

## *Literacies –with Care*

### Report on 3 year activity 2006 -2009



Following the feasibility study **Sustainable Literacies and the Care Sector** (L.Wilde 2006), Lead Scotland was funded by HALP (Highland Adult Literacies Partnership) to explore a model to build sustainability into Literacies provision for the Highland area, focussing on training and collaborative work with the Social Care sector. Based on information gathered from previous HALP funded projects supporting learners with Learning Disabilities *Literacies – with Care* (Stage 1) was designed and delivered as an action research pilot project in 2007-8 by Lead Scotland in partnership with Adult Basic Education (ABE) and the Workers Education Association (WEA), and funded by HALP.

HALP extended funding to continue the activity in 2008-9 (Stage 2) to widen access to the training in the area and strengthen the sustainability of the work. The programme was subsequently offered to Social Work staff in Aberdeenshire and also requested by West Dunbartonshire. It was disseminated to a wider audience through two national seminars arranged by Learning Connections in November 2008, attracting participants and interest from local council Social Work depts., the Care Sector, the Voluntary Sector and Literacies Partnerships across Scotland. The programme is now delivered through Lead Scotland's Training & Consultancy programme.

*Literacies – with Care* was designed to ensure that learning opportunities in Resource Centres and Independent and Supported Living schemes are recognised and supported by an inter-agency approach even if **dedicated** literacy learning isn't part of the programme.

The feasibility study (2006) identified the opportunity and interest to build on work previously funded by HALP which involved learners supported by the Care Sector.

Building on this evidence *Literacies – with Care* (LwC) Stage 1 had 3 main aims.

These were:

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- Build a sustainable approach to literacy delivery in the Highland area for disabled learners supported by care workers – the model developed should be rolled out across the area
- Raise awareness of cross-sectoral involvement in supporting disabled learners, and increase literacy skills and confidence of disabled people in care settings, both formal and informal, and Social Enterprise setting.
- Meet the challenge of identified gaps in provision e.g. people in Care settings no longer accessing learning, young home-based people requiring additional support for literacy, people with acquired disability affecting literacy skills etc.

During the period of this project another action research project, led by Strathclyde University and funded by Learning Connections, was also exploring the potential learning support for adults with learning difficulties by engaging with their systems of care and/or support and facilitating ways in which learner, adult literacies tutor and carer could work effectively to establish learning opportunities in the everyday life. (*Ref ELALD: Effective Learning for Adults with Learning Difficulties*)

'*Literacies - with Care*' delivered training and support to Care and Support staff to ensure they had an awareness of the social practices model of delivery and that literacy could be integrated into existing daily activity, be that in a formal care setting or related to independent living. Although the aims and objectives of both projects had much in common '*Literacies-with Care*' did not include the adult literacy tutor as an equal partner, but rather as a collaborative partner providing specific literacy learning independently of the care setting. Nor was the aim to involve care workers as literacy tutors, but rather to identify and strengthen the connections between existing support and the literacy agenda, and facilitate the links for on-going support from agencies providing literacy learning. It was anticipated that care staff with an awareness of social practices literacy would be more aware of the literacy connection in their work. Indeed many of the clients in care settings did not access specific literacy support and this was a personal preference. Learning needs or desires could be identified within the project, but it was not a specific aim.

Staff at the training sessions and follow-up with *Literacies - with care* identified that they were already integrating some of this work into their practice but had not specifically identified it as 'literacy' before, nor had they understood its importance. There has generally been a willingness and enthusiasm to continue to be aware of opportunities to consider the literacy elements in support work, and an acknowledgement that it adds value to the experience.



During 2008-9 **122** Care Staff, including managers and support staff, participated in *Literacies – with Care* training across Scotland, mainly in the North. Follow-up has shown that the practice has been integrated into routine activity and staff have identified further training needs to help them to continue to support clients/service users/members in developing literacy skills. It also demonstrates the continued willingness of the Care Sector to provide a holistic and relevant service to its clients, including Lifelong learning opportunities.

Evidence collected for the *Literacies – with Care (Stage 1)* report (L.Wilde 2008) suggested that this is a sustainable and robust model of working. However, it depends on the continued maintenance of good communication and sharing of ideas. The role of a co-ordinator is crucial in building the bridge between the two sectors. Neither sector has time to become embroiled in discussions and activity which are not specific to the other. It is the nurturing of the common threads that extends learning opportunities and maintains skills for independent living. The ELALD research findings also evidenced these outcomes. The two projects complemented each other and provided even stronger evidence for a change in practice and policy for both literacy workers and carers and support workers and their organisational management in meeting the Lifelong Learning agenda

This particular model of support can be adapted to suit the needs of staff working in other supporting settings e.g. Social Enterprise environment, outdoor activity, independent travel training, youth work etc.

Currently a 'Training for Trainers' pack is being written in order that more trainers can deliver the programme.

Lead is working with Learning Connections to write guidelines for Care Sector staff who may be working with learners where literacy is integrated into activity.

There are other local projects around Scotland developing closer links with the Care Sector and it is apparent that the work of Strathclyde University, Learning Connections and Lead Scotland has had a positive impact in the sustainability of literacy provision for adults with learning difficulties in a care setting.

Lynda Wilde 2009

(Reports available on Lead Scotland's website – [www.lead.org.uk](http://www.lead.org.uk))