



Learning Link Scotland

Annual Report 2009-10



Learning Link Scotland is the national organisation raising the profile of adult education delivered in the voluntary sector.

We **develop** adult learning in the voluntary sector, **represent** the views of member organisations, **support** voluntary adult education organisations and **promote** the value and impact that this sector has on the education of adults in Scotland.

Scottish Charity: SC025308

From the chair **George Thomson**, *Chief Executive, Volunteer Development Scotland*

This is the third Annual Report in my capacity as Chair for the organisation and the community. We've had a positive year welcoming new members to the Executive Committee and considering a change in the legal status of the organisation.

In order to take forward this consideration we first reviewed the existing principles and values of the organisation and analysed them against relevant adult education practices and with key partners. We carried out a consultation with members to ensure the principles and values were fit for the proposed change. After refining and approval by the Executive Committee, Members adopted the revised principles and values for Learning Link Scotland at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October 2009.

We explored during the year changing the status of the organisation to become a company limited by guarantee. The Executive Committee agreed that a clear legal entity, separate from the people involved, ensured the organisation as an incorporated association could enhance its contractual relationships in its own name and develop its funding portfolio and strategic direction. The members at the AGM voted that Learning Link Scotland should seek to become a company limited by guarantee in the coming year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members, the staff and a special thanks to Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council (EVOC) for agreeing to assist us in the process. The Executive Committee and staff have started putting the necessary steps in place with Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and we look forward to reporting on our progress next year.

Welcome **Jayne Stuart** *Director, Learning Link Scotland*

The year was a time for implementing our ideas, working with partners and members to deliver on our first full year of the Big Lottery project, Get Smart. This report will outline activity that took place and the developments in progress with this five year project.

A collaborative approach is fundamental to our projects and services and this year we undertook an ambitious project in partnership with Evaluation Support Scotland. In addition we outlined a successful competitive tender in partnership with Workers' Educational Association (WEA) Scotland and we assessed the first year in our strategic partnership with Scottish Government to build understanding of the work and impact of the voluntary adult education sector. As always each year we are continually forward planning and we highlighted some of those ideas.

2009-2010 Achievements & Performance

22 national/strategic committees and groups representing the voluntary adult learning sector

19 meetings with MSPs and Scottish Government on policy and strategy

Nine events, reaching 240 participants from across education and learning

11 national policies and strategies influenced/developed/ changed through contribution to 22 committees and two consultations

114 participants in consultation events and activities

96 member organisations, 146 practitioners and managers received six policy briefings, two information papers and five electronic bulletins

In this year we completed the first project year of our Big Lottery supported project called **Get Smart**. The project year runs January to December and the first report to Big Lottery was in January 2010. We are pleased with the progress we've made towards our outcomes. It was an exciting start for us and we enjoyed planning, developing and implementing the activities we had set. We had achieved most of our planned milestones and where we had to adjust timescales in relation to some of these, we were confident that this would not impact adversely on the rolling out of the project.

In the first year we established a 2009 Baseline of membership in order to grow the learning community, creating a contact management system and the first phase of building a website with a database which we aim to grow as a focal point on adult education for members and partners. We developed the template for an annual publication to showcase the work of the members and developments in adult education. We delivered a national event, 'Think Explore Influence', four regional events and fourteen consultancies all aiming to improve on the quality of member's programmes, increase their capacity to deliver adult education and evaluate outcomes and impact. Lastly we created partnership agreements and relationships built with relevant partners in evaluation, social enterprise, quality and the design and delivery of adult education.

Between September 2009 and March 2010 we ran a Seminar Series designed to stimulate thinking on the big issues affecting adult education and community life in Scotland. The delivery of the seminars was supported by a grant from Scottish Government, Learning Connections. We engaged four high calibre speakers to lead participants in deliberation at four seminars, attracting 150 participants, who reported increased understanding and knowledge and enhanced thinking, vision and practice in community learning and development.

In partnership with Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) and supported by Scottish Government, we piloted a project for innovation in evaluation called **Explaining the Difference**. We worked with adult learning organisations that were actively looking to develop their existing evaluation work and were keen to make links to national outcomes and targets. The organisations who took part included Lead Scotland, Rosemount Lifelong Learning Centre, Amina – The Muslim Women’s Resource Centre, CraigOwl Communities and the Workers’ Educational Association.

Over 10 months, participating organisations met six times in an action learning set facilitated by ESS to develop a model to describe the ‘outcomes journey’ of voluntary adult learning. The key was to link these to the local and the national strategic outcomes and to have key evaluation questions and indicators to help measure the outcomes of voluntary adult learning.

In addition one to one support from HMIE was built in as an adjunct to the programme to support the development of self-evaluation within the voluntary sector. A reference group convened twice over the course of the project to give a steer, both in terms of usefulness of the direction of the work and in dissemination out to a wider audience.

So what difference did the pilot project make for the participants?

They demonstrated they:

- Were able to see clear links to SOAs and National Outcomes
- Had developed their capacity to become more robust and sustainable
- Had effected change both within their organisation and at a local level
- Had made the link between developing their own logic model and HMIE/HGIOCLD? (2)

We now want to develop the **Learning Link Scotland Excellence Programme** to support best practice in evaluating outcomes. We aim to create a credit rated training programme, workshops/taster-days, tools, resources, guidance and a peer network. The second phase will be launched in the next year.

