

A Guide to accessing Community Based Adult Learning for Disabled People

This guide was co-produced by Lead Scotland and a group of disabled people who all have experience of accessing community-based adult learning (CBAL).

The guide was created as part of a project called, 'A Right to Learn', which was funded by the Scottish Government as part of their covid recovery programme.

Lead Scotland produces free online accessible guides for disabled people about post school learning in Scotland and this our first guide dedicated to CBAL.

Find this guide in alternative
formats on our website:
www.lead.org.uk/CBAL

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What is Community-based Adult Learning?

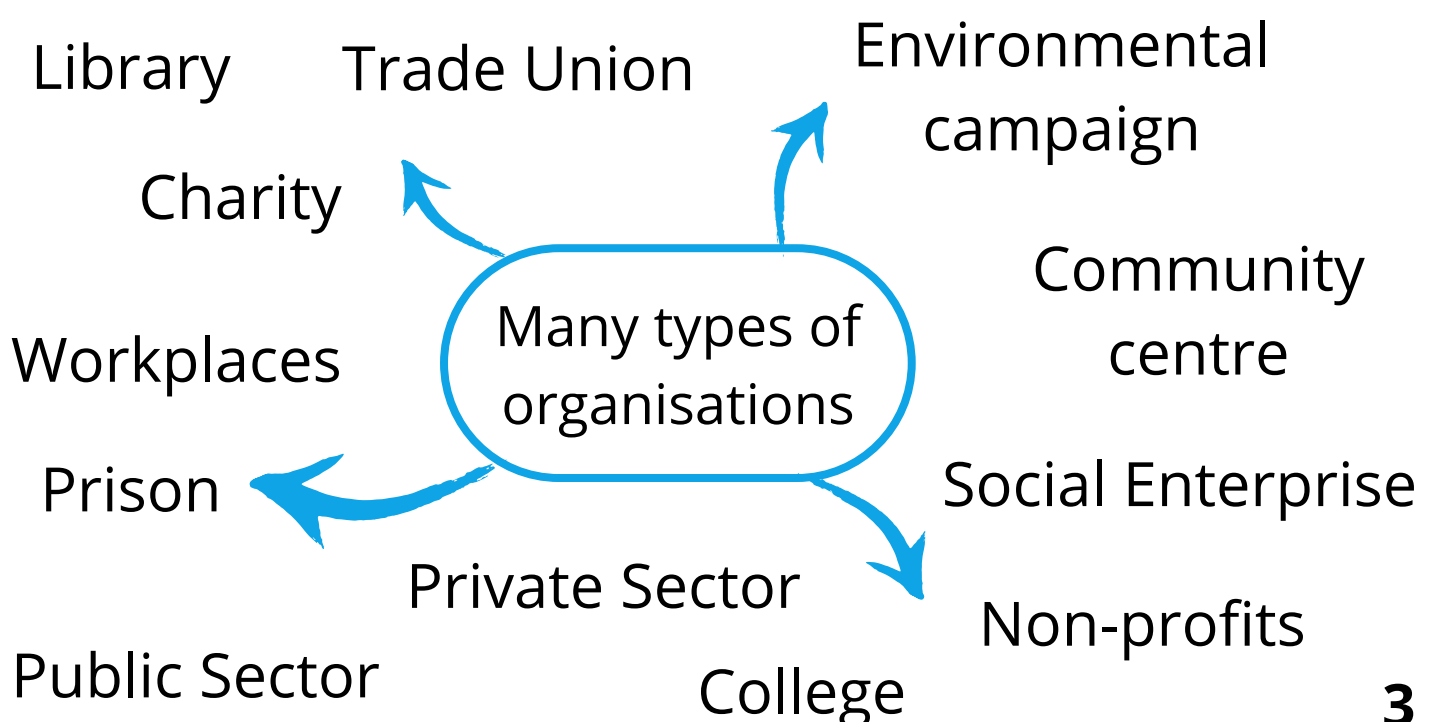
What is Adult Learning?

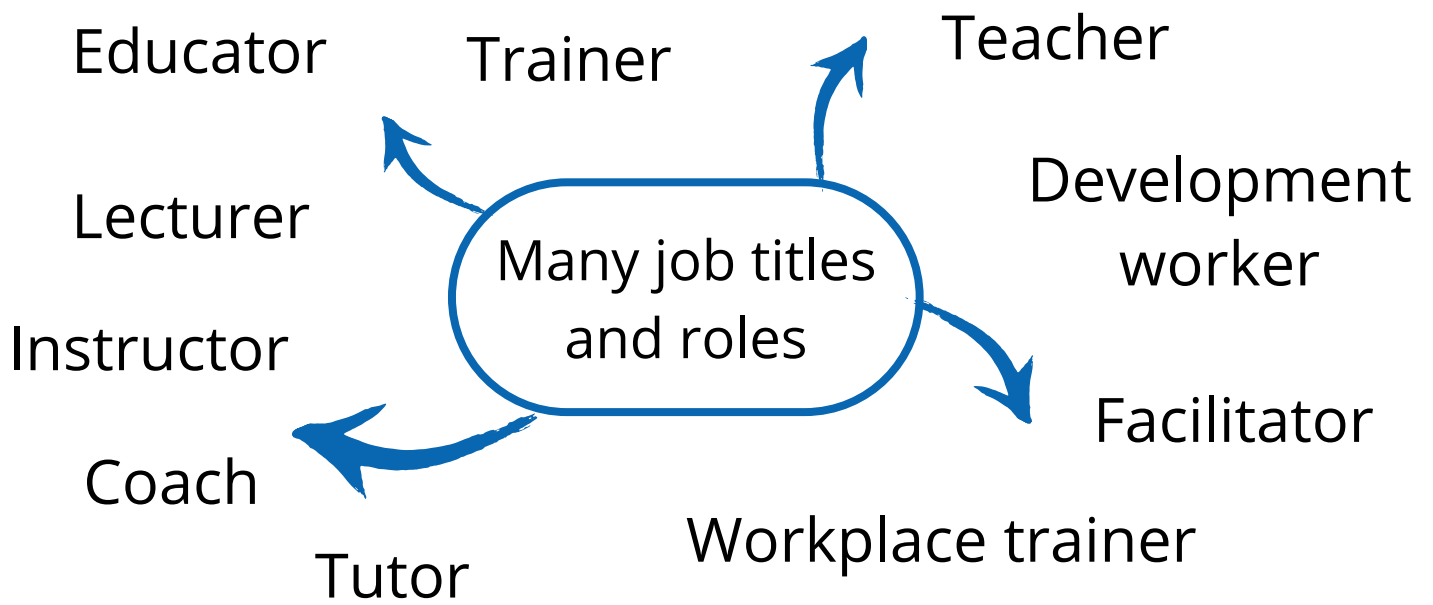
In Scotland Adult Learning traditionally includes 16+ post-compulsory education. The term describes both a course of learning and an approach to learning.

Community based classes are built around the needs and interests of the participants. They should be learner centred with a lifelong and life wide reach. They can be formal and informal, taking place in a variety of settings like community venues, online, at home, in workplaces and in colleges and universities.

What do we mean by Community Based Adult Learning (CBAL)?

Community based adult learning can be provided by local authorities (your local council) and third sector organisations such as registered charities, community groups and voluntary organisations. It can also be provided by colleges. It includes (though is not limited to) reading, writing and number skills, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and digital skills. The following lists show how varied community-based adult learning can be, highlighting the different sectors, places, examples of learning, learners, and ways of describing adult educators there are.



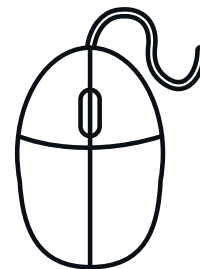


Diverse learners:

- Young adults
- Ex-prisoners
- Retired people
- Families
- Disabled adults
- Workers
- Trade unionists
- Students
- Refugees
- Prisoners
- Women
- Unemployed people

Yoga for disabled adults	Sculpture and painting in prison	Teaching people how to bake bread
Study skills	Dementia care workshops	English for Refugees
Addictions	Diverse learning contexts	Literacy and numeracy
Mental health: coping with anxiety	Women's groups	Distance support in library
Bicycle maintenance, recycling	Sexual health workshops for young adults	Outdoor family learning

Community based adult learning is person centred, inclusive and focuses on the needs and goals of the learners.



Some examples of CBAL include:

- Art for learners with early stages of dementia
- Digital skills for communicating with others
- Combatting stress through mindfulness and meditation



The following would not be examples of CBAL, even though the education of adults is taking place:

- Fine art study tour to Florence
- Digital Skills for financial investors
- Yoga weekend retreat



The first three examples focus on personal and community development, the last three focus on providing expensive, interest-based learning that, although life improving, is funded by the people taking part in the learning and not by public funding.

CBAL courses can also be informed by experiences of community members. For example, adult learners might work together exploring issues of inclusion. A group of D/deaf learners might be working on literacies skills, or a group of adults with learning difficulties might be collaborating on the development of a play exploring issues relating to their lived experiences.

The number of learners per course is usually between 8-12, and tutors who run sessions are sometimes supported by volunteers.

In recent years, adult learning providers have taken face to face learning online to support learners through the pandemic. The adult learning workforce, along with adult learners, have developed digital skills to keep in touch with each other and carry on with their learning.

What are the benefits of doing Community-based Adult Learning?

At Lead Scotland, we think there are lots of benefits to doing community-based adult learning! Here are some of the responses our co-production team gave when asked this question in a focus group:

"It can be done at your own pace, not being rushed to do things"

"Relaxed, not formal"

"Not a competitive atmosphere"

"Can be done at any time, when you function best"

"Can be done when I'm in the mood for it"

"Can stop for any reason, there's no pressure"

"Support useful during lockdown"

"Not the same pressure, allows you to develop and learn at your own pace"

"Useful for people who don't respond well to traditional education, practical learning"

"One to one support can build confidence to move into group-based learning."

"Getting proper support"

"Getting support with funding applications and with my mental health"

"It gives people greater choice, there being such a wide variety of resources and subjects to study"



Who is Community-based Adult Learning for?

Community based adult learning can be accessed through various routes and is available to anyone who wishes to learn. It is life-long, life wide and learner centred. In Scotland, there are several groups who may find it particularly beneficial to access these opportunities.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

A number of people arrive in the UK for work, education, or after an event which has forced them to leave their own country, like war or conflict. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes allow people to develop English skills and meet new people. These classes are vital for people to understand the culture in the country they have moved to. For some people, they may not know anything about the country they have moved to or the language, so these classes help them to engage more fully in their culture. ESOL classes are delivered at colleges, local community centres and by charitable organisations, and are particularly helpful for asylum seekers and refugees.

Mental health and adult learning

Mental health is currently an important issue, especially as the world comes out of a global pandemic. Community-based adult learning can be a very useful way for people to improve their mental wellbeing as it is very accessible. Third sector organisations like mental health charities offer free courses in local communities on subjects like managing stress and anxiety and learning how to use mindfulness techniques. Lots of charities have also developed free apps you can download to your mobile phone or online resources so you can learn tools to support your mental health at home. You can read more about this in our CBAL and mental health section on page 20.

Adults returning to learning

People can decide to learn something new at any time. Many adults, who decide to make a career change may need to access adult learning to learn the skills they require to progress. This might be the first time they are accessing learning since leaving school. As the world changes, especially since the covid pandemic, many people need to access adult learning to adapt to this new world. It can be very daunting for people who have been out of learning to get back into it, so CBAL can be an ideal place to start, as it can be a very flexible and supportive way to learn. Personal tutors are a great support to people who may be new to learning, as they can provide guidance and encouragement to help you settle into the learning environment.

People with low literacy and numeracy skills

Literacy and numeracy (reading, writing and numbers) are considered core skills people need to be able to access formal education and go into employment. Unfortunately, not everyone had the opportunity to learn these skills effectively when they were at school. CBAL is therefore an ideal environment for people to gain the confidence and knowledge they need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. These classes are widely available to adults across Scotland in local community centres and various other settings. See our 'What can you learn?' section on page 9 for further information.

