

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE
22 May 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Adult Basic Education – Update and Future Work Plan

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Summary

This report summarises Adult Literacies work through the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership and Adult Basic Education Team and seeks approval to carry out a programme of activity which will further support learners' needs throughout Highland.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland report (ALNIS) 2001 showed that 23% of the population may have very low literacy or numeracy skills and an additional 30% may not have the literacy or numeracy skills necessary to perform such functions such as changing job or applying for promotion. This means that as many as 38,000 adults in Highland may have low literacy skills.
- 1.2 Low literacy has been linked to poor health, low socio-economic status, the probability of being unemployed or in a low paid job, lack of qualifications, lack of participation in voluntary community activities, low self-esteem and lack of confidence.
- 1.3 In recognition therefore of the fact that about 50% of the population might need some sort of literacies support, the then Scottish Executive provided funding to allow literacies provision to expand by working in partnership across the CLD Partnership. In Highland, the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership (HALP) was set up in 2001 as a sub-group of the CLD Partnership in order to facilitate a more flexible approach and enable an expansion of literacy and numeracy working.
- 1.4 A HALP Working Group, made up of representatives from partnership organisations distributes the funding which has increased over the years, based on a set formula of need, to currently just over £400,000, to organisations in the community who are working with people who might have a literacies need. This allows people to receive literacies support alongside other relevant activity and enables people to engage more readily with literacies provision.
- 1.5 HALP encourages innovative projects and partnership working and seeks particularly to grow and/nurture embryonic projects offered by small organisations thus helping to build the literacy/numeracy infrastructure across Highland and cross agency. The following partners are currently running literacies projects (excluding ESOL) which are funded by HALP:
 - Adult Basic Education, Highland Council,
 - Workers' Educational Association,
 - Training and Guidance, NHS Mental Health,

- Rag, Tag 'n Textile, Balmacara
- Lead Scotland,
- The Army, Fort George,
- Lairg Learning Centre,
- Skye and Lochalsh Learning Centre Network,
- Deaf Communication Project, Highland,
- Apex Scotland, Inverness,
- Calman Trust, Highland,

- 1.6 Direct provision of support to Adult Literacies Learners is made by The Highland Council through the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Team. Since the publication of the ALNIS report in 2001 the adult literacies provision available through ABE has increased significantly. This has been due to increased capacity, partly funded by the Scottish Government through the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership (HALP). Through HALP, ABE has received £188,000 towards its core running costs this year (2008/9) for literacies provision.
- 1.7 ABE has ten front line staff of whom five are part-time. ABE staff are based in the main areas of population and work as part of their Area Teams. Professional support and supervision and strategic direction is provided through the Adult Literacies Strategy Officer.
- 1.8 The ABE team supports and is supported by 235 volunteers who work with individual learners and as such play a significant and valued role in the work of ABE. All tutors receive training and support from the ABE Co-ordinators. In 2007 fifty five new tutors were trained, giving a total number of two hundred and thirty five working across Highland.
- 1.9 The increase in ABE's work includes that undertaken with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). This work is the subject of a separate report elsewhere on this agenda.

2. Key Aspects of ABE's Work

- 2.1 ABE works with adult learners across Highland. Its work focuses on the goals and aspirations which each person has identified in their Individual Learning Plan. Tuition is provided on a one-to-one basis, with a trained volunteer tutor, or in a small group. There is evidence that improving their literacies skills can have a significant impact on all aspects of a person's life, whether it is being able to help their children complete their homework, complete paperwork and numeracy activities at work, participate in community organisations, or enjoying reading for pleasure. Improving literacy skills can enhance employability and improve progression for those already in employment. Last year ABE staff worked with **977** learners across Highland, **407** of whom were literacies learners. Many of these adults could be described as non-traditional learners.
- 2.2 ABE is seen as a lead provider of adult literacies provision in Highland and as such plays a significant role in partnership projects. This is endorsed by the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership which encourages organisations that wish to undertake literacies projects to work with ABE either directly or in a consultancy capacity. In 2007 ABE worked with 72 partners across Highland and continues to develop links with organisations that may be potential new partners. This includes providing Adult

Literacies Awareness Training. Partners are as diverse as the Army, Inverness and Newtonmore Museums, Learning Centres, the Workers Education Association, and Football Clubs. As a result of this work, new literacies learning opportunities and effective referral systems have been developed.

3. Training and recognition

- 3.1 HALP provides and encourages training for tutors and volunteers. The ITALL training for literacies tutors, which was developed by Learning Connections, is delivered by ABE staff for the Partnership. In addition HALP runs training sessions for literacies practitioners on various topics as evidenced by an annual training needs analysis. These are usually delivered by partners and enable the sharing of good practice. A tutors' conference is held by HALP every second year.
- 3.2 HALP and ABE have gained much acclaim for their effective and innovative work, as evidenced through nominations for local and national quality awards, invitations to contribute to national and international research projects and invitations to deliver locally developed training programmes at national level.

4. Future Planning

- 4.1 The work undertaken by HALP and ABE contributes to a number of aspects identified in the Programme for Administration, particularly building "a skilled and confident Highlands", as well as other national strategies such as "Working Together to Build Stronger Communities", "Skills Strategy for Scotland", "More Choices, More Chances" and the "National Standards of Community Engagement".
- 4.2 Recent changes in Learning Connections, the Government Agency with the responsibility for overseeing literacies partnerships, has disrupted the planning cycle for HALP. It is expected that a clearer picture will emerge during the summer and that a further report will be brought to a future meeting of this committee.
- 4.3 Following consultation with stakeholders areas of work for the ABE team to support learners have been identified which link to the Programme for Administration, the work of partner agencies and the priorities of the Scottish Government. Key themes have been identified including:
 - Family Literacy
 - Numeracy
 - Supporting learners with Specific Learning Difficulties (especially Dyslexia)
 - Culture and Heritage
 - Work place learning
 - Natural Environment

Some of this work will require the development of new resources and the involvement of partner organisations and will be in addition to core work with learners and tutors.

- 4.4 As the emphasis from Government is more and more on people being able to fulfil their potential and contribute to the economy, HALP and ABE are currently looking in particular at providing progression options for literacies learners. This is a task which will engage with the whole of the CLD Partnership.

4.5 Recently new links have been developed between ABE and the NHS team that works closely with Job Centre Plus. The importance of Health Literacy has been recognised by both organisations and it is planned that by working together more effective ways of supporting adults with low literacy levels will be developed.

5. Resource Implications

5.1 HALP funding has in the past been ring fenced for literacies work but has now become part of the funding to support the Single Outcome Agreement.

5.2 The work outlined above will be accommodated within the existing HALP/ABE resources supplemented by new agreements with partners. The existing ABE funding depends on the continued contribution from HALP.

6. Conclusions

It is proposed that the priorities set out in section 3 above and joint working with existing and newly identified partners are adopted as the focus for HALP and ABE provision in order to consolidate its contribution to the programme for Administration and the Single Outcome Agreement.

7. Recommendation

7.1 Members are invited to:

- Comment on the work of the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership and Adult Basic Education Team
- Agree to the areas of work identified in this report
- Agree to the development of stronger links with the NHS and Job Centre Plus
- Note that a future report will be presented in the light of the emerging new arrangements for literacies partnerships
- Note that the existing ring fenced funding for HALP is now part of the Single Outcome Agreement settlement

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 6 May 2008

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Ref:

Background Papers: