

Making it Happen

The Community Learning Newsletter - Winter 2021
Focusing on Adult Learning in West Berkshire

What a Year!

Mark Browne reflects on the community learning service in 2020.

Thank you to all our tutors and providers for the fantastic way you have responded to the challenges over the last year.

Prior to March the community learning service was on track to another successful year with new providers, a diverse course offer, growing enrolment numbers and an unprecedented high number of qualifications. In addition we were planning a new adult reading scheme, a lifelong learning consultation and new partnerships.

In response to Covid-19, tutors and providers have been quick to develop new learning opportunities. Around 75% of providers moved their courses on-line and a number of new initiatives were introduced such

as [Creatively Engaged](#), an online art exhibition, Recovery In Mind's on-line learner support, PACT's weekly newsletter and the Newbury College [At Home](#) programme.

Thank you for all your support, your work has enabled the community learning service to continue to deliver high quality courses to West Berkshire residents.



*Mark Browne, Post 16 Adviser and
Community Learning Lead, West
Berkshire Council*



Tutor Forum

This year's Tutor Forum was a big success with a record number of tutors and providers attending the sessions via Zoom over a two day period.

Delivered on an annual basis the Forum provides an excellent opportunity for community learning tutors to update their professional skills, gain an awareness of the local and national sector and develop links with other providers across the service.

This year's programme was delivered by the community learning team and included presentations by Clare Middleton (Berkshire School of English) and Shaun Daubney (Newbury College). The two sessions covered the following topics:

- National, Regional and Local Priorities, Opportunities and Challenges (Mark Browne)
- Impact of Covid-19 on West Berkshire Community Learning Service (Alison Prudden)
- Focusing on Local Opportunities (Debbie Ferguson)
- Developing On-line Teaching Skills (Shaun Daubney)
- Creating a Virtual School (Clare Middleton)
- Adult Safeguarding and PREVENT within On-line Settings (Alison Prudden)

For further information or to access the recorded sessions and presentations please contact Community Learning team on the acfteam@westberks.gov.uk or telephone **01635 519060**.

Our Thanks!

- ❑ Resilient - you have all kept going throughout the pandemic
- ❑ Adaptable - you have all flexed the way you work
- ❑ Innovative - you quickly moved learning online where you could
- ❑ Professional – you have maintained high quality learning

We were able to report full spend of our 2019/20 Adult Education Budget (AEB)

Support and CPD

Community Learning team distributed a range of support initiatives to providers:

- ❑ April:
 - Education and Training Foundation on-line delivery support
 - HOLEX peer information on lessons learnt
 - Local grants to support mental health initiatives
- ❑ May:
 - DfE Skills Toolkit launched (range of free on-line courses)
 - Community Education Fund 2020-21 – focus on developing remote learning to support employment, mental health and families
- ❑ June:
 - Community Learning Partnership
- ❑ July:
 - Making It Happen Special Edition (update on West Berkshire provision)

West Berkshire

Training the trainers at the Tutor Forum

2019/20 in Numbers

The 2019/20 academic year was one of challenges and opportunities for the Community Learning service. During the autumn term learner enrolments were high with a wide range of providers and many new courses, particularly those leading to qualifications.

As Covid-19 developed the service responded to changing local priorities around health and wellbeing, supporting families and developing employment initiatives. Providers and tutors took up the challenge to address learner needs through the delivery of new courses, many on-line, and providing strong support to keep learners engaged.

Inevitably the service has suffered with a reduction in enrolments and fewer courses. In line with the rest of England learner numbers declined by around 30% with many of the very vulnerable learners unable to attend their courses. The Community Learning service will be working with our partners and other council services throughout the 2020/21 academic year to address local priorities and challenges and provide West Berkshire adults with a range of learning opportunities to enhance lives and move forward.

See below for a full breakdown of the West Berkshire Community Learning service in 2019/20.

310 Learners aged 60+

30 Community venues used

21 Individual learning Providers

1963 Adults enrolled on a course

225 Courses delivered in West Berkshire

24% Learners have a learning difficulty or disability



Recovering from Covid-19: Sector Update



Kick Start initiative

The Kickstart Scheme is a new £2 billion government initiative to support the creation of high quality 6-month work placements aimed at 16 to 24 year olds who are at risk of long term unemployment.

Access to the scheme is on a DWP referral basis and the placements will be paid in line with the national minimum wage. West Berkshire Council is working with local employers to develop the scheme across the Berkshire region.

For more information, including employer support, go to the [West Berkshire Council](#) or [government website](#).

Berkshire Redundancy and Redeployment Service

To support adults who have been made redundant the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and the National Careers Service have developed the Berkshire Redundancy and Redeployment Service. The service is aimed at employers and employees to support the redundancy transition and to match individual skills and experience with job opportunities across the region.

For more information go to the [National Careers Service website](#), call 0800 100 900 or email NationalCareersService@adviza.org.uk

Thames Valley Covid-19 Business Recovery Survey

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has published the results of a Berkshire wide survey into the impact of Covid-19 on the

local economy. The survey was carried out in June 2020 and included responses from 400 local businesses.

The results will contribute to local strategic planning including the LEP Skills Priority Statement, West Berkshire Council's Economic Development Plan and the Community Learning curriculum plan that addresses adult employment skills, qualifications and training.

Click here to view the [survey results and the LEP Skills Priority Statement](#).

