

National Strategic Forum for Adult Learning in Scotland Learner Voice Working Group

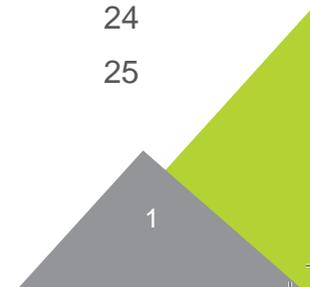
How the voice of adult learners shapes local learning opportunities and influences strategy and policy across Scotland.



Transforming lives through learning

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National Strategic Forum for Adult Learning in Scotland Learner Voice Working Group

Introduction

The National Strategic Forum published the Statement of Ambition for Adult Learning in 2014 and, in consultation with the wider sector, agreed five Strategic Outcomes:

- Adults access, recognise and participate in learning opportunities throughout all stages, changes and circumstances in their lives.
- Adults co-design their learning experiences.
- Adults transform their lives and communities through learning choices in personal, work, family and community settings.
- Adults effectively influence strategy and policy at local and national levels.
- Adults are effectively supported in their learning journeys.

The Learner Voice Working Group is one of four working groups established by the Forum to implement the Statement of Ambition. Members of the group reflect key interests within adult learning (Appendix 1) and we were tasked to work on the Forum's high level Strategic Objectives dealing with learner involvement:

- Adults co-design their learning experiences.
- Adults effectively influence strategy and policy at local and national levels.

Following discussion at initial meetings, the working group agreed to work collaboratively, focus on learners using a range of methods in a co-design and co-creative approach. A first step would be to ask key questions – to 'co-inquire' across a range of stakeholders.

An action plan was agreed as follows:

- Establish Learner Voice Working Group (Appendix 1).
- Analyse existing data and information on current practice.
- Survey adult learning providers and learner organisations to identify effective current practice.
- Creating new and/or enhancing existing professional dialogue for adult learning practitioners around co-design and active participation in policy development.

This paper is a starting point and a summary of information received from our survey on current practice. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the survey and case studies and hope it will stimulate a wider discussion on Learner Voice. (See Appendix 2 for contributors)

Methodology

The group initially surveyed local practitioners, using the contact details from Community Learning and Development Managers Scotland (CLDMS) Adult Learning subgroup. We asked practitioners two questions:

Q1 Where adults are effectively engaged in co-designing learning – what makes it effective?

Q2 Influencing policy effectively – what was the role of Adult Learning in that?

Group members contacted practitioners over the summer of 2016 and received feedback from nine local authorities.

We analysed responses, which we gathered into three headings: what **structures** are in place to enable Learner Voice; what are the underpinning **values**; what **actions** were taken to ensure Learner Voice is heard.

In order to obtain a qualitative picture of Learner Voice activities we then contacted respondents of the initial survey to ask for a case study and also obtained case studies from Adult Learning organisations in the voluntary sector. In all we received 16 case studies covering a range of aspects. They included examples of successful learning, of learners co-designing their learning and systems put in place to promote learner involvement. The following section describes the key points from our survey, which we have illustrated with information from the case studies.

Survey Results

Section 1 Adults Co-design Their Learning Experiences

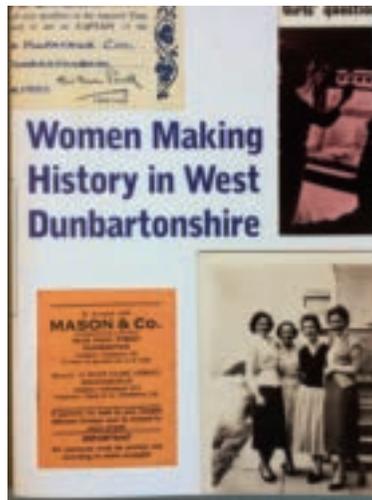
Q1. Where adults are effectively engaged in co-designing learning – what makes it effective?

