

Appendix 2 – Learning and Skills Programmes delivered by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

A wide range of programmes are delivered by Council services to support people who have left full-time education. These include programmes designed to improve skills or support well-being as well as programmes that are specifically focussed on supporting people into work. These are delivered by:

- the Adult Education Service,
- Communities for Work/Communities for Work +;
- Education, Employment and Training service;
- the Youth Engagement and Participation Service;
- Organisational Development (HR)

Adult Education Service

The Council's Adult Education Service delivers adult community learning programmes in Rhondda Cynon Taf and is the Lead Body for the Adult Community Learning Partnership in the county. The service provides support, in the main to people over the age of 25.

The service has one lifelong learning centre at Garth Olwg that facilitates a wide range of provision delivered by Council services and other partners including courses, workshops, events and theatre performances.

The majority of courses and programmes are delivered at libraries, community centres and other venues across the county. In 2017/18 learning was delivered at 96 venues.

Provision is targeted at those who are most disadvantaged and would benefit from gaining skills and qualifications although there is also a programme of activities designed to enhance the well-being of participants and to support the social integration and independence of older residents or those who have a life-limiting health condition.

The service's **pre- employment programme** is funded by the Community Learning Grant and runs as either a 2 or 4 week programme delivering a number of accredited courses through either Agored Cymru or Quallsafe. The programme is built around the specific needs of the learners on each course and individuals can choose from a suite of qualifications including resilience skills, creating the right image, telephone skills, job interview skills, team working to name a few. If successful, learners can then progress onto the more sector specific Employment Routes provision or may decide to focus on developing a particular skill further.

The service provides a range of **digital skills** courses, from basic Introduction to Computing to ECDL courses. A 4 week programme delivered for Communities for Work+ to further develop the skills of people who have engaged with Digital Fridays provision has been particularly successful and a clear progression pathway has been developed in partnership with Communities for Work+ and Adult Learning Wales for learners who wish to enhance their digital skills further.

The focus on ensuring that learning meets local needs has also ensured that services work closely with local employers. The **Employment Routes** programme developed by the service has been successful in developing training programmes with employers who have vacancies and ensuring that learners who successfully complete the training and gain the relevant qualifications are assured of an interview. 46 businesses have engaged with the service and contributed to the development of the programme. These include both local and national companies.

Essential skills courses are funded through an agreement with Coleg y Cymoedd. They are set up for the year but learners can join at any time. They are open to anyone over the age of 16 who has a literacy and/or numeracy skills need. Learners are able to attend more than one class a week. All learners are assessed using the Welsh Government's Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) or a paper-based assessment. Their needs are identified from the assessment and a relevant Agored Cymru qualification is selected for them to work towards. Individual support is provided by the tutor. Classes have learners of varying levels of need and, consequently a maximum of 10 learners are enrolled on each course. The majority of classes are held at libraries, job centres and community venues. Specific provision is provided for:

- Carers
- people who need to achieve a Level 2 qualification so that they can enrol on Employment Routes provision (some employers, for example the NHS require employees to have this as a minimum qualification);
- people who work in Vision Products
- people with mental health conditions

The **Independent Learning Skills** programme, funded through an agreement with Coleg y Cymoedd, provides opportunities for people with moderate or severe learning disabilities to achieve a 3 - credit qualification. The courses are held at a variety of venues over two terms and 122 learners are currently engaged on a varied curriculum. The majority of learners arrive at the centres by buses provided by the Adult Services team and carers attend with them. This provision is valued highly by the learners themselves, their families and the Day Centre staff who support the provision. It provides an opportunity for learners to gain confidence, raise their self-esteem and meet new people as well as learn new skills.

Inspire 2 Work is an ESF Priority 3 programme that offers a supported Employment Pathway to young people aged 16-24 years living in Rhondda Cynon Taf, providing guidance and training to strengthen the position of young people seeking employment in line with Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework guidelines, and Supporting Engagement in Education, Employment and Training Strategy. The project is focussed on young people with low aspirations, no or low qualifications, those who have difficulty in engaging or participating and who lack awareness of the services that are available to meet their support needs.

