

Central Dudley Area Committee – 13th March 2007

Report of the Director of Adult Community and Housing Services

Adult and Community Learning in the Central Dudley Area

Purpose of Report

To give an overview of the role and activities of the jobs and training opportunities provided within the Central Dudley Area through Adult and Community Learning and the St Thomas's Community Network.

Background

1. Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Team (DACHs)

The ACL Team works in partnership with the three Further Education colleges, schools, voluntary and community providers to plan and deliver a co-ordinated approach to adult and community learning in the Dudley Borough. The team is funded by Dudley MBC, the Black Country Learning and Skills Council, Advantage West Midlands and the Department for Education and Skills.

The key objectives of the Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Team are to:

- Widen participation, reduce barriers to learning and ensure provision meets learners' needs
- Provide support and guidance for learners to progress and realise their full potential through a diversity of learning achievements
- Ensure highest quality of service delivery
- Ensure equality and diversity is embedded within the organisation through regular consultation with individuals, communities and learners and inclusive delivery of services
- Work in partnership to support a coordinated approach to Adult and Community Learning within the borough
- Implement the e-learning strategy for the ACL Team to increase access to learning opportunities.

Detail of course take up is included in **Appendix 1**.

1.1. Adult and Community Learning Team - Central Dudley Provision

In Dudley Central, within Castle and Priory ward, 57% of people have few or no qualifications¹. This is the highest in the borough alongside Netherton and Woodside and St Andrews, also within Central Dudley. It is nationally recognised that people with

¹ Black ry Observatory – Qualification levels by ward

no qualifications are more likely to be unemployed and this is reflected locally. Therefore, learning, employment and regeneration are the key themes included in all provision that enables people to gain employment, move on and enhance their personal development.

The team works to encourage adults, 19+ years and families to access learning opportunities that are local and relevant to their individual needs. As well as formal education and qualifications, this also covers other community learning activities which enable people to learn new skills and to gain confidence in different areas. We work to remove barriers to learning and bring community based opportunities to those who have previously had the least chance to benefit from learning. To do this, we have developed programmes which have started with where people are – in terms of taking learning to places where people feel comfortable and also by using peoples own concerns and interests as a means to engage them in learning.

Whilst there is educational under-achievement in Dudley Central, there is also educational under-representation. Fewer people gain qualifications and move into further and higher education than other parts of the borough. Community based learning in the Central Dudley area has been designed to actively engage people into learning that is demand led and relevant to local need. In addition, we have created a range of activities and events that enable people to recognise the intrinsic benefits that learning for life gives you. We have concentrated on how to learn rather than what to learn. This has enabled people resident in Central Dudley to engage, to learn, to develop and to gain skills and qualifications.

Community Learning Co-ordinators and Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) Outreach Workers are active across the area working with individuals and groups to provide a range of learning activities and courses. This enables extensive provision in venues and community locations across the central borough area.

1.2 Dudley Wood Neighbourhood Learning Centre has presented a choice of learning and social activities for the local community. The provision is based on identified local need and client demand. Dudley Wood NLC has engaged with 184 local people in 05/06 who have undertaken both accredited and non-accredited courses in a variety of subjects. There have been 1462 enrolments at the centre in 2005/06.

The centre has supported the delivery of customised employment programmes including work with PCT and clients suffering from mental health issues, enabling taster sessions to deal with specific needs then delivering individual progression route planning into further education and employment.

1.3 Castle and Priory Neighbourhood Learning Centre have delivered community based learning. There were 280 enrolments on courses in the centre, 137 of which were residents from Castle and Priory and the rest from the Central Dudley area.

Excellent feedback has been given to the centre through course evaluation forms and letters received. A Castle and Priory learner was given a Highly Commended award at the Learner of the Year Awards in October. The learner gained 7 qualifications throughout the year and has since gained employment. Four other learners who gained confidence and skills at the centre have gained employment.

Information, advice and guidance is an integral part of the service offered within the Neighbourhood Learning Centres. The Nextstep mystery shopper gave Castle & Priory

NLC excellent results of 99% overall and 95% for our outstanding service on information and advice to our clients. There have been 972 enrolments at the centre in 2005/06.

1.4 The Savoy Centre, Netherton has been open for 12 months and it has successfully targeted residents from the Central Dudley area by using the main site and other venues in the target area. The Savoy receives funding from Advantage West Midlands to support a number of targets including: Local People Local Jobs, Business Support and the development of Social Enterprise.

Within the Central Dudley area, learning staff work closely with the Savoy Centre in Netherton, and the Employability programmes located there, to develop a seamless co-ordination of local based services for learning and work. There have been 389 enrolments at the centre in 2005/06.

Employability programmes have included employer forums, work with large scale redundancies and customised individual and group delivery.

1.5 Carelink

Carelink is a programme delivered across the Black Country to support and develop those wishing to gain employment in the care industry. Local unemployed residents are recruited via outreach activities and attend a four week training programme which supports the basic requirements for those wishing to work in the care industry.