Key points from survey

Structures	Values	Actions
Accessibility Creating a structure that includes learner voice groups Planning learning Overcome a range of barriers Good use of existing structures and groups Using virtual digital forum Forums Use of technology Social media Ongoing not one-off	Learner centred Personalised/bespoke learning Relevance/knowing limitations Building relationships Developing trust - entitled to be listened to Learners begin to share control of their own learning Voluntary participation Honesty and realism Reflective Recognition and exploration of power dynamic Multi-layer approaches Aspirational learning	Acting on learners' input Active listening to all Recording Create opportunities Generating evidence Evaluation Events celebrating success Provide the context for learner voice Negotiate the "curriculum" Remove barriers Consultation Peer support Active confidence building through real tasks Reflection Involve those who make decisions Communication – newsletters – feedback from learners Advocacy Capture experiences of learner

Glasgow Women's Library (GWL) Women Making History in West Dunbartonshire, Sharing Heritage Lottery Fund

Description



The project worked with 22 participants from the West Dunbartonshire Women's History Group and other women from unemployed/low wage/vulnerable backgrounds to explore the history of the lives of women and through this to improve the participants' confidence and skills and reduce social isolation and create new sustainable resources for the local community.

Participants co-designed their own learning by creating two memory boxes and a virtual box on the lives of women in the past and the project produced a booklet on

the oral history collected by the group.

Training sessions were delivered on recording and interpreting local oral history and on how to collect oral histories from members of the community. Participants were trained on delivering outreach sessions using the memory box and then supported to deliver four community outreach sessions. There has been a real sense of local engagement with the project, with Libraries and Museums partners being involved and local press featuring several of the events the project ran. All of the events run by the project had high attendance numbers.

Impact

This project created a new vibrant women's history resource for the local community and for women across Scotland. The impact included improvement in skills and confidence of the women involved and the recognition by them and others that their life histories are important and deserve to be recognised.

In addition, the participants had a sense of reconnection with their own history and of their community; they also acquired new skills such as memoir writing, archive skills, research skills.

This project won the Women's History Network Community Prize and the group have now gone on to independently start another project about women in the Second World War.

Learning Points and Advice

- Resources created for one sector can be useful in other sectors; for example, a local secondary school teacher is arranging a memory box session and oral history training with her S2 students to link in with a local history project they are doing.
- Being involved in creating the archive of the future has had a confidence building and liberating effect and helped the participants to realise the importance of their own lives within the context of social history.
- Involving participants in all aspects of project delivery, for example, planning, preparing and delivering of workshops, public events and community engagement, allowed the participants in increase in confidence.



Glasgow Women's Library (GWL) in collaboration with the National Galleries Scotland (NGS) - Modern Scottish Women partnership project

Description

GWL's national project and NGS staff at the Gallery of Modern Art (Modern Two) agreed to work together to invite diverse groups who would not traditionally visit museums to the Modern Scottish Women exhibition, the project would also enable participants to co-design their learning experience.

After some negotiation, it was decided to have a guided tour of the exhibition and then some informal workshop/discussion time after the tour. GWL/NGS shared facilitation of the workshops and agreed on diverse methods of engagement. GWL facilitated poetry/writing,

discussion and zine making. NGS provided artist-led workshops along the themes of 'What is strong?' and 'Where in this exhibition do I see myself?'

In all, 71 women attended. There was a wide range of ages, around a quarter were under 25 years and around a half were women of the black and ethnic minority origin. Of 71 women, 49 had not previously visited any of the NGS galleries.



The project culminated in a celebration event for all the participants at the gallery and all participants got a copy of a publication which incorporated a selection of the feedback, discussions, comments, writing and artwork produced by the groups.

