created social media platforms to keep adult learners informed of progress, liaised with tutors who provided 5-10 min video tasters of Adult Education Programme classes on facebook live and www.joininedinburgh.org pages. Paper based class materials for literacy and ESOL learners were delivered by staff to learner's homes. 'You tube' video channels were produced for Syrian and ESOL learners creating a range of resources for adults and families to use and participate in online.

4.2 **Microsoft TEAMS – establishing an online teaching platform for adults**

Prior to lockdown there was no existing online adult learning and teaching platform, nor had Lifelong Learning staff any experience of using Microsoft TEAMS.

The Strategic Adult Learning Team initiated discussions with ICT colleagues to discuss preferred online teaching platforms for use by staff and adult learners. This took time to achieve due to several factors, including that some of the more widely used platforms could not be exploited due to Council Data Security concerns.

The only agreed, viable route was to make the existing TEAMS meetings tenancy more adaptable for online teaching use. The ICT team worked closely with the team to make this a viable option. Staff then began the process of identifying staff and tutors who were willing to upskill or had some online experience.

The Strategic Adult Learning team, with assistance from Digital Skills (Libraries), embarked on a training programme for staff, tutors and business support colleagues between August – September 2020. Initial sessions from Digital Skills staff were used to familiarise staff on basic use of TEAMS. Most had no experience of delivering classes online before.

From this we established 'TEAMs champions' within our staff/tutor pool, who cascaded 'Teaching on TEAMs' training to other locality staff teams and tutors. User guidelines were produced by business support and cascaded for staff/tutors on how to support/instruct learners to access and get online. In October 2020, we piloted our first online classes on TEAMs and from January 2021 have reinstated 150 classes for up to 1,200 adults

Supporting Adults and Families during lockdown – what we did

- 4.3 **Outlook learners** were prioritised, given their association with having experienced some mental health issues. Strategic Lifelong Learning staff arranged for regular phone contact to all 120 adults registered and from April 2020 set up a monthly Outlook Newsletter. The newsletter enables learners to receive regular up to date information on mental health services available, to share articles on coping strategies, express their own experiences through poetry, photography, creative writing. More recently learners have taken part in some online classes.
- 4.4 **Literacy learners** were initially contacted by phone and by post. Print and post materials were set up for most students and those close to completing Adult Achievement Awards. Six learners subsequently achieved their awards. LLDO's and tutors continue to maintain contact and set literacy projects and challenges, conducting some classes on Facebook live. Online learning is not ideal for adult literacy learners and although some literacy online classes are available from January 2021, these are restricted to low numbers to provide more individual attention to each learner
- 4.5 **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL):** Classes were suspended until October 2020 and learners directed to free online programmes. From October 2020, once 'Teaching on TEAMs' training had been rolled out to staff/tutors, we were able to reinstate 12 classes at higher levels - Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) 4-5. From January 2021, we have all 32 classes online (SCQF levels 1-5), includes lower levels. The 0800 self-referral number has also been reinstated.
- 4.6 **Syrian ESOL Resettlement Programme (SRP):** Prior to lockdown the Council's Syrian Resettlement ESOL offer consisted of 23 classes (SCQF levels 1-4) for 95 Syrians in community centres across 4 localities. 70% of the Syrian adults in council provision have little or no English in their first language, are unfamiliar with roman script. SRP staff have developed ESOL with literacy classes specifically for this group. It was imperative to find a way of continuing English language support for these families, given the additional challenges they would face.

The SRP staff team set about creating 'you tube' sessions for learners at Beginner level. This resulted in 58 ESOL 'Snacks' produced with over 5,000 views in the first 4 months. Family Learning 'Time for a Story' you tube sessions were also produced and shared with Syrian families. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLegBYwEHLZRWB-VGM1dnA>

In addition to sharing these resources with local, national Community Learning and Development (CLD), College and voluntary sector ESOL practitioners, SRP staff recently presented their you tube channel resources at the National Association for Teaching English & Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA) conference. *ESOL Snacks* and *Family Learning, Time for a Story* have also been recognised as examples of good practice by Education Scotland in a recent publication about lockdown experiences, *'What Scotland learned – 100 stories'* https://education.gov.scot/media/z4elsjeo/what-scotland-learned_100stories.pdf

In October 2020, online classes for Syrian adults began (SCQF 1-3). In January 2021 we commenced classes for Absolute Beginners. Following a consultation with Syrian parents, SRP family learning staff collaborated with the communications team to simplify the school *E-messaging* service for parents and further digital skills learning for parents is now underway. This will enable parents to participate more fully in online learning and to support their children's learning via school channel.