1.6 Family Learning in Central Dudley

Family Learning programmes encourage family members to learn together to promote learning as a family, but also within the family. Dudley MBC Family Learning enables people to develop a wide range of knowledge, values, skills and understanding. It actively promotes the intrinsic benefits of lifelong learning for the whole family. For Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN), the programmes have three core aims:

- to raise literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents
- to improve parents ability to help their children
- to improve children's acquisition of literacy, language and numeracy

Family Learning has been successful in the central area with a range of provision in the most disadvantaged areas.

1.7 Partnership working in Central Dudley

The ACL Team have been proactive at seeking out partnerships both formal and informal across the Central Dudley area to maximise the opportunities to engage people in learning. The team have worked with Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge Colleges, Saltwells Residents Associations, Primary Care Trust, Early Years and Childcare, Local Cabinet Members, St Thomas's Network, Asian Women's Centre, Police, Neighbourhood Management, Castle and Priory Regeneration Board, Social Service's, Next Step, Local Schools and Nurseries, Libraries, Job Centre plus and Wrens Nest Community Centre.

1.8 Castle High School

The ACL team have a service level agreement with the school to deliver adult learning on their main site and at satellite centres including working with Age Concern. They achieved over 300 enrolments in 2005/06 academic_year. This learning targeted older learners in partnership with Age Concern and learners in the local community contributing to community engagement. .

1.9 Inclusive Learning in Central Dudley

Significantly work within the Central Dudley area has concentrated on moving away from the provider dominated menu system which has targets and qualifications. Area based learning programmes designed to regenerate deprived areas both socially and economically are enabling more people to undertake learning in the community.

Area Plans for learning in Central Dudley 2007 are complete. New initiatives are highlighted to enable the development of lifelong learning specifically designed to meet individual learner needs.

2. St Thomas's Community Network, Kates Hill, Dudley

St Thomas's Network has a Board of Trustees and is both a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Charity. It was established in 1989 and was a forerunner of the Local Action Centres. At the end of SRB 1, it continued along with the other centres (now Neighbourhood Learning Centres), delivering to those most in need in our communities. The Network is given support from DMBC to do this work; the buildings are owned by Children's Services and members of staff, the Manager and the Senior Administrator, are seconded to work there. However the majority of the funding is raised by gaining contracts and fundraising by the Network itself.

The activities now go beyond what was delivered through SRB. The emphasis then was on training local people for local jobs. This is still at the fore of what is done but the provision has broadened.

For those who have just left school with few qualifications, we have a contract to deliver a programme called Entry to Employment; 16 – 18 year olds learn about personal and social skills, vocational skills and basic skills. They are given the opportunity to do work placements and since August 2006 63% of them found jobs or went to college. There is also a young people's volunteering programme where they are encouraged to 'build on what you're into' whether it be football or singing and to put this into action in the community.

For the younger ones there is a unit (Link to Learning) for 14 – 16 year olds who have been excluded from school or are at risk of being so. For this we had to register as an independent school through Ofsted. We have had some success with this group with levels of 85% attendance and 90% of all students gaining a qualification. For students who had poor attendance at school this is a tremendous progression.

Little Saints is our Nursery; this is a 50 place Full day-care Nursery for 0 – 5 year olds. Since we opened the highest number of children on the register has been 89. We aim for 80% occupancy and although there have been odd days when we have achieved 90% we average 60%. Some of the parents are at work while others are on training courses. The Nursery recently had a good Ofsted inspection report.

Social activities and services are also provided. After School childcare support for working parents (28 on the register), holiday play schemes (63 attended last summer plus another 135 young people in partnership with the Youth and Community Team), an active retirement group (31 members) and many trips and events are held throughout the year. There is a Furniture Store where donated furniture is sold cheaply to people on benefits and low income. A Charity Shop was started two years ago selling good quality household goods and clothes to local people. The Herb project on Jasmine Road provides local people with horticultural training and a place to grow vegetables. It caters also for those with learning difficulties, mental health issues, young offenders and unemployed people. A food co-op is being developed selling fresh produce to the community.

Many local groups use the facilities; Cheerleading, Football training, Karate and Youth Clubs, and the hall is also available for children's parties. Community Theatre is often put on for different groups. The Asian Women's Centre on site uses many of the facilities.

St Thomas's is more than a training centre; it is still a community centre. Over the last twelve months 618 adults have attended courses, 613 young people have been to the centre and 649 people have enjoyed social events, trips and activities.

Detail of course take up is included in **Appendix 2**.

Finance

3. The total Gross funding of the Adult and Community Learning Team for 2006/07 is £2.46m. This sum is made up of £646k of mainstream council funding and £1.8m in grants from external bodies (e.g. The Learning and Skills Council, Advantage West Midlands, European Social Fund etc).

Equality Impact

4. The learning provision is targeted to work with priority groups who would not otherwise access learning. Local consultation and planning ensures that the programmes delivered are the result of the identified needs of the community and supports equality and diversity within service delivery.

Recommendation

5. That members of the area committee note the report



.....
Linda Sanders-
Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services

Contact Officer: Kate Millin
Telephone: 01384 812295

Email: name@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

Appendix 1- Learner Statistics Aug 2005 – Sept 2006.

Appendix 2 - St Thomas's Community Network, Kates Hill, Dudley:
Course Information