Impact

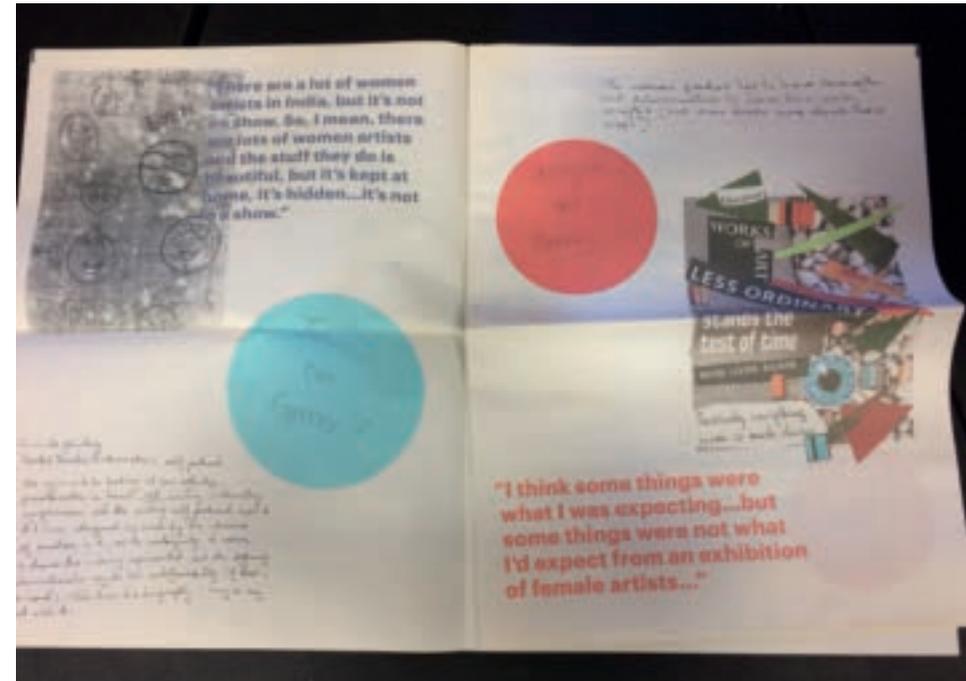
This project brought together several diverse groups of women who would not normally have had contact with one another and they all contributed to the design of their learning experiences. The project led to the Gallery of Modern Art establishing a relationship with several new groups of women who had not previously been to the gallery and it led to a significant increase in both social and cultural capital for the women who participated.

The women felt they had seen some inspiring female role models and had taken part in wide ranging discussion about equality issues about female artists as role models and many other topics.

Learning Points and Advice

There were some challenges:

- Large organisations often have less flexibility and less experience of working with socially excluded groups, changes in numbers attending at short notice can cause planning difficulties. It's important to take into account the different working practices and cultures of each organisation when creating good partnership approaches. The organisers of this project managed to work together on a compromise and resolve the issue and this turned out to be a learning experience for both organisations.
- Because of the environment the groups worked in, it was a challenge to capture the best feedback. Project organisers found it best to use a range of methods of recording feedback but with consistent baseline questions to be asked of all groups in order to measure the effect the project had.



Scottish Book Trust (SBT) – Walk the Walk

Description

Walk the Walk is a graphic novel on the theme of tackling sectarianism, with associated activities and support resources produced by Scottish Book Trust. The key principles in this method are to facilitate collaborative work between professional authors/illustrators and members of the community of readers who will be using the book, to produce work that is inclusive and accessible and to provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and/or teaching resources. For Walk the Walk, SBT worked with six adult literacy groups in developing the graphic novel and a further five to pilot the initial draft.

The activities used in the development sessions enabled and supported learners to co-design their learning experience, recognise that others have different perspectives and to reflect upon links between their own perspectives, experiences and opinions and those of other people in the group and of the characters in the story. Learners enjoyed reading the script together and enjoyed developing characters and being engaged in a creative process. These activities were associated with a deepening recognition of others' perspectives. This was the case for tutors as much as for learners. In particular, some younger participants felt that working with this project gave them insight into the experiences of older generations.

Impact

Scottish Book Trust found that as a result of being involved in the development of their learning in contributing to the novel and resources, adult literacy learners:

- developed their self-confidence and improved their communication skills, especially in participatory or group discussion settings
- increased their understanding of sectarianism and their recognition of the perspectives of others
- improved their reading ability, leading to greater engagement with books.

Learning Points

Aspects that were identified as key to engaging learners included:

- involving learners in the development of the content of the book
- working together as a group
- using an interesting story that is 'realistic' and has relatable characters and settings
- the script format and the practice of reading out loud in a group helped to engage learners as did the use of vernacular language and humour.

The work was independently evaluated by a Researcher from Edinburgh University. The evaluation found that:

- the graphic novel format and the storytelling dimension with identifiable characters caught participants' interest
- difficult subjects can be presented to learners through narrative and visual means
- participants enjoyed taking on a role and reading it out loud
- reading a character's words encouraged learners' participation at a deeper level than reading simple prose.

Advice

- Providing opportunities for learners to include their own ideas in a structured but fun way was found to be very beneficial.
- Involving professionals that were experts in the subject area such as inviting an author or artist to participate in the group.

Section 2 Adults Effectively Influence Strategy and Policy at Local and National Levels.