- 4.7 **Family Learning** workers continued to work with primary schools over the lockdown period: delivering transition events for parents and children moving into P1 from Nursery, producing you tube video learning activity sessions for parents including Read, Write and Count programmes

Recently, in response to a survey conducted by the Parent & Carer Staff team, on parental experience of home learning, Family Learning workers have developed materials for parents to use with their children (P1-3, P4-5), whose digital skills are poor and cannot access the school's portal. Initial sessions will be delivered to parents at the end of January 2021 by Family Learning and locality LLDO's in 4 localities, with further training planned to build staff delivery capacity.

- 4.8 **Adult Education Programme (AEP)**

During lockdown, the Adult Education Programme was suspended. The staff team quickly established social media platforms, maintained contact and supported tutors and learners through regular updates and taster videos on 'You tube'. AEP staff including business support colleagues were heavily involved in organising and cascading TEAMS LLDO/tutor training to other Lifelong Learning teams.

Granton Recovery Programme; From May - August 2020 AEP staff worked closely with other key adult learning partners within Edinburgh's CLD Partnership to develop a 'recovery' programme for adults living in Granton/Muirhouse area. The results of a local survey identified emerging themes around 'health and wellbeing and employability' for local adults.

The initial plan was to deliver face to face classes within Edinburgh College, Granton campus. Following college closures in September 2020, the free programme was moved online and delivered by AEP to 304 adults between October – December 2020. Key partners included CEC North West Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Programme teams, Edinburgh College and Stepping Stones, demonstrating collegiate and responsive partnership working to address the emerging needs of a local community.

Resumption of fee based Adult Education Programme classes – January 2021

51 online classes resumed from Monday 25th January 2021 with 780 adult learners booked on thus far, with other courses starting in February 2021.

Delivering a blended learning offer for adults

Whilst we celebrate being able to offer some adult learning online, this cannot and does not replace the quality and wider benefits to adults from a face to face learning experience. Also, the level of support currently engaged by staff to enable learners to access and navigate TEAMS is high and requires learners to have good quality and up to date devices.

A return to face to face classes for our most vulnerable learners from Outlook, literacies, ESOL with literacies is required at the earliest opportunity, as part of a phased return, and as government and council restrictions allow.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 From February 2021, work will continue to roll out online classes across all adult learning specialisms where feasible. Not all adult learners are comfortable or able to participate online, nor have access to devices. Print and post materials will continue to be used for adults with no access to digital devices or unable to navigate online learning.
- 5.2 Feedback on learner experience of online classes will be collated this term. Lessons learned from this period will inform and shape future practice and any future blended learning offer.
- 5.3 A return to face to face classes for our most vulnerable learners from Outlook, literacies and ESOL with literacies including Syrian refugees is required at the earliest opportunity and as government and council restrictions allow.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Staff costs are met within Lifelong Learning revenue budget and external funding resources (Home Office, Scottish Funding Council)
- 6.2 Annual income target of £230,000 for Adult Education Programme is unlikely to be met until resumption of full face to face class delivery. Online class income estimated between £30,000 - £50,000 to June 2021.
- 6.3 External Funding: We receive £250,000 external ring-fenced funding to cover operational costs for ESOL and Syrian ESOL, and part funding for Outlook classes

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Learner consultations were carried out via survey monkey, local and citywide learner surveys to ascertain what adult learning learners needed and felt able to participate

in during lockdown. From this we were able to put in place additional support/guidance for learners on 'How to Access TEAMs for adults to join classes.

- 7.2 Feedback on learner experience of online classes will be collated this term. Once a return to face to face learning, we plan to hold a learner consultation event to help inform the future blended learning offer
- 7.3 The use of virtual online learning has contributed to a reduction in carbon emissions as tutors and learners are not travelling to attend classes.

8. Background reading/external references

8.1 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-community-learning-and-development-sector/>

8.2 <https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/adult-learning-statement.pdf>

8.3 <https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/ESOLStrategy2015to2020.pdf>

8.4 <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/AdultLiteraciesCPDFramework.pdf>

8.5 <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/ESOLMidStrategyReview.pdf>

8.6 <https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/CfE-briefing-10.pdf>

8.7

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34671/12-1243-review-wider-benefits-of-adult-learning.pdf

9. Appendices

N/A