To date the project has engaged with 413 young people, 71 of whom have entered employment, 202 have gained qualifications (with some currently going through the accreditation process) and 28 have gone on to further training and education. The funding for this project ends in December 2020.

The service works closely with a wide range of organisations to develop provision that supports the Council's **well-being** agenda. Examples of this work include:

- provision of workshops for the Carer's project such as social media, sugar-craft and sign language;
- collaboration with the Hapi project on 'All about me' – provision for people diagnosed with the early stages of dementia and their family members;
- provision of courses prescribed by Cwm Taf Health Board and the Parc Canol surgery for patients with low level depression and anxiety;
- leisure/hobby-based courses designed to enable people to pursue their interests – of particular relevance to people who are no longer working whether that is due to retirement, ill-health or other reasons

- Chatty café, Knit and Knatter and Age-friendly dancing cater for people of all ages who have common interests

Welsh-medium provision is facilitated and contributes to the achievement of the Council's Strategy and Action Plan for the Promotion and Facilitation of the Welsh Language including a weekly Ti a Fi provision for parents and carers of babies and toddlers and Cymraeg i Blant at Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre. Welsh-medium courses and pathways for learners from Welsh language classes on to other courses delivered in the medium of Welsh are facilitated and jointly planned with key partners.

Of particular note in respect of **Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre** is that it hosts the activities of 63 community groups and organisations and provides access to a wide range of advice, information and guidance not just learning opportunities to residents.

Communities for Work (CfW)

This programme is delivered in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions.

The focus of the CfW programme is to help those furthest away from the labour market in to employment, education or training, or to move closer to the labour market.

Priority 1 of the CfW Programme focuses on the provision of mentoring support, access to qualifications, work experience, and volunteering opportunities for adults over the age of 25 who are long term unemployed and economically inactive living in Communities First areas with a view to helping them to secure employment.

Priority 3 of the CfW Programme provides young people aged 16-24 including those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training, living in Communities First areas, with mentoring support to access Education, Employment or Training.

The majority of training is accessed through ACT, the preferred supplier for training provision identified by Welsh Government.

Up to August 2019 the following outcomes have been achieved for adults:

- 1,084 participants engaged
- 120 job entries
- 633 qualifications gained
- 164 increasing employment

Outcomes for the youth provision by August 2019 is as follows:

- 870 engagements
- 166 job entries
- 326 qualifications gained
- 55 entered edycartin/training

Communities for Work +

CfW+ has been designed to be wraparound support service for Communities for Work, and other European Social Fund (ESF) projects, where people are not eligible for support. This replaced the previous Communities First programme. It consists of two new grant funded programmes namely the CfW+ employment support programme and Legacy fund.

CfW+ offers support to all residents in RCT who are looking to get into employment, training or volunteering.

CfW+ is also able to offer in-work support to those we support into work or those clients on low incomes who are looking to retrain or upskill.

The programme is available across the whole of RCT.

We focus work with Adults 25+ who are ineligible for support through ESF grant funded programmes. Young people aged 16-24 are also able to access support if there is no other suitable provision available from other services or ESF grant funded programmes.

The Legacy fund supports projects that have been identified as best practice and meet local priorities. The Council made the decision to utilise the Legacy fund to:

- support voluntary sector partners that previously delivered projects under the Communities First programme that achieved good outcomes to ensure the continuation of good practice delivery;
- commission core offer activities where good outcomes have been achieved.

The collective CfW+ & Legacy programmes deliver on three key elements:-

- **Local Engagement** - These activities are based upon local need & getting people involved. Our Engagement teams organise a number of local activities and events including well-being coffee mornings, day courses, confidence building sessions & support groups.
- **Core Activities** - These include Work Clubs, Digital Fridays, RCT Leisure, Essential Skills (Maths, English, IT), Adult Learning Courses. We commission RCT Adult Education to deliver the Employment Routes programme.
- **1:1 Mentoring** - Our Employment Mentors support people, through 1:1 tailored sessions, to gain qualifications, find work placements & secure employment.