Q2. Influencing policy effectively – what was the role of Adult Learning in that?

Key points from survey

Structures	Values	Actions
<p>Input to CLD plans and processes</p> <p>Focus Groups</p> <p>Learners Forums</p> <p>Electronic Surveys</p> <p>Adult Learning Group</p> <p>Engagement and meetings with MSPS and others at National Level</p> <p>Development and Implementation of Plans to Meet National Legislation and Guidance</p> <p>Community Planning Partnerships (CPP)</p> <p>Strategic Plans</p> <p>Using National Structures to Raise Issues Identified Locally by Learners</p> <p>Informal representation on policy and decision-making groups</p> <p>Website</p> <p>Digital Forums</p> <p>Using “naturally occurring” opportunities e.g. adult learners week events</p> <p>CLD local partnerships</p> <p>Officer-led activities</p> <p>Public Active Citizenship Seminars</p> <p>Social Media</p>	<p>Targeted Approach</p> <p>Supported to Contribute</p> <p>Different Ways to Contribute</p> <p>Inclusive Approach</p> <p>Partnership Approach</p> <p>Listen and Adapt in Response to Learner Feedback</p> <p>Ensuring views of learners, whose voices are limited, are heard</p> <p>Recognise and value achievements</p> <p>Learning and personal growth</p> <p>Empowerment</p> <p>Link to national policies</p> <p>Local Community Workers are involved in encouraging local people to become involved</p> <p>Free consultations relating to active citizenship</p>	<p>Seeking Views/consultation</p> <p>Analysing Views</p> <p>Telling People Involved in Policy Decisions</p> <p>Information from Learners taken to forums</p> <p>Meetings with MSPs</p> <p>Comments Voiced at Parliamentary Cross Party Group</p> <p>Problems Acknowledged at a National Level</p> <p>Communication – minutes, case studies, records</p> <p>Learners Conference</p> <p>Needs assessment</p> <p>Training for group members</p> <p>Funding</p> <p>Peer support/sharing</p> <p>Consultations/surveys</p> <p>Community events</p> <p>Feedback to senior management/CLD Plans</p>

Learning and Employability – Stirling Council, Learner Representatives (Reps)

Description

The Learner Reps project's aim is to give adult literacies learners the opportunity to have a say in the way that literacies learning is developed and delivered locally. This will support learners to develop ways to influence strategy and policy at local and national levels. Five adult learners have been involved in the group. In particular, it was an opportunity for them to develop their skills and confidence through taking on new roles.

Impact

Learners developed a programme of learning opportunities for summer 2016. More recently, their main piece of work has been the development of 'Learner Rights and Responsibilities'. Participants drew a draft up, sent it out for consultation to all current literacies classes, and then, based on the feedback and altered it accordingly to take account of the learners' views. This Rights and Responsibilities have now been displayed in all our literacies classes. Learners are now communicating and engaging in discussion with Stirling Council Team Members, who they would not otherwise have done so. Participating as Learner Reps is also having a positive impact on the learners' own individual learning.

Learning Points

Learners are not passive participants – they have taken up the opportunity to have their opinions heard and have some good ideas on how to develop provision.

Advice

The group only meets monthly, so members of staff need to remind learners of meeting dates.

Crisis Skylight Edinburgh, Edinburgh: Our City & Who Owns Edinburgh?

Description

The theme, 'Who Owns Edinburgh?' was chosen by learners and, after an initial couple of sessions exploring general issues, the group and tutor designed the remainder of the course, deciding to concentrate on: common good land, affordable and social housing in Edinburgh, self-building, local concerns such as hotel and student developments, and allotments.

The course was a mixture of classroom based (using resources or research learners had done), a Question & Answer session with a housing expert, a guided tour with Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust and a visit to the Grove Community Gardens.

A second course entitled 'Edinburgh: Our City' ran from April 2017. Again the curriculum was negotiated between learners and the tutor and included: a photography mapping exercise in the local area, a visit to the Hidden Door Festival in Leith Theatre, a tour of underground Edinburgh, and a session on proposals for the tram extension.

Learners chose to understand the power structures of their city in more details and be better able to effectively influence strategy and policy at local and national levels.

