

FIFE COMMUNITY GUIDANCE NETWORK
SUMMARY REPORT ON THE GUIDANCE RESOURCE
PROJECT

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Appendices:

- 1 – Questionnaire for Focus Groups**
- 2 – Letter to local employers**
- 3 – Pilot 1 Evaluation Summary**
- 4 – Pilot 2 Evaluation Summary**

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

As a result of a successful bid to the Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum, Fife Community Guidance Network secured funding for the development of a web-based guidance tool. Additionally a small amount of funding for the sustainability of the product was provided by Learndirect Scotland in relation to the Templehall IT Buddy Project.

The proposed aim of this tool was to start with introductory programmes within community based adult learning provision and to develop a web-based guidance tool which would map appropriate progression routes, possible exit points and potential destinations related to key growth occupational sectors in Fife.

The product was to be more than an information resource, but rather, a tool that could be used within a guidance process to illustrate a range of options and likely outcomes and consequences of learner decisions at different stages.

The Jays Consultancy was awarded the contract for this project in June 2006. It was agreed that Joy Boyle from The Jays Consultancy would present a three monthly progress reports to the Steering Committee commencing in September 2006. This is the final report.

1.2 Initial Meeting with Steering Group Members

At an initial meeting with Ray Blackley and Val Ormiston (members of the Steering Committee) it was agreed that the project would concentrate on the following Community Based Adult Learning (CBAL) courses:

- Information and Computing Technology (ICT)
- Childcare/care
- Hospitality/Travel and Tourism

- Call Centres

It was also agreed that where possible the Scottish Curriculum and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) would link courses within sectors to show progression.

Clarification was given that this new resource will be used by practitioners **and** clients.

1.3 Project Team

Three colleagues were appointed in July 2006 to work on this project under my direction. They have expertise in different areas but two of the team have technical expertise in designing web pages.

At our first meeting roles were assigned to the different team members.

1.4 Starting Point

At the first meeting of the Project Team there was a lot of discussion around the base line for the project. It was agreed that the project would concentrate on a benchmark of existing community based adult learners wishing to progress. It was also agreed that we could use Fife Direct as a link for information on CBAL courses. However as all the courses are not listed on this database it was agreed that providing we have examples of the different courses available we could use these as starting points for our illustrative examples into:

- Advanced CBAL courses
- Further Education (FE)/Higher Education (HE)
- Employment.

2 Methodology and Results

2.1 General

It was decided to use a range of methods. Reading relevant articles on Community Based Learning such as *Overcoming Barriers; Enabling Learners (HMLe 2006)*, *Lifelong Learning – Building on Success (Scottish Executive 2006)* and using key words on the Internet for additional information. Meetings were also held with key personnel within community learning, local FE Colleges, employers and the voluntary sector.

Focus groups were held with community based and FE college workers over a period of one month.

2.2 Learning Opportunities

Feedback from the Focus Groups with community based/FE college workers was very positive. Especially from the community based workers as they felt that this is a resource that they could use with their clients as an interim measure before referral to a guidance adviser.

However there was some concern from this group about lack of access to the Internet in some of the community centres. It was suggested that it would be useful to have this information on CD/DVD, however as there are so many 'live' links to other websites this might be a problem.

As can be seen from *Appendix 1* the workers were encouraged to identify any of their learners that have moved into the areas of employability listed: Care/Childcare, Hospitality/Travel and Tourism, ICT, Call Centres/Financial Services. Construction was originally identified as another growth area but a decision was taken by the Project Team and Steering Committee to concentrate on the four areas above at this time. However, at this stage it was decided to add Administration to ICT as anyone working in an office environment requires computing skills.

As a result of the focus groups the community based workers supporting the CBAL programmes were encouraged to identify learners who would be willing to be used as illustrative examples on the website.

A decision had already been taken to use illustrative examples of 2006 Fife Adult Learner Award nominees on the Home Page. Additionally it was agreed that the 2007 Fife Adult Learners Awards would be promoted and that the profile of these awards in general would be raised.

2.3 Employment Opportunities

The Labour Market Intelligence for this report was provided by Fife's Economic Forum in their paper, *Fife Labour Market Overview (2007)*.

A number of local employers in the relevant sectors were identified and a letter was written seeking their assistance with the project (*Appendix 2*).

The response from most of the employers was very disappointing. However, by actively going out and talking to employers a range of employees have been interviewed to use as illustrative examples in the Employment Opportunities pages.

“The ‘visibility’ of employer involvement in programme design was a highly motivational factor for learners” (HMIE 2006:P17)

The methodology for this area was mostly around local newspapers and finding out what jobs were available in the three areas of Fife – West, Central and East. An Internet search was also carried out for employers in the four areas of employability identified and this has been reasonably successful. There are live links to a selection of employer's jobs/vacancies pages and this normally includes a brief on their current recruitment practices. There are also telephone numbers for potential employers who do not have websites.