People with low confidence or other barriers to learning

Lots of people might want to learn something new, but they might not be ready to make the commitment of doing something like a formal college course, as it could feel quite daunting. This may be because they don't have a lot of confidence, or because they may not be able to access a course due to health, disability or for care related reasons. CBAL offers a much more flexible approach and can often fit around people's lives and personal circumstances.

How can you get started? Where can you do CBAL? What can you learn?

- How to get started

There are lots of different ways you can get started with community-based adult learning. If you're getting support from someone, for example a social worker or support worker, they might be able to help you find local classes in your area.

Another good place to start would be by looking online. Every council area (or 'local authority') in Scotland has a department providing some form of adult learning. This is often found under the heading 'community, learning and development' or 'adult learning' on a council's website. The easiest way to find learning opportunities in your council area is to do an internet search for the name of your council (for example 'Edinburgh Council') followed by adult learning, and see what results come up. There might be a programme of courses you can book onto or an email address or phone number of someone who works in adult learning you could contact to ask for information.

The WEA is a charity dedicated to bringing high quality learning into the heart of communities. With the support of nearly 3,000 volunteers, 2,000 tutors and over 10,000 members across the UK, they deliver friendly, accessible and enjoyable courses for adults from all walks of life. You can search for courses by theme, subject or outcome on [the WEA website here](#).

You can also search for learning opportunities via the [My World of Work website](#) in the 'Learn and Train' section. You can search for [free online courses](#) as well as under the [further and higher education courses and training search button](#). You could also try looking at the websites and social media pages of your local colleges, universities, libraries, and community centres to see if they're advertising any community-based adult learning opportunities.

Another great way to get started is by word of mouth. Chat to your friends and family – perhaps they've been involved in a CBAL activity they loved or know someone else who has. You could also look out for posters and leaflets advertising courses in your local community venues and shops. In addition to your local council, there are many third sector organisations (charities and voluntary organisations) that also provide CBAL. If you know the names of any services in your area, you could check their website and social media pages, phone them up or if they have a drop in facility, you could go along and chat to someone to find out more.

- Where can you do CBAL?

There are many different locations and venues available for you to learn. If you're accessing a council run course, you'll likely be learning in a public venue like your local library, church hall or community centre. Third sector organisations might also rent out rooms from community venues, or they may run courses from their own premises. Some colleges and universities also run community-based adult learning classes on their campuses, often in the evenings and at weekends (separate from their full and part time courses of further and higher education).

If you're learning a course 'remotely', or via distance learning, this is just another way of describing the learning as online. You might log on to access learning materials in your own time, or you may be matched with a volunteer or with a tutor and meet with them at specific times online via video conferencing tools like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Lead Scotland has some services that will match you with a volunteer or a tutor, and they will meet you in a community venue, online and in some cases (covid depending), they could even visit you at home. Have a look at [our website](#) to find out more about where we currently offer community-based adult learning.



You might be doing a practical course that takes place while you learn, for example in a kitchen learning cookery skills, or outside in a garden learning horticultural skills. You might also be doing something called 'context free' learning, where you are developing a whole range of skills while you work or volunteer or carry out your daily activities. For example Lead Scotland delivers a qualification called the [Adult Achievement Award](#), which allows you to record and reflect on the skills you develop in different settings in your everyday life. For example, you might volunteer at a museum or a school or be an unpaid carer, so you can reflect on the learning you develop while carrying out your activities. So, in summary, you can basically learn anywhere!

- What can you learn?

Through a community-based adult learning course you can take your first step back into learning and just begin the process of getting out of the house, meeting new people, and building up your confidence.

CBAL covers many different subjects and types of learning, both formal (learning which leads to a qualification) and informal. For example, you could:

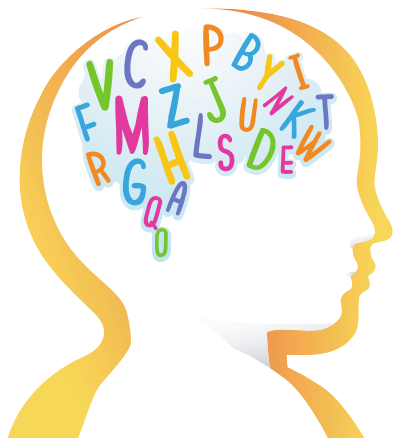
- Do courses to improve your mental or physical wellbeing.
- Learn core skills, like interpersonal skills, communication skills, or citizenship.
- Get support to access other learning opportunities or employment, like volunteering.
- Learn new skills or brush up on existing ones, for example reading, writing, or using digital technology.
- Do short courses to meet your interests in particular areas, like cooking, baking, upholstery, watercolour painting, crochet, driving theory... (the list goes on!)



- Do general or work-related courses in areas such as care, retail, customer service or office work, which might give you the qualifications needed to progress to further learning or as qualifications in their own right.
- Do access courses which are designed specifically for learners who need additional support and might include things like independent living skills.
- Take a course to learn how to better support your children and provide a foundation for making improvements in health for the whole family.

Other types of learning:

- 'The Big Plus' helps adults to improve their reading, writing and number skills. It is a free service that allows you to work with a tutor in places like libraries, community centres or colleges. It is a flexible method of learning, and attendance can be suited around your individual needs. For more information, call the Big Plus helpline on 0800 917 8000 or go to the [Big Plus website](#).
- If English isn't your first language and you want to improve your verbal and written skills, an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course could help. These courses can be taken in many learning centres and colleges across Scotland. Google 'ESOL' and the name of the local authority (council) area you live in to find courses. You could also try searching on the [Scottish Refugee Council's website here](#). Type 'ESOL' in the search for bar then click on near me in the location bar.



Using Community-based Adult Learning to influence change

This section will explore a variety of ways disabled people can use community-based adult learning to influence change. There are several courses, programmes and organisations which can enable disabled people to increase their skills, knowledge, and confidence to get involved with politics and learn how to campaign for the issues that matter to them.