Impact

Several learners attended a Hustings on housing and homelessness for the local elections. They used knowledge built up on the course to plan questions, with a member who had never voted before asking a question about council priorities as she had seen many new hotels and student accommodation, but a lack of social housing being built. Members also found out about other projects to move onto during visits.

Many signed the 'Let There Be Light' petition after hearing about this during the session with Old Town Development Trust. One member noticed asking herself "who owns that?" about all kinds of things and places in Edinburgh she hadn't considered before. After starting a new job a previous learner said, "I have got so much out of the classes and helped keep me busy and aided my recovery as well as they prepared me for working by keeping me busy and in a routine."

Learning Points

- Keep it current – use issue of current importance and up to date materials.
- Use a variety of methods and learning tools.
- Include visits and tours where possible.
- Provide browsing material for people to read during breaks or take home.
- Design the course together around people's interests.

Advice

- Lots of ideas and enthusiasm at the start of the project was important.
- Don't plan too much so there was still space left in the programme for learners' ideas and priorities to shape things.
- Having an announcements section at the start of the session allows learners to feed in anything they've found out or has struck them since the last meeting.

Workers' Educational Association (WEA) Highlands, Women@Work

Description

The WEA Women@Work project aimed to dismantle the barriers caused by rural isolation, poverty, and inequality, and to give women a voice at home, at work, and in the community. Staff consisted of a Project Coordinator, Information and Support Worker, and a team of Local Network Coordinators (LNCs), who helped to ensure that equality and diversity happened at a grassroots level.

Continual dialogue between the core staff, the LNCs and the learners ensured that a programme of events was designed which responded to learner need while meeting the aims of the project. The project encouraged the women involved to develop ways in which they might influence strategy and policy at local and national levels.

Impact

Women participating in the WEA Women@Work project were equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to empower them so that they could engage with and contribute to society, and benefit from the personal, professional, and lifestyle opportunities available in the Highlands.

Learning Points

Three main themes have emerged throughout the funding period June 2016-17:

- **CONFIDENCE** - confidence issues are deep-rooted and the project sought to address this by ensuring that confidence-building techniques were a core element of each of the workshops. As a result, 86% of women who participated in the programme of events reported increased levels of confidence.
- **THE NEED TO COME TOGETHER** - this was a common theme reported back by LNCs and recorded in participant feedback. No matter the subject of the workshop, the opportunity for women to come together to talk, listen and support each other in a safe, non-judgemental space, was crucial to their sense of wellbeing. In response to need, the project workers provided additional opportunities for women to come together and discover ways of moving forward.
- **DESIRE TO LEARN** - the notes of gratitude on feedback forms, posted on Facebook and expressed to tutors and staff were profoundly moving and are a clear illustration of the desire and need to learn.

Advice

- Listen to the learners.
- Respond to need.
- Be creative in your response.

Scottish Borders Community Learning and Development (CLD) Service

Description

Adult Learner surveys and focus groups

In early 2016 we put together a series of questions and our CLD workers talked to existing learners about these questions. We decided as a team not to go down the “SurveyMonkey” route, but to keep it personal. The areas for discussion included: developing a learner voice, involving learners in the recruitment of staff and volunteers and celebrating/promoting adult learning. The survey yielded some very helpful information, and learners were extremely positive about contributing their views.

We followed this up in May/June 2017 by holding four local focus groups of learners. We introduced the CLD Strategic Plan and asked learners for their feedback on what they wanted to see included in the next three year Plan.

Most learners preferred local opportunities to influence service design and delivery. This is not surprising given the geography of the Scottish Borders – rural with a dispersed population. Whilst it may not be sustainable to have an adult learners’ forum, the principles of involving learners in shaping service design and delivery are just as important in a rural area as anywhere else. We will continue to build in ongoing opportunities to consult with learners to make sure their voices are heard and carry weight.

Impact

- Learner feedback was used to make changes to our adult learners’ awards ceremony in March 2017. This included more focus on learners’ journeys and less time on speeches.
- Learner feedback was used to support local CLD partnership self-evaluations in May/June 2017.
- There is some interest in a Borderwide learners’ day to influence planning for the next three year CLD Strategic Plan. This will be scheduled into the planning cycle.
- Some learners were interested in being involved in recruitment of staff and volunteers. We would like to progress this, if time allows, in future.

