



Community Learning

In addition to colleges and universities, community learning is also an important player, part of the strategy to widen participation in learning and making the important connection between learning and social regeneration. While the economic benefits of learning are acknowledged, learning also helps to promote active citizenship, to strengthen the family and the communities.

The provision of informal learning, delivered in familiar local surroundings, has proved to be effective in particular when engaging with adult learners. These notes aim to raise your awareness about the reasons why community learning is so important in developing learning projects aimed at adults who would not normally participate in education and training, and subsequently, how to engage with these learners when they look to change from informal to formal education.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY LEARNING

Community education is a key contributor to lifelong learning. The capacity of individuals and groups of all ages to participate in developing their own learning is crucial to improving their quality of life.

Through learning, people can come to make a real contribution to their own communities and build the confidence and capacity to tackle wider social and economic issues, such as health or community safety. Skills can be acquired at many levels which are applicable in any walk of life. Community learning contributes to:

- Developing a student-centred approach
- Equal opportunities to all participants
- Addressing barriers to participation
- Promoting a culture of lifelong learning
- Developing a student voice

- Identifying gaps and duplication of courses
- Promoting collaboration and partnership between different organisations
- Invest in core skills provision
- Invest in staff development
- Invest in wide-ranging and socially valuable curricula
- Make learning normal and accessible for everyone

Furthermore, learners can increase their opportunities for moving into further and higher education and into employment. However, taking the step from a community setting onto a mainstream provision, such as a college or university, requires both support and guidance as students may be feeling vulnerable.

Whether your organisation is a formal education provider or a community learning centre, it is at this stage that you can play a major role in enabling this progression to further study to take place. To promote post-compulsory education, it is essential that learners exploring this possibility are carefully informed about all aspects relating to the transfer from informal to formal education to enable them to make the right decision for their personal circumstances.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- What are your local community learning providers?
- What courses can they offer?
- Discuss importance of this type of learning in your community
- Discuss how best to engage with students that want to transfer from informal to formal education



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Local providers
- [PlanIt Plus](#)
- [Direct Gov-Learning outside the classroom](#)