Partners in Policymaking



[Partners in Policymaking](#) is a course run by [InControl Scotland](#), a national charity working to create a more inclusive society. The course is designed to equip disabled adults and parents of disabled children with the skills they need to negotiate various support systems. It is aimed at those who want to improve the way services are delivered for disabled people. The course is filled with speakers from all over the world who have different views and experiences of inclusion. It is split into eight weekends over eight months, each exploring a different topic. These range from the history of disability, education, and self-directed support (see Ashleigh's case study) to how to live independently. Within these broad topics are nuggets of tools which can be used to help people to live their best life. It is well worth investing in the eight months as you can learn so many different tools. The uniqueness of Partners in Policymaking is that it brings people together from all over Scotland and builds lasting friendships. This type of learning is lifelong as people can continue to learn long after they complete the course. It is a very worthwhile and highly recommended course.

Inclusion Scotland



[Inclusion Scotland](#) is a Disabled Peoples' Organisation (an organisation that is controlled by at least 51% disabled people) which strives to make Scotland a fairer place for disabled people. They have a strong emphasis on politics and try to push for more disabled people to be involved in decision making at the highest level. The work they carry out with policy makers aims to ensure disabled people can be at the heart of changes which affect them.

They set up the [Access to Politics](#) project to enable disabled people to have the opportunity to explore the world of politics. This can take place in many forms, such as support, advice, and access to online resources, to linking you up with other disabled activists for mentoring and peer support. Inclusion Scotland also have a project called [We Can Work](#), which enables disabled people to access a paid internship and gain new skills while learning in a community environment. Past internships have included working in an MSP's office, so this would be a great opportunity to gain an insight to the world of politics.



Glasgow Disability Alliance



Glasgow Disability Alliance
Confident Connected Contributing

[Glasgow Disability Alliance](#) (GDA) is another disabled people's led organisation which brings disabled people together from across Glasgow to develop new skills, make new connections and influence change. They offer a range of fun, free CBAL courses, and provide support to ensure disabled people can access all their activities. The emphasis is on community and getting involved in making changes that effect disabled people, both locally and nationally.

GDA runs a programme called [Drivers for Change](#) and [Young Drivers for Change](#), which is designed to help disabled people increase their skills and make sure their voices are heard. You can learn invaluable skills to help you become an effective change maker, for example how to develop an online campaign, how to tell your story to make an impact and how to carry out research. This is a great opportunity for disabled people to build confidence and speak up for themselves.



Using CBAL to develop digital skills and access assistive technology

What are digital skills?

Having 'digital skills' refers to having the confidence and ability to use devices including computers, laptops, smart phones, and tablets (like an iPad). Having basic digital skills allows you to get online, send and receive emails, use online video conferencing tools (like Zoom) to meet people remotely, create an electronic document (like Word) and even take part in online learning. As we come out of the pandemic it has never been more important to have some basic understanding of how to make the most of digital devices to ensure you are not left behind. Using digital technology is so exciting when you get the hang of it, you can do your shopping and banking online, have a video call with your cousin in Australia, and even attend an online lecture at a world-famous university!

What is Assistive Technology?

The term Assistive Technology (AT) refers to any item, piece of equipment, software programme, or product system that can be used to increase, maintain, or improve the independence of disabled people. It is used by disabled people to help them perform tasks which would be difficult or impossible to achieve on their own without support from other people.

Who is Assistive Technology for?

People who most benefit from using Assistive Technology include:

- Disabled people
- Older people
- People with health conditions

What can Assistive Technology do?

Some assistive technology such as wheelchairs, walking frames or white canes have been created to help people's mobility and physical independence, while other equipment like cooking utensils with speech software are designed to increase daily living skills. There are also a wide range of apps, computer programmes and braille computers which provide disabled users with access to social media and other forms of communication, as well as making learning materials more accessible.

Here is a list of items described as Assistive Technology:

- Communication boards made of cardboard or fuzzy felt
- Scanning pens
- Computer/laptop screen reading software
- Predictive text
- Voice recognition
- Electronic recognition
- Talking calculators
- Talking spell checker
- Electric dictionary
- Audio player
- Scanners or scanning apps to translate print material into speech
- Frequency modulation listening systems
- Written support word processor
- Graphics organisations
- Braille computers
- Talking smart phones or accessibility apps for Android and iPhone
- Talking cooking utensils such as microwaves or scanning devices

Why is Assistive Technology important?

Assistive technology increases people's independence and quality of life. It also helps promote equality and inclusion, as it has been designed to remove barriers by finding creative ways for people who use it to do and experience the same things as those who do not rely on AT.

Why study Assistive Technology within community-based adult learning?

It is useful and important for users of Assistive Technology to come together and be given the opportunity to learn how to use equipment and share their experiences of AT in formal or informal CBAL settings. Non-users of AT may also benefit from attending community led workshops to increase knowledge and awareness, especially if they know someone who requires AT.

Where can you access training in Digital Skills and AT?

There are many organisations which provide training, either in person or online through webinars or video conferencing sessions. Lead Scotland delivers lots of digital learning services to disabled people, carers and those who face barriers to learning in various areas across the country. We lend learners an iPad or laptop, teach them how to use it, including the in-built Assistive Technology features, as well as supporting them to access specific apps. Sessions can be in person or online. You can learn more about our local projects [on our website](#).

Many local councils and third sector organisations also offer CBAL in digital skills. See our section 'How to get started' on page 9 for further information.

[Ability Net](#) are an organisation which provides lots of free services to disabled and older people, including digital support in people's own homes across the UK. Their volunteers can get people set up with new equipment, help them get online and deal with problems.

They also provide lots of [free resources](#) related to digital accessibility, including access to free [pre-recorded webinars](#), where you can learn in your own time at home. They also have a series of free factsheets related to digital accessibility and related topics in their resources section.

Some websites and organisations provide advice and support about AT for specific groups such as visually impaired people, for example the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), which has a [Technology resource hub](#). They help people purchase equipment, and give training, as well as information and resources online.