Learning Points

- Using discussion, rather than a questionnaire, gave some deeper insights into what really matters to learners (and tutors!).
- Ensure that learners influencing service design and delivery is seen as part of the responsibility of every member of staff and volunteer.
- Be creative and don’t give up if more obvious models don’t work in your area.

East Renfrewshire Council Adult Learning Services

Description

Learner Voice



We wanted to increase opportunities for adults to influence our service and to develop the Learner Voice in a more formal way. We carried out a consultation to plan our celebration of learning event. We included an option for learners to be actively involved in planning the event with volunteering roles

on the day. We used the information gathered to plan the event. We met with the adult learners who had expressed an interest in getting involved at the planning stage. Adult learners decided the format of the event, which partners attended, the information available and what volunteering opportunities were needed.

Some of the learners helped to set up the event space. There were stewarding roles on the day and others worked with staff on the welcome tables. Some learners had their own display tables to share information on: Glasgow through the years, hobbies and useful learning websites.

We held an evaluation event to reflect on the process and experience of being involved in this project. All of the learners felt that being involved in service decisions and design is positive for them and the service. They have expressed an interest in continuing with this active role and have introduced new ideas and suggestions for the Learner Voice to develop.

Impact

- The celebration event was a success and the learners who attended were positive in their evaluations. They felt valued, and that the event was more inclusive as a result of their involvement.
- Staff felt this had been the best celebration event to date due to the learners' involvement at the planning stages and in supporting roles on the day.
- We encouraged learners to reflect on transferable skills and the value of being involved in the Learner Voice project. Learners had gained new skills; they reported increased self-esteem and confidence and had made new friends. We didn't realise how much this project would impact on the individuals in relation to feeling valued and included. There are clear benefits to this work for the service but also for the individuals who get involved.

Learning Points

- It can take time for adults to embrace this way of working as they may have a traditional view of learning and education based on the deficit model.
- It's vital to create safe, inclusive spaces for people to work together, share and be creative.
- Leave plenty of room in your plans for new ideas and space to explore possibilities and take the projects in a new direction.
- Over the past year we have also realised the importance of asking the right questions to support people with creative thinking.



Age Scotland

Description

Over the past four years Age Scotland has been able to offer community development support to Men's Sheds as they have set up in different parts of Scotland.



During December 2016-May 2017 we worked with eight sheds to enable shedders to talk about their personal experiences of their sheds and to describe the positive impact sheds have on their lives. We did this with a view to

writing up the personal testimonies, and publishing the shedders' stories in a booklet, which could then be used by sheds to generate increased support for their activities from amongst policy makers, funders and other stakeholders.

It was important that shedders were able to tell their stories in their own words. We developed a set of interview topics and questions, but conversations were informal and semi-structured to draw out personal stories. The conversations were recorded and transcribed. 30 shedders contributed their individual stories, and we also held tea-break groups discussions with shedders and conversations with shed supporters.

Strong common themes emerged. The testimonies were written up, published in "The Shed Effect" and launched at two Age Scotland Men's Sheds network meetings, hosted by Dunoon Men's Shed and Carse of Gowrie Men's Shed, in May 2017. 500 copies of the publication have been distributed by sheds and shed supporters generating significant interest in Men's Sheds and their power to transform lives.

Impact

- The personal stories provided a wealth of evidence on the positive impact sheds are making to older men's health and wellbeing and to tackling loneliness and isolation. They also put the spotlight on the skills, voluntary effort and commitment that older men are contributing in their local communities via sheds.
- Shedders in Scotland and their supporters have their own evidence to draw on, learn from and make use of, as well as research about sheds and their impact from other countries.
- One important funder has included Men's Sheds in their funding criteria.

Learning Points

- Personal stories, told in people's own words, are incredibly powerful and persuasive. Allow time for the conversations to take place, to carry out transcription of recordings and for contributors to have the opportunity to read over, edit and maintain the integrity of their material.
- Shedders are the best people to speak about sheds. Many shedders gave interviews to local and national newspapers, radio and television on the back of "The Shed Effect", speaking with passion and insight on the importance of the shed in their lives.

Glasgow South Adult Learning Partnership

Workshop and discussion on “Learner Voice”

Description

Following on from the findings from a workshop on Glasgow’s CLD Plan by members of the South Adult Learning Partnership (20th September 2016) and in partnership with Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS), it was agreed by partners that further focussed discussion should take place on the findings from the recent review in relation to outcomes associated with the CLD Action Plan:

- Outcome 1 – Communications, Support, Access, Participation.
- Outcome 2 – Mode and Range of Provision.
- Outcome 3 – Evidence of Impact.