Outcomes achieved during 2018/19

- 3,939 people registered with CfW+ and Legacy programmes
- 714 people received 1:1 employment mentoring
- 393 people gained employment
- 216 people improved their basic IT skills
- 767 people gained a total of 1,370 qualifications
- 144 people entered a work placement
- 82 people enrolled on In-Work support, of which 86.5% either sustained employment or increased their working hours

Other Legacy outcomes achieved with family and youth engagement programmes:

- 904 people improved mental well-being
- 57 increased physical activity through RCT Leisure

- 428 know how to access help & support
- 364 feel more a part of their community
- 492 foodbank vouchers were issued to 272 individuals

Education, Employment and Training Service (HR)

This service is located within the Council's Human Resources department and leads on the management and provision of a range of programmes for the Council as follows:

Apprenticeship Scheme - The Council's Apprenticeship Scheme has been running since September 2012. During that time, over 180 Apprentices have been employed across the Council in many different service areas. The Scheme is open to anyone from the age of 16. There is no upper age limit. Apprenticeships with RCT Council are fixed for two years and paid at National Minimum Wage, depending on age.

Graduate Scheme - Each of the graduate schemes offer a unique opportunity to learn new skills, develop professionally and start a career in community-based public service. Graduates will:

- Earn £26,317 per year on a 37-hour contract
- Complete a range of fully-funded professional qualifications
- Undergo mentoring with a senior member of staff
- Be entitled to participate in a wide-range of staff benefit schemes All successful applicants will be enrolled on a Project Management Level 4 qualification, which will include day release for University attendance

Work experience - Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's work experience programme enables people to carry out and/or observe a range of tasks or duties as an employee, but with the emphasis on learning. Anyone can apply for a work placement with the Council. RCT Council work with School, College and University students, as well as non-students, to support and source work placements. European work placements and University internships are also facilitated.

Care2Work - The Care2Work programme provides children looked after, young people with care and support needs and care leavers with encouragement and support to identify and access a range of training and employment opportunities.

Step in the right direction - this offers two year paid traineeships for children looked after and care leavers aged 16-25. It develops their skills, knowledge and provides work experience in the Council.

Careers and The World of Work – working within Secondary, SEN and Primary schools in RCT, providing advice and information on further education and employment related opportunities. Provide a number of workshops and information sessions to increase awareness and explore opportunities available to them to develop the skills they need to decide upon and implement their career paths.

Career Fairs – The EET Team arrange two career fairs a year within RCT. Working with partners/employers and key stakeholders.

Gateway to Employment – The EET team in partnership with Coleg y Cymoedd is currently working with 8 learners with additional learning and physical needs and arranging suitable

placements within the Council for one year to increase employability skills and sustainable employment.

Organisational Development (HR)

Building Resilience, Prosperity, and Wellbeing in RCT is an ESF Priority 1 project that offers SME's within the Rhondda, Cynon Taf Local Authority area an opportunity to pay particular attention to staff absence and the organisational responses, and the support available to meet the wellbeing and health of their workforce.

The project is focussed on employed; including self-employed, who are absent from work, with a work limiting health condition or disability, who wish to return to work.

The Project will provide support to:

- **278** Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises within Rhondda, Cynon Taf.
- **2,625** individual participants.

Of these, 20% (580) would be Local Authority employees, 80% (2,323) supported from the Private Sector/SME's.

Specifically developed to provide support to SME's and Individuals, to make the necessary arrangements to enable participants to return to work as quickly as possible, including, but not restricted to:

- Specialist HR support to develop or improve wellbeing, equality and diversity policies and strategies.
- Training for Managers/Employers
- Access to physiotherapists, occupational health nurses, counselling and coaching.

The Project delivery commenced in May 2019, with an expected funding end date in April 2022.