[AppleVis](#) is a useful online resource for blind and low vision users of Apple products such as the Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, and Apple TV. They have a large knowledgeable community of users supporting each other with information and resources. AppleVis provides regular newsletters, blogs and podcasts about the latest developments in Apple technology, giving you lots of opportunities to learn flexibly when it suits you.

How to purchase and receive funding for AT

Digital devices and assistive technology can be expensive, but funding could potentially be available from charities or your local council. There are also grants available for certain groups such as students, who could apply for funding through their college or university. Have a look at our 'Sources of funding and support' section on page 30 for further information.

How to keep safe online

Due to the pandemic, people are spending more time online than ever before. This means more opportunities for hackers to carry out cyber-attacks. They often do this by targeting people and businesses using:

- Email and website scams.
- Malware - software that can damage your device or let a hacker in.

Lead Scotland has translated National Cyber Security Centre messages into a range of alternative formats to help people stay safe and secure online. [You can access all the alternative formats here on our website](#). We also run regular webinars about digital accessibility and cyber security so sign up to our newsletter, follow us on social media or check our website for the latest events.

Community-based adult learning and Mental Health

Community-based adult learning is an ideal way for people to explore tools and approaches to improving their mental health and wellbeing. Learning and support are delivered in community settings, usually in small groups. You will have the guidance of a non-judgemental facilitator and the support network of the other participants, which can be helpful as it can give you have a sense of shared experience. Classes might be part of timetabled programme, a one-off session, or a flexible drop in, so you can choose what's right for you and your circumstances. See our section on 'Where can you do CBAL?' on page 10 to find out how to discover local opportunities.

As technology continues to develop, there are also increasing ways to learn how to improve your mental health and wellbeing without having to leave your home. This can be helpful for those who struggle with going into new environments and meeting new people.

Here, Neil, one of our co-authors, talks about his experience of becoming more mindful during lockdown and of accessing online tools to improve his mental wellbeing, before engaging with some mental health charities to take his learning even further.

“During the enforced lockdown, many of us became aware of our mental health, some like me, possibly for the first time. While lockdown was hard, I found myself being more aware of my surroundings and the sounds of nature that are all around, that due to traffic noise and everyday hustle and bustle, I wasn't aware of previously. This made my one hour outings much more enjoyable and made me more aware of just how calming the sounds of nature are.

I also found many free apps which enabled me to improve my personal mental health such as Headspace or Calm. These guide you through meditation exercises at a pace that fits into your daily life. For example, I used to rush around first thing grabbing and gulping down a strong coffee, but now I will sit calmly and quietly in contemplation for five minutes, and I feel this does better prepare me for the day ahead.

I also try to repeat this as part of my bedtime routine and reflecting on the day gives me closure, with the aim of clearing my mind to aid sleep. While there are paid upgrades on these apps, I found there was enough on the free part, such as guided meditation sessions, that there was no need to pay for the extras on offer.

I also discovered the health benefits of having a smart speaker, like learning mindfulness skills and playing soothing sounds such as bird song, or one I particularly like is a gurgling brook which complements the general nature sounds, and of course there is a vast array of mood music available. Whether it is by using an app or smart speaker, both enable you to take as little time as you like out of your day just to reflect quietly and calmly, and both can be set to remind you to do this.

It is also possible to take this further and there are many online resources as well as podcasts and specialist organisations such as [SamH](#) and [The Scottish Recovery Network](#) which can advise on many aspects of mental health. See our support section here on page 26 for more mental health services.

Following some engagement with them, I found myself joining an online group dealing with peer-to-peer support for people in recovery and continuing on my learning journey, I embarked on a six-week Peer to Peer Support training course with five other participants, something I would never have dreamed of doing at one time. Each week we looked at the core principles of recovery known as “CHIME”: Connectedness, Hope, Identity, Meaning and Empowerment.

This was a completely different way of learning for me as it focused a lot on self-reflection and some deep and sometimes uncomfortable discussions, but one I found very rewarding. I got so much from it and learned exactly what peer to peer support is and how powerful it can be, along with shared lived experience. I also saw first-hand the power of communication, which is something that is often spoken about, but previously I had been sceptical about it. In fact, I got so much from the course that I am going to help facilitate the next one, which is really exciting as this experience has been a real eye opener for me and has dispelled many myths and personal prejudices I had.”

This is a perfect example of challenging your own pre-conceptions, setting yourself goals, building on your learning, and accessing a variety of different CBAL resources to improve your mental health and wellbeing. The continued professional development opportunity was a fantastic, unexpected outcome – thanks to Neil for sharing this amazing story!

Your rights as a disabled learner

This section has been adapted from our more extensive guide, The Equality Act in post-school learning, which you can find on [our website](#). It provides an introduction to the Equality Act, explains what your rights are and provides an overview of reasonable adjustments.

What is the Equality Act?

The Equality Act came into force in October 2010 and replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (as well as other anti-discrimination laws). Its purpose is to protect people from being treated unfairly and to promote equality.

Who is protected under the Act?

It aims to protect people from discrimination in relation to:

- disability
- age
- race
- sex
- sexual orientation
- religion and belief
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage and civil partnership
-

This section focuses on disability discrimination, but you can find out about the other types of discrimination listed above from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).

What's the legal definition of 'disability' under the Equality Act?

To be protected under the Equality Act, individuals must meet the legal definition of disability.

Disability is defined as: 'A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Long term means the impairment has lasted at least a year or is likely to last at least a year. Fluctuating conditions are covered if they are likely to recur. Substantial means anything more than minor or trivial (like a cold or a sore head.)

Normal day to day activities refer to everyday functions like moving, dressing, communicating, keeping safe and using public transport etc.

This is a broad definition where there are a wide variety of conditions and impairments that will be covered, although each part of the definition must apply before the person can be classed as disabled under the Act. The only exceptions to this are cancer, HIV and Multiple Sclerosis, which are covered from the point of diagnosis.

What are your rights as a disabled learner or service user?

When accessing CBAL, the organisation providing the opportunity has a legal responsibility to make sure you have equal access to take part and the right support to ensure you can effectively participate and get the most out of the experience.