At the meeting of 28th February 2017, further discussion and workshops were held around the “Learners Voice”, which links into the above outcomes.

The session was facilitated by Shaun Pearce from Glasgow Life.

- What are we currently doing to involve and engage with learners in the South Glasgow area?
- How can we involve and engage with learners from across the South Glasgow area?
- What resources would we need to give adult learners and non-learners a voice in shaping provision of services?



Impact

- 11 people from South Glasgow partner organisations contributed to the session.
- South Adult Learning Partnership members have agreed to set up a short life working group to further explore the findings from the workshop.

Learning Points

- Learning providers used a variety of techniques to engage their learners including consulting and assessing their progress, which facilitated learners to influence their learning and give them a voice.
- There are a wide range of different barriers to engagement and participation that we would need to take into consideration and explore further if we are to effectively capture a full representation of learners and non-learners from across South Glasgow.
- We gained a greater understanding of the practical barriers we would need to consider in relation to consulting a wide range of learning communities, size of area, and accessibility as well as participation.



Advice

- We found consulting with community learning providers a great place to start our journey of engaging learners in consultation and feedback. We were able to pool a wealth of knowledge and experience in a variety of approaches in consulting learners at a micro level.
- The exercise also gave us a good grounding of what the barriers might be in effectively engaging and consulting with current learners and non-learners.
- Consulting learning providers from across South Glasgow provided the sub group with a fuller understanding of the wide range of ways we could consult learners and non-learners and what barriers different learners might experience. For example, what the practical barriers might be of involving learners from across a large geographical area.

Airdrie Adult Learners' Forum (AALF)

Description

The Airdrie Adult Learners' Forum (AALF) is an arena for established learners to come together to share experiences and ideas. The members represent and collect the learner voice within the Airdrie area. They consult with adults to see if they can provide a service that helps meet their learning needs and to identify learning opportunities that complement CLD's provision. They develop networks and partnerships which have added to the numbers of Airdrie residents they have consulted with. To continue to increase their skills AALF members have attended a variety of training and information sessions. This has helped to increase the members' skills and knowledge, as well as their confidence, further.

Impact

- AALF's provision includes a Men's Group, Syrian refugees' integration and orientation work, a mental health engagement programme, intergenerational work some of which was with the 16+Hub and the Young Parents Group, a walking group and Airdrie Needlecraft Group.
- Three AALF members have gained employment, one person is volunteering for another organisation and two members have recently secured a place on the Community Education undergraduate programme at the University of the West of Scotland.
- AALF is now providing an adult learning service along with CLD within the locality.

Learning Points

- The work is evaluated in a number of ways using formative and summative assessment techniques. Time has also been spent with the forum members thinking about why we evaluate programmes and also building reflective-practitioner skills.
- All the AALF members now say that the most discernible learning for them is *what they have to say is important*. AALF members have also learned a number of skills during their volunteering that have not only been of benefit to themselves but also to adults who were not previously involved in adult learning.

Advice

- Developing a forum is challenging for CLD staff and partners and requires workers to deal with change.
- Ensure staff have time to discuss and explore this change in provision.

West Dunbartonshire (WD) Learners' Voice

Description



The Learners' Voice Group meets weekly and has undergone development training to up-skill and inform them on topics such as consultation, representation and participation. They have made contact with three local authorities and have ongoing meetings

planned with other learners' voice groups. The programme continues to grow and develop as new ideas and opportunities arise. They have created their own Learners' Voice Facebook Page and PR leaflets; they have been involved in a variety of Learners' events across West Dunbartonshire, jointly promoting the aim of learners' voice and the opportunities for adult learning in West Dunbartonshire. The group has designed consultation opportunities 'Consultation Stations' throughout all adult learning venues in West Dunbartonshire, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity of expressing their views on the adult learning provision. They are currently organising a learner Voice Event with their Development Worker.

Impact

- The Learners' Voice Group have eight active members and 40 affiliated members to the WD Learners' Voice, who are updated regularly.
- The group is currently undertaking the Community Achievement Awards via Kelvin College and hope to gain an SCQF level 5 qualification.

