



Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum: Transitions Pre-access in Communities Project

This established and successful project has created and continues to develop a range of free place collaborative pre-access opportunities for learners across Fife and Tayside. In the first year of its operation (2005-2006) eight courses were run in three of the four Fife and Tayside local authority areas. This achievement exceeded the partnership delivery target of five, and 104 learners benefited from their participation in these courses. Approximately 1/3 were identified as coming from the lowest quintile on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and just under half progressed on to other learning opportunities.

In the second year (2006-2007) of the project's operation partners have expanded the provision offered. Twenty-one courses have or are scheduled to run across all four Fife and Tayside local authority areas in this academic year. From the courses that have already started over 120 learners have enrolled, and although the statistical impact of these opportunities in terms of progression has yet to be confirmed the anecdotal evidence suggests the number of learners engaged through the Pre-access in Communities project who have progressed to other educational opportunities has increased this year.

By taking a learner needs approach rather than a recruitment approach members of the Forum in Fife and Tayside have developed strong partnerships to deliver targeted provision based on local consultation. Working through existing networks the Pre-access in Communities Project has enabled partners to develop innovative short courses that have demonstrable additionality aimed at reaching those most disadvantaged groups in Scottish society. That the project has begun a process of achieving this goal is evident in the following observations:

'When we started the pre-access project in June 2005 I knew that there was a lot of goodwill and commitment from partners to work together. As with all partnership working we have faced our challenges, but with the support of the transitions development officer and the continued backing of all the partners I feel that we have more than exceeded my expectations for the project. I think we are only now starting to realise the benefits of this approach in helping individual partners to meet their community obligations and for learners the benefits are far more long-term and for many potentially life changing. I look forward to building on our existing good practice and continuing to develop sustainable opportunities for our target learners in Fife and Tayside.' **Keith Mackle, University of Dundee, Chair of Transitions, Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum**

'The support to run pre-access level courses has helped Angus College to reach people in the community who are not yet ready to engage with more formal education provision. Lack of confidence and personal barriers can conspire to keep learners away from a College environment. Running tailor made courses in the community in partnership with other agencies allows us to begin meaningful engagement and start to address the issues that keep them away.'

Iverene Bromfield, Angus College

'I attended a class in Whitfield which was organised through the Adult Learning Worker...This course made me feel more secure in myself and I felt more confident about myself when out and about with my son. It was also good to meet other people. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I laughed for the first time in a while. I was really disappointed when this course finished....I am now considering full time education or a job that is going to fit in with school time such as a class room assistant, or a nursery nurse...I would still like to continue being involved in Community Learning in some way possibly at my son's school when he starts in August this year.'

Learner in Dundee

'Throughout the two years of the pre-access project, the support from F&TWAF has helped encourage a more joined up approach by higher education, further education and the local authorities to the delivery of pre-access opportunities throughout the Fife and Tayside region. This partnership working has enabled practitioners to adopt an innovative, learner centred and bottom up approach to the development of pre-access course,s which have been tailored to meet the needs of traditional non-participants in adult learning in the four local authority areas. As a result, the pre-access programme has reached out to countless learners who would not otherwise have seen learning as an option for them, with many of these learners having gained the skills and confidence required to enable them to progress on to further learning.'

Jill McKay, University of Dundee

'Elmwood College is convinced that the Pre-Access project has made a real difference to peoples' lives. It has allowed rural based, disadvantaged learners to get a supported introduction to learning and has enabled them to access adult guidance thus ensuring that they can make informed choices at the beginning of their learning journey.'

Tom Birrell, Elmwood College, Fife

'I think the pre-access project has made a positive contribution to co-operation and partnership across the region. Planning and delivering courses has provided a focus for joint working, which will have wider benefits for future activity. From a learner perspective, the programme of courses has added to the range of opportunities available and enabled these to be tailored to local needs and priorities. It is early days yet to be looking at progression and impact, but the courses certainly provide a more rounded "first step" for returning learners than might otherwise have been available.'

Graham Hewitson, Angus Council

'Being on the course made me realise I was not alone. I enjoyed getting information about the choices available and always wanted to learn more. It was very relaxed - the tutors were kind and meeting once a week to begin with was enough. Now I want to go on another course and see what's out there'

Learner in Angus

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