Volunteers make up a significant and important part of the Community Based Adult Learning (CBAL) workforce. As part of its ongoing strategic development and delivery of services, the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development (CLD) for Scotland set out to consider the needs and aspirations of volunteers who work with adult learners in the community. In October 2010, the CLD Standards Council engaged Learning Link Scotland to undertake an investigation with volunteer practitioners through a **Dialogue with Volunteers** to identify their perceptions, ideas and aspirations in relation to their personal development, training needs and skills development. Dialogue groups were held in Angus, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Moray, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and Stirling. Of the groups reached, four were hosted within

local authorities, and five within voluntary organisations. In some areas, a few of the volunteers also provided additional volunteering roles within college and university settings.

The investigation concluded that the volunteering role is an important aspect of community based adult learning provision. In both delivering and supporting adult learning, volunteers play a crucial role in widening provision of CLD in local communities. Volunteering and the people who volunteered required support, recognition and investment in order to develop sufficiently to meet growing demands and expectations and this must be made available by the hosting organisations as well as strategic bodies. All the volunteers we spoke to welcomed the development of non-formal and formal learning opportunities.

We made recommendations to the CLD Standards Council for Scotland based on our investigation. You can visit the CLD Standards Council website to find out more.

This was the first year of implementing our **Strategic Partnership with Scottish Government**, Further and Adult Education Division. The concept behind the partnership was to set strategic outcomes for the sector which would better reflect the contribution that the membership makes towards the National Outcomes. Strategic outcomes were set to better reflect the needs of voluntary adult education organisations in national and local Lifelong Learning policy and strategies. Our approach to the delivery of the Strategic Partnership Agreement included representing the interests of the sector to national government on a number of strategic committees/groupings. We would carry out consultations with the sector on relevant policy areas and disseminate policy and information briefings and electronic bulletins. We would raise awareness across voluntary sector adult education organisations around the planning processes and structures including the Strategic Outcome Agreements (SOAs) and the National Outcomes.

By evaluating the awareness raising inputs on Lifelong Learning policy delivered at seven events reaching 231 participants:

- 76% of 62 respondents increased their awareness and understanding of lifelong learning policy
- 86% of 44 respondents in evaluations indicated that the input at events helped them to reflect on issues and impacts on adult learning
- 71% of 34 respondents in evaluations indicated that input helped them to raise their own awareness needs and issues

The provision of advice and support in **Embedding the Curriculum Wheel** contract was to support Adult Literacy and Numeracy practitioners to further embed its use across

Partnerships in Scotland. We worked in partnership with Workers' Educational Association to deliver this contract. We recruited three specialist workers who liaised with the local co-ordinators in each Partnership to develop a programme of support to utilise their training grant. Fifteen Partnerships are engaged throughout the whole of Scotland, stretching from Dumfries and Galloway to the Shetland Islands covering both rural and urban locations.

The work aims to:

- Raise awareness of the potential contribution of the Wheel to literacies learning and teaching by supporting development of innovative use
- Support literacies partnerships to promote and encourage use of the Wheel by developing and delivering training to suit their local context
- Promote and encourage use of the Wheel across a range of community learning and development practitioners
- Disseminate innovative use of the Wheel and use Adult Literacies Online to raise awareness of the potential of the interactive Wheel

The evaluation will be carried out in summer of 2010 and the report to Scottish Government will be submitted in September 2010.

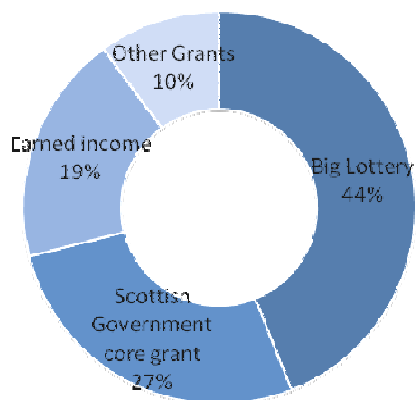
At the Annual General Meeting in October 2009 our members voted to **change the legal status of the organisation**. Learning Link Scotland's Executive Committee and management team reviewed the organisation within the current and emerging social, political and economic context. With a current five year Big Lottery investment, a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Scottish Government, and growing enterprising opportunities, it is a positive time for the organisation to focus on the future. Discussions highlighted the possibility of enhancing the charitable status of the organisation to become a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

The Executive Committee instructed staff to investigate the viability of a change in legal status. In consultation with members, staff reviewed the organisation's principles and values, and considered how they would be incorporated into a new company structure. Members' views were sought via a survey on the reviewed principles and values and were adopted at the AGM in October 2009 to underpin proposed legal status change which the members voted in favour of. Learning Link Scotland engaged the expertise of EVOC to set about applying to OSCR to become a company limited by guarantee and maintain its charitable status. We look forward to achieving company status and the aim is to have the company with charitable status up and running by end of 2010.

Finance 2009- 2010

Our total income for the year was £221,895 and we spent £208,762. The main grants received are shown in the chart.

These figures are extracted from the audited accounts. Please contact us if you would like a full copy.



Our Auditors are Cowan & Partners CA

Executive Committee

George Thomson	Chair
Fiona Craig	Vice-Chair
Joyce Connon	Treasurer
Asma Abdalla	
Stephen Fernand	
Kenny Anderson	
Jack Dyce	
Pamela Couper	
Lara Moir	
Jackie Slater	
Sarah Cox	

Staff Team

Jayne Stuart	Director
Susan Walls	Deputy Director
Shirley Grieve	Head of Practice
Alice Hoepfer	Information
Stephanie Haigh	Administration

We have been supported in this year by



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