2.4 Volunteering Opportunities

Information on volunteering in general was taken from the Internet, specifically a Scottish Executive Report on Volunteering (2004). Local information on volunteering was sourced by talking to the Co-ordinator from the local Volunteering Fife office in Kirkcaldy. Information leaflets on local volunteering were also provided along with their website address which will be used on the Moving On In Fife web page.

Four nominees from the Fife Volunteering Awards 2007 will be used as illustrative examples on this page.

3 Piloting of Product

There was a delay in piloting the product due to some confusion as to where the website was to be housed. However, web space was subsequently purchased along with a domain name. The domain name is:

www.movingoninfife.info

This is a stand-alone website but it will be linked to the Transitions home page and Fife Direct homepage.

The product has now been piloted with two different groups from a range of community based provision. The first pilot was mainly with community based learners and tutors. The second pilot was with participants at the Fife Community Learning & Development Partnership Conference held in Glenrothes on Monday 26 March 2007. The results of these two pilots are very encouraging (*Appendices 3 and 4*). The feedback suggests that this website will help to bridge the gap between community based learning, FE college courses, employment opportunities and volunteering. It would also appear to address some of the concerns expressed in a recent HMle report:

Effective collaboration with community learning partners had the potential to encourage and ease participation, and enhance the learning experience. Colleges worked with key partners through the community planning processes to promote access to learning. However, in most cases, local

arrangements for joint planning of provision to encourage and ease transition to full-time FE programmes were not well established.

4 Quality Issues

Once the website is live it will be shown to a member of staff from HMle to seek their views on the product in relation to their report (HMle 2006).

All learners/employees/volunteers used as illustrative examples have given their permission for their photographs and biographies to be used on this website.

5 Technical Information and Issues

Domain name: www.movingoninfife.info

Webhosting

- Site is hosted by eUKhost, using their Windows Gold package - £59.99 per annum, **renewable on 07/02/08**. (Domain name free with this package)
- Web Space – 2000MB i.e. 2GB (current usage is x MB)
- Bandwidth (traffic) per month – 30GB
- Site usage statistics: comprehensive information is available online, detailing site traffic e.g. site access, page hits, volume over time periods (hourly, daily, monthly)

Site Maintenance

- The site has been developed using Macromedia Dreamweaver, and incorporates MySQL code for accessing the internal MS Access database of the course provision.
- Dynamic content: Course database – will require to be updated a **minimum** of once per academic term (dependable, accurate source of data yet to be established)
- Live links to external homepages and sub-pages – require to be checked regularly for having become broken, particularly sub-pages,

which can be deleted or changed in content by the host. Software can be utilised to perform this checking.

- There are currently, as at 28/03/07, 32 home page links and 73 sub-page links. It was a design intention that site would be heavily populated with appropriate links and therefore this is likely to increase over time.

The Future – Possible Site Enhancement:

Ongoing design review of site, possibly by a local review team, to initiate and expedite:

- enhancement of content eg introduction of more occupation areas such as construction industry, new links (home page and sub-page) to identified relevant external sites, employer links, tips, enhanced database search, further utilisation of maps (potentially down to street level for colleges and local learning centres)
- standards compliance – W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) standards – accessibility issues etc

6 Sustainability

The Jays Consultancy has agreed that once the final product is live, probably at the beginning of May, back-up will be provided until end of January 2008 in the form of trouble-shooting etc.

General maintenance: ongoing review of site's static content – spelling, grammar, inconsistencies etc.

On-going training to members of the Templehall IT Buddy Project. This project is featured on the Moving On In Fife website.

7 Conclusions

- All in all the consensus of opinion is that this product is one that will be used by the wider Fife community and this is very encouraging.
- The SCQF works well on the database to show progression between the variety of courses featured. This should assist with guidance on progression routes to other community based or college courses.
- Initially the Project Team was disappointed that Fife Council computers were unable to use a Flash computer package which would have provided animation and interactivity to the website.
- Lack of co-operation from local employers, especially the larger employers, has been very disappointing.
- Because of a two week setback the database and some of the web pages will be 'fine tuned' over the next few weeks, but hopefully the website will be 'live' by the beginning of May.
- Next meeting with the Steering Committee on 27 April 2007 to finalise the project.

8 Recommendations

- There is a need to look at the sustainability of the product. If the website is well used (The Jays Consultancy will provide a report on the number of hits to the website at the end of October 2007) then the Fife Community Guidance Network will need to allocate funding for the extension of web space for the product. This will expire on 7 February 2008.
- It is important that this product is marketed well across Fife as a 'One Stop Site' for learning, employment and volunteering opportunities in

Fife. It has the potential to be used not only by community based learners and tutors but also those from Further Education colleges for exit guidance. A variety of other training and voluntary sector organisations could also find it very useful.

- Potential to promote to local employers as a way of advertising their organisation. Possible route of sustaining the product through an advertising fee.

9 References

Fife Economic Forum (2007) – Fife Labour Market Overview Report

HMIe (2006) – Overcoming Barriers; Enabling Learners – Report by HM Inspectors of Education for the Scottish Funding Council

Scottish Executive (2006) – Lifelong Learning – Building on Success: Edinburgh HMSO