- Through their volunteering work in learners' voice they have also undertaken volunteer roles in digital learning and English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) conversation cafes.
- They are raising awareness of learner voice through the consultation stations and events.

Learning Points

- Evaluation is continual and group work and training evaluated on the day via verbal feedback and noted; events and visits are evaluated at weekly meetings and discussed.
- The WDLV Group enjoy the learning process they have been involved in due to being part of the WDLV and it has opened up new opportunities for all members of WDLV as they have gone on to volunteer for various groups within West Dunbartonshire.
- Having staff time dedicated to supporting Learners' Voice was crucial in developing the group.

Advice

- Having the awareness raising event to launch the Learners' Voice was an excellent way to create a buzz and encourage sign up.
- Keeping the training fun and relevant engages the learners. Ensuring skill development and clear defined aims and objectives of the group was crucial.
- Having opportunities to travel out with their local area visiting other LV groups and national events, helps participants grasp the national picture and become more focused and inspired on what they want from their own Learners' Voice participation.

Conclusion

The group received material which highlighted interesting work happening in different parts of Scotland. In terms of co-design, practitioners have described good involvement of learners in negotiating and planning their own learning. There are also some very good examples of learners influencing policy, particularly in terms of CLD planning. However, responses have also shown that there is a need for improved understanding of learner voice and learner involvement, more so with influencing local and national policy. Given that learner involvement is a fundamental principle of CLD practice and this is emphasised in Quality Indicator “Developing the learning offer with learners” (5.1: How Good is the Learning and Development in our Learning Community), we feel there is a need to reassert the importance of learner involvement in CLD adult learning practice.

There are challenges in engaging learners to commit to Learner Voice activity; it takes strong staff commitment to undertake the work effectively, including training, resourcing and allocating time.

We have outlined some recommendations below, however, we do have to issue a caveat in terms of the ability of the Working Group to carry out research, given that we were a small group meeting on a voluntary basis and that we had a small number of replies.

The Strategic Forum Professional Learning Working Group conducted an online survey of adult educators in 2016-2017. The survey was geared towards establishing the professional development opportunities experienced by adult educators and the professional learning needs identified by adult educators. To help establish whether additional forms of professional development might be required, practitioners were asked to think about the challenges faced by their learners, and to consider ‘which areas of knowledge and skills do you feel the need for learning

opportunities that would assist you in your work?’ 52% of respondents identified that professional learning opportunities to help engage with Learner Voice would assist them in their work.

Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Learner Voice should be at the heart of policy development and must receive continuing support from national bodies and Scottish Government.
2. Inspection frameworks should reflect the role of Learners’ Voice and its influence on policy.
3. Learners’ Voice should be embedded within professional learning for community learning and development workers.
4. Practitioners should build on this learning and expand the consultation with learners.
5. Planning, including the upcoming Community Learning and Development Plans, should include Learners’ Voice at its heart.

Appendix 1

Organisation

National Adult Learning Forum
CLD Managers Scotland
Glasgow Women's Library
Dyslexia Scotland
Scotland's Learning Partnership
Learning Link Scotland
Age Scotland
Glasgow Clyde College
Education Scotland

Name of member

Jane Logue
Oonagh McGarry
Morag Smith
Fiona Dickinson
Tracy Waddell
Jackie Howie
Elizabeth Bryan
Sheila White
Edith MacQuarrie/Cath Mackay

Previous members

Jayne Stuart
Barbara Allan
Rhonda Leith

Appendix 2

CLDMS Local Authorities

Aberdeen City
Argyll & Bute
Clackmannanshire
Dundee
East Renfrewshire
Edinburgh City
Glasgow City
Highland
North Lanarkshire
Scottish Borders
West Dunbartonshire

Voluntary Organisations

Age Scotland
Glasgow Women's Library
Scottish Book Trust
WEA

Resources

Contributors kindly shared the following resources:

Learning Link Scotland – [New Approaches to Gathering Learners' Views](#)

Age Scotland – [The Shed Effect](#)

Scottish Book Trust – [Walk the Walk](#)

Stirling Learner Reps – Roles and Responsibilities

West Dunbartonshire Learners' Voice Leaflet

Thanks to Willie Bhari from Education Scotland for producing this paper on behalf of The Learner Voice Working Group.

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