A Positive Outlook for ACL

In mid-December the adult and community learning sector (ACL) was given a boost in [a new report from the Parliamentary Education Select Committee](#). Described as the 'jewel in the crown' of the nation's post 19 education landscape the committee recommended that four key pillars were needed to revolutionise the ACL system:

- A community learning centre in every town
- Individual Learning Accounts to support lifelong learning
- Nurse part-time higher education back to health through the re-introduction of grants
- Skills tax credit to revitalise employer led training

Additional recommendations include childcare, ESOL support, information, advice and guidance and support for adult learners with special needs.

Getting Back to Normal

Learners are returning to the Newbury Community Resource Centre (NCRC) to continue their courses that were interrupted by the lockdown. With most sessions delivered on a 1-1 basis the Centre has worked with the learners to ensure their training is delivered safely taking in to account the government's Covid-19 regulations.

Targeting vulnerable adults the NCRC course programme is a mix of non-accredited provision and qualifications that support adults back in to learning with specific focus on gaining vocational skills and knowledge. The courses develop skills in carpentry, maintenance of electrical appliances, customer service and warehousing.

For those learners who prefer to learn in a group the Growing2gether gardening and horticulture workshops continue to be delivered at Cottismore Nursery. All sessions are delivered in accordance with the government guidelines outside in the fresh air although there is cover and heating if the weather is too challenging!

For more information go to www.n-c-r-c.org/tcs/tcs-training/



Preparing winter hanging baskets at Cottismore Nursey



NCRC learners building flat pack furniture

Sue Edgar has joined West Berkshire Council's Careers and Participation team as a 16-24 year old Support Officer aimed at helping young people in to employment, training and education. She has been a Youth Worker for over 30 years and more recently was employed in the Council's Children's Services as the 'Missing Young Persons Coordinator'.

In addition to her current role Sue has recently become a Trustee

of the Community Youth Project in Greenham. Her main passion is live music and with experience of running the local Battle of the Bands competition she is currently a volunteer at Arlington Arts and Ace Space where she is looking forward to attending gigs once the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

Sue works closely with the community learning team and can be contacted on email: Sue.Edgar@westberks.gov.uk or telephone: 07554 111072



Sue Edgar

Going Fully Virtual

Berkshire School of English (BSE) has celebrated their transition to a fully integrated 'Virtual School' by combining their traditional classroom based school with today's virtual learning platforms.

The school continues to deliver its popular beginners and advanced courses on a weekly basis with ESOL live sessions

being accessed via the learner's phones, tablets, PCs and laptops. The BSE programme includes ESOL, digital skills, citizenship and a GCSE/functional skills maths and English revision programme.

For more information go to <https://berkshireschoolofenglish.co.uk/>



Supporting Business

Like many providers The Real Business Club (TRBC) has turned to Zoom for the delivery of their popular self employment workshops.

The new on-line programme has been well received by learners with many preferring the flexibility and ease of access. In addition the courses have attracted a wider

audience across West Berkshire resulting in an extensive range of learners representing diverse industry sectors and exciting new business ideas.

For more information on TRBC programme in West Berkshire go to: www.therealbusinessclub.co.uk/SYOB



Recovery in Mind

Recovery in Mind (RIM) launched its new programme in September with its Creativity for Recovery course delivered by Sarah Burton, tutor and artist. Learners were inspired by pumpkins and gourds to produce some fantastic artwork using acrylics on canvas.

The RIM course programme provides a range of learning opportunities to enable adults manage their mental health. Throughout the lockdown the RIM team worked hard to keep learners engaged through on-line and telephone support and newsletters. Learners and tutors were delighted to welcome the new academic year which offers an exciting range of courses and activities delivered on-line, in the classroom and out in the community.

Full details on RIM courses are available at:

<https://recoveryinmind.org/>



RIM learners work with acrylics

Connecting Communities in Berkshire

Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB) delivers a range of webinars to support local volunteers and community groups in West Berkshire. The courses focus on maximising the use of community buildings, addressing rural crime, local scams and loan sharks and improving energy bills.

In the last year village halls and community buildings have suffered from a decline in use, an increase in regulations and an inevitable loss of funding. CCB works with local communities to address these challenges in order to continue to provide safe venues that bring people together.

For more information about CCB training courses go to:

<https://ccb2017.wordpress.com/our-projects/training/>

Supporting village halls & community buildings to re-open safely in Berkshire. You are not alone.

"Whilst I had already seen the ACRE advice, and have started to implement the advice given, I enjoyed the interactive nature of the content, and being able to ask venue specific questions. It also helped knowing that "you are not alone" and your questions/fears are shared by others."

"Information was concise and well thought out. Presentation was first class and very thought provoking."

Quote from learners at re-opening village halls post covid-19 training webinar, Summer 2020

More info at www.ccbberks.org.uk



Useful West Berkshire Contacts

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West Berkshire
Public Health
[https://info.westberks.gov.uk/
publichealth](https://info.westberks.gov.uk/publichealth)

West Berkshire
Family Hubs
0118 986 3532
[www.westberks.gov.uk/
familyhubs](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/familyhubs)

Coronavirus (Covid-19)
Community Support Hub
[www.westberks.gov.uk/
coronavirus-communityhub](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-communityhub)

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National Careers Service
0800 100 900

Community Learning Partnership

The Community Learning Partnership aims to develop joint working opportunities to support the development of learning opportunities that improve the lives of people who live, work and volunteer in West Berkshire. Partners work together to focus funding on community groups, increase participation in education, address the needs of disadvantaged learners from

all backgrounds and to develop good health and social well-being, especially for older learners

The next Community Learning Partnership meeting is at 10am on Thursday, 11th March via Zoom.

To become a member go to <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/clp> and complete the online registration form.



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We are committed to being accessible to everyone. If you require this document in an alternative format or translation, please call the Community Learning Team on Telephone 01635 519060.