Support for disabled people to access and participate in learning does not always need to be expensive, there are lots of changes organisations can make that don't require spending lots of money. For example:

- Using all the free built-in accessibility features of Microsoft and Apple and utilising free apps.
- Making sure all electronic documents are fully accessible.
- Using plain language in any communications.
- Sharing free disability awareness and equality resources and webinars with staff to support their development.
- Making a quiet room available for people to use when they need some time out.

- Adapting start and finish times for people who might learn better in the morning or afternoon because of their medication.
- Scheduling plenty of breaks during sessions for people who might experience fatigue or chronic pain.

These are just a few examples, there are many more ways learning providers can support you. Have a look at our section on 'How to ask a learning provider to meet your support needs' on page 27 for advice from our co-authors on how they've tackled this in the past.

One important thing to keep in mind is that (theoretically) disabled people should never be asked to cover any costs that are incurred as a result of being disabled. In practice, this is not always easy to uphold, especially as lots of providers of CBAL are small third sector organisations with very limited budgets themselves. See our section on funding and support on page 30 for information on where to find funding and grants.

Reasonable Adjustments

What is a reasonable adjustment?

The previous examples of support are just another way of saying 'reasonable adjustment'. A reasonable adjustment is the official term used in the Equality Act. A learning or service provider cannot refuse to provide you with a reasonable adjustment – it's either reasonable or it isn't! Here are some more examples of reasonable adjustments a learning provider could make:

- Altering the way applications are accepted for a course – for example could they let you apply by video, using a BSL interpreter, or over telephone?
- Offering course materials in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, accessible electronic documents or Easy Read
- Allowing a flexible way to show the learning outcomes have been met (observation or using photos rather than tests and written assessments)
- Allowing a flexible learning pattern
- Changing physical features and premises
- Providing communication and support services, such as readers, note takers, interpreters, assistive technology or special equipment

So how do you know if your request is reasonable? What does that word actually mean? Here is a check list to work through to help work out whether the request might be reasonable:

- How effective and practical is it?
- What financial resources does the organisation have?
- Are any other grants or funding available, such as Disabled Students' Allowance, ILF Transition Fund, Access to Work etc?
- Is there another organisation responsible for providing aids and equipment, like social services?
- Would other people's health and safety be put at risk by making the adjustment?
- Would the adjustment result in significant disadvantage for other learners?

Have a look through our guide to the [Equality Act in post-school learning](#) or call the Lead Scotland disabled students' helpline on 0800 999 2568 if you want some advice.

Case Study: Holly has undertaken an accredited course with Lead Scotland which she is doing online with support from a Learning Coordinator and a volunteer. They are scribing (writing down) the answers she gives them for her assignments. This is a reasonable adjustment to enable Holly to achieve her goals in an equitable manner. She would normally have that support face to face, but due to the pandemic restrictions, an online platform has been a good alternative.

What is not a Reasonable Adjustment?

Case study: Michael goes to a Community Centre where he is attending a course. Usually, the group would meet on the ground floor to make sure Michael, who uses a wheelchair at times, can access the course. There is a ramp that Michael can use on a regular basis. For two weeks of the course, the room the group uses is not available, and is scheduled to be held on the 2nd floor. There is no lift in the building or accessible toilet on the 2nd floor. It would not be a reasonable adjustment to ask the Community Centre to install these for a short period of time, as their funds are extremely limited. However, they would have a responsibility to find an alternative accessible location to hold the course for those two weeks that the group can't access the ground floor instead."



How to ask a learning provider to meet your support needs

We asked our co-authors what their experience was, as disabled learners (and students and employees), of asking for a reasonable adjustment or just getting the right support put in place. Here's what they had to say:

"When embarking on most courses, as a person with a disability I find it very important to take a few moments out to look at the practicalities of what I want to do, and this can include everyday tasks as well as much larger projects. Being clear in my own mind is the first step and by having this clarity I find I am more able to identify any possible pitfalls, and this then enables me to work out ways around them.

This is also true when dealing with service providers as I find that the vast majority want to help and the clearer you can be on what is required assists them and if nothing else, speeds up the process. Also, by doing this exercise I am able to give them realistic options on what I require and of course this doesn't always mean them spending lots of money, often it is a simple adjustment required and being able to give practicable examples can help. I also find that when making an ask, it is important to be polite and courteous and if possible, try to smile at this stage. It is always better taking this approach rather than quoting equality and discrimination legislation from the outset, this can always be kept in reserve and used if necessary at a later date."

"I have cerebral palsy which affects me physically. When entering a learning environment, I need to have someone with me who can write notes for me. It's important people have the opportunity to get to know you, so they can build a good working relationship. It's really important to have an open and honest conversation with the learning provider about what support you require.

The best thing to do is to start having discussions as early as possible to allow yourself and the learning provider to work together, so you can have the best experience. I had a situation at college where a few of my scribes did not understand what I was saying, which led to a lot of stress in exams. If I had had the opportunity to work regularly with the person before the exam, they would have got used to the way I spoke and would have been able to understand me better. In a learning environment, this is crucial, as it could affect the grades people receive.

Ensure that learning providers make reasonable adjustments and are open to adapting things to meet your needs. An example of this is when I sat my Higher English, I was entitled to 100% extra time, which meant I had to arrive early, and stay late. Obviously, this had an effect on my transport, so I had to arrange to get picked up earlier and later than usual.

My advice would be to speak up. It may be difficult to find the right person to talk to, but there will be somebody that should have the time to get to know you. An important thing to remember is that no two people learn the same, so just because three people have cerebral palsy, that doesn't mean they will need the same level of support. It is important to be really clear about what you need.

It can be very daunting to ask for the extra help when you need it. To get the best experience, you should be able to ask for the help, and receive what you need.

When trying to get across what you need, remind yourself that you have the right to say exactly what works best for you. It is important you have the time to think about what you need. Don't be afraid.

I found spending time planning what support I needed was helpful. I created a person-centred plan which I can now show people."

See Ashleigh's section on person-centred planning on page 32.

“It is important for all people to have their accessibility needs met, whether in an educational, workplace or community-based setting. My best piece of advice would be to not be afraid of asking for help, whether this be accessing materials in different formats, needing extra time for assignments, or using different ways to contact people. I have always found the people I work for and with to be very supportive and approachable when I have needed extra support, but it took a while for me to build up the confidence to speak up and explain my needs. It became easier through practice however, and my coming to realise that I was not causing anyone an inconvenience but was learning to empower myself and encourage wider conversations about equality.”

Stories of accessing CBAL

Our co-authors talk about their experiences of accessing CBAL in these audio clips and transcripts:

Alan: [Click here for audio clip](#)
[Click here for transcript](#)

Aly: [Click here for audio clip](#)
[Click here for transcript](#)

Holly: [Click here for audio clip](#)
[Click here for transcript](#)

Neil: [Click here for audio clip](#)
[Click here for transcript](#)

Stacy: [Click here for audio clip](#)
[Click here for transcript](#)

Ashleigh: [Click here for audio clip](#)
[Click here for transcript](#)

Sources of funding and support

It is important that finance is not seen as a barrier to community-based adult learning. Many courses are free or low cost, and where there are charges, these may be discounted for people in receipt of benefits.

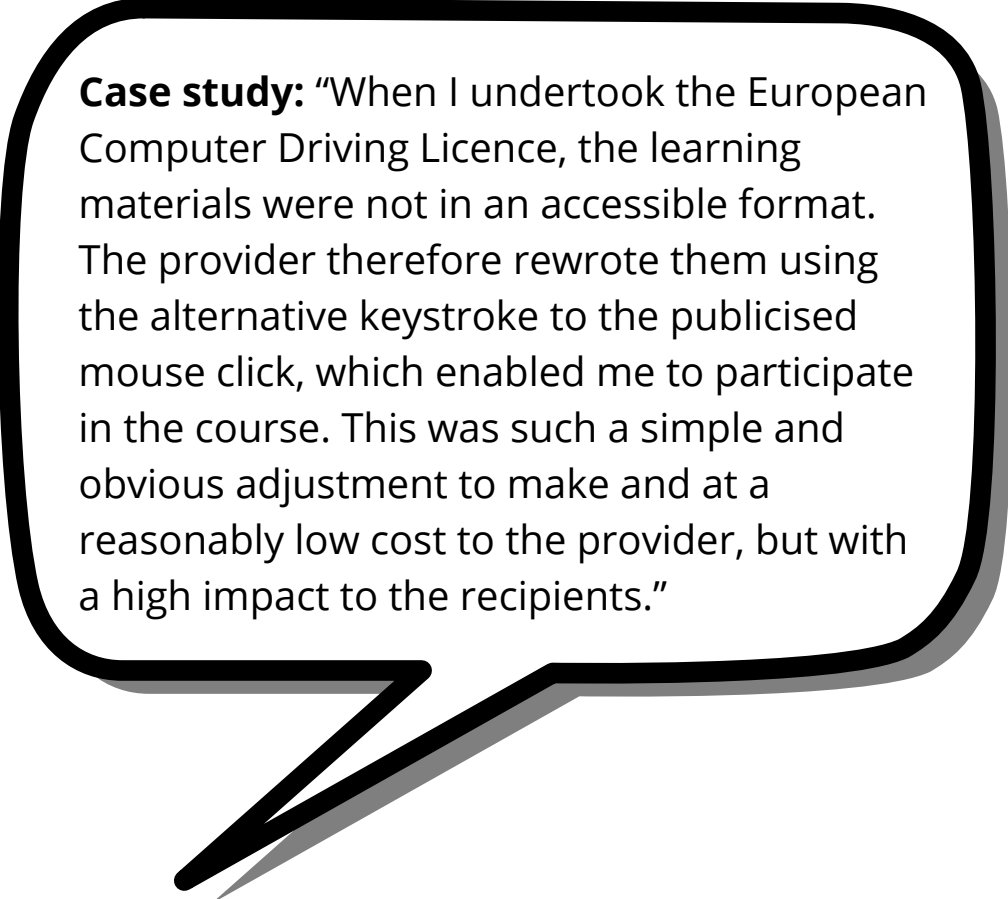
- Lead Scotland has a comprehensive guide to charitable trusts providing grants to individuals for educational and other purposes [on our website](#).
- [The ILF Transition Fund](#) provides young people aged 16 to 25 with funding up to £4,000 per year to try out new activities and develop their independence as they move into adult life.
- Skills Development Scotland provides learners with £200 for an [Individual Training Account](#) to access learning that will help them be more ready for work.
- There are also a wide range of free courses available and information on some of these can be found on the [My World of Work website](#).

There are also many free ways to learn and to do research prior to signing up to a course. For example, there are podcasts on every topic or subject you can think of. These are a great way to focus on specific areas and can be a useful way of finding out if the subject is the right one for you. It can also save you a lot of time ensuring the learning path you choose is the correct one.

Many third sector organisations, including those supporting people with a wide range of impairments and health conditions, offer grants and support to their service users to enable them to participate in courses. A good place to find organisations supporting people in your own area would be your local Third Sector Interface (TSI), as there is one of these in each council area in Scotland. The best way to find contact details for your local TSI would be through an online search or by contacting your local Citizens Advice Bureau. Your local council office or library should also have information about them.

Many TSI's have a dedicated Funding Officer who has access to a funding search engine. This is usually aimed at supporting organisations and groups; however the funding officer may also be able assist individuals in finding suitable funding.

It is also important to remember that under the Equality Act there is a duty for all learning and service providers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people to ensure they are not disadvantaged. Further information about this can be found in our section on your rights as a disabled learner page 22.



Case study: “When I undertook the European Computer Driving Licence, the learning materials were not in an accessible format. The provider therefore rewrote them using the alternative keystroke to the publicised mouse click, which enabled me to participate in the course. This was such a simple and obvious adjustment to make and at a reasonably low cost to the provider, but with a high impact to the recipients.”

Using Self-directed support to access learning

Self-directed support is a system of funding which gives you more control over your day-to-day support. People can choose to receive the funding directly and arrange their own services and support workers, they can use the funding to ask an agency to arrange their support for them, or they can have the funding go direct to their local social work department and ask them to arrange their support. You can read more about self-directed support and how it works on the [Care information Scotland website here](#). If you are allocated a budget for self-directed support, you might be able to use the funding to arrange for a support worker to help you access community-based adult learning. You can read some fantastic examples of how people have used their self-directed support budgets in this [online booklet from the Glasgow Centre for Independent Living](#).

Ashleigh's story

"Since 2013, Self-directed support is the way in which people who require support to live their lives, can have choice and control. Before the publication of the self-directed support act (2013), the government ran three test sites in Dumfries and Galloway, Glasgow and Highland to monitor if it would be an effective way to deliver social care in Scotland. After the success, this became the new social care system, which is based on people with disabilities having total control over their lives.

I left school in 2010, and when speaking to social work I was told that I could only use my funding for personal care, and not living the life I wanted. It was very important to me that I was able to further my education like my peers. I was fortunate to be living in Dumfries and Galloway, which meant I could take part in the test site, with the help of the personalisation team. I came up with a plan of what I wanted to achieve and presented it to a panel of social workers. After presenting my plan, my self-directed support budget was approved, and I finally started to believe I would be able to go to college.

I employed a Personal Assistant through self-directed support, who took me to college. This enabled me to further my education. This is a really effective way of getting support. In my experience, the colleges only provided support during the actual class, therefore I needed a PA to support me during the rest of the day, including my extra study time. Without this support, I would not have been able to attend."

Ashleigh's Top tips

- Believe you can access learning
- Say what you need
- Remember you have the right to get the support you need

Person-centred planning

Person centred planning is such an invaluable tool to enable disabled people to dream big, and make things happen. A person-centred plan is a great chance for people to explore the things they want out of life. There are different ways that a plan can be done. Individuals can do it with a group of people who know the person really well and help them plan. You could do it with family members, social workers, support workers or anyone else who knows you well. For disabled people it is a tool which puts them at the centre of their life. For example, person-centred planning can be used creatively to help you access CBAL, if that was something you wanted to do.

Thank you to our co-authors:

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Links for further sources of support

<u>Aliss</u>	ALISS helps people find and share information about local groups, services and activities that can support health and wellbeing.
<u>Beat</u>	Beat is the UK's eating disorder charity. We provide free advice and support 365 days a year, giving you a place to feel listened to, supported and empowered.
<u>Breathing Space</u>	We are a free, confidential, phone service for anyone in Scotland over 16. If you're experiencing low mood, depression, or anxiety, we provide a safe and supportive space, listening, offering advice and providing information.
<u>Combat Stress</u>	Combat Stress is the UK's leading charity for Veteran's Mental Health, providing specialist treatment and support for veterans from every service and conflict.
<u>Equality Advisory & Support Service</u>	Helpline and letter templates for issues related to complaints about discrimination, equality and human rights.
<u>Equality and Human Rights Commission</u>	VOX (Voice of Experience) are Scotland's national voice on mental health, making sure Scotland's laws and mental health services reflect service user needs and interests. We're run by service users, for service users.
<u>Maternal Mental Health Scotland</u>	We bring together lived and professional experience of perinatal and infant mental health into one voice. We use this to educate the public, health professionals and policy makers and campaign for change.

<u>Mental Health Foundation Scotland</u>	We work to prevent mental health problems, so that people and communities across Scotland and the UK can thrive.
<u>Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland</u>	We protect and promote the human rights of people with mental illness, learning disabilities, dementia, and related conditions. Our five main areas of work are visiting people, monitoring the Acts, information and advice, investigations and influencing and challenging.
<u>Mind Yer Time</u>	A website by children and young people in Scotland, for children and young people in Scotland. Get information, tips, resources, and ideas on how to use screens and social media in healthy ways.
<u>NHS Inform</u>	Our aim is to provide the people in Scotland with accurate and relevant information to help them make informed decisions about their own health and the health of the people they care for.
<u>NHS24</u>	If you need urgent support for your mental or emotional health, you can call the NHS24 Mental Health Hub on 111. The service is open 24 hours every day for anyone in Scotland.
<u>Parent Club</u>	Parent Club has a whole host of mental advice tips and advice to help parents and children during the coronavirus outbreak.
<u>Penumbra</u>	We're one of Scotland's largest mental health charities. If you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious, we have some good tips on keeping well, and free resources on maintaining good mental health.
<u>Safe to Speak</u>	Our confidential helpline is here to support anyone with experience of domestic abuse or forced marriage, as well as their family members, friends, colleagues, and professionals who support them.

<u>Samaritans</u>	If you are going through a difficult time, you can get in touch with Samaritans. We're here, day or night, for anyone who's struggling to cope, who needs someone to listen without judgement or pressure.
<u>SAMH</u>	As Scotland's Mental Health charity, we offer a range of services across Scotland and have a hub with guidance for looking after your mental wellbeing.
<u>Scottish Just Law Centre</u>	Supports disabled people to challenge discriminatory practices of public bodies and service providers.
<u>Scottish Recovery Network</u>	Visit our website for more information about mental health recovery, to hear people's stories and find resources which can help you think about recovery and wellbeing.
<u>See Me</u>	We're Scotland's programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination. We're creating a social movement, where people can come together to tackle stigma and discrimination, enabling people who are struggling with their mental health to live fulfilled lives.
<u>Support in Mind Scotland</u>	We believe anyone affected by mental health issues deserves compassionate and expert support and we've compiled some guidance to help people through difficult times.
<u>The Spark</u>	The Spark's free Relationship Helpline is for anyone experiencing relationship problems. If you are 16 or over freephone 0808 802 2088 for emotional support and access to free counselling, Monday to Friday.
<u>United to Prevent Suicide</u>	United to Prevent Suicide offers support to help prevent suicide.
<u>VOX Scotland</u>	VOX (Voice of Experience) are Scotland's national voice on mental health, making sure Scotland's laws and mental health services reflect service user needs and interests. We're run by service users, for service users.