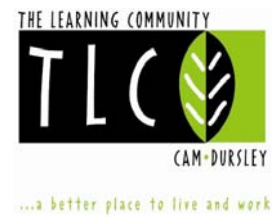




GL11 Community Project

8th Annual General Meeting
28 October 2009

the people place



Chair's Report

April 2008 - March 2009

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to report a steady growth across all areas of work. This is reflected in the numbers of students, the range of courses, drop-in groups and partner organisations with whom we are now working. The growth has been in response to need as identified through on-going consultation, and to the growing desire for agencies and organisations across all sectors to be working more effectively and efficiently for the benefit of diverse communities.

Consultation provides us with evidence of local need upon which our programmes of work are developed. In spring 2009 we embarked upon a comprehensive consultation exercise in Cam Woodfields and Long Street, Dursley, as a joint initiative with Vale Vision, funded by Gloucestershire First. This will be followed in 2009/10 by a similar exercise in Highfields, Dursley. Our attendance at various community/agency events throughout the year not only helps with identifying resident need, but continues to raise our profile, and support our multi-agency work.

The impact of the recession has required us to develop additional support for individuals and families, and this has included the introduction of an Employability Programme in conjunction with Stroud College.

Our involvement at strategic level has increased through our representation on the Cam and Dursley Safer Stronger Partnership, Stroud District Council Safer Estates Group, and the Children's Centres Partnership Board.

STAFF

Keith Sparrow, Garden Scheme Co-ordinator and Mike Townsend, Bike Shed Worker, left us during the summer of 2008, and we send them our best wishes and thanks. In December we welcomed Karen Whitlock as a Youth Support Worker with our new youth group Bedlam, and in March 2009 we were joined by Zac McKerron as Bike Shed Support Worker.

Other staff include Ann Wheeler (Project Manager); Jane McKerron (Activities Co-ordinator); Jacky Tolfree (Volunteer Co-ordinator); Mandy Bailey (Administrator); Viv Jones (TLC Co-ordinator) and Stuart Heffernan (Gardener).

Creche staff: Gemma Gourlay, Helen Jenkins, Mandy Western and Debbie Bendall. Support services are provided by: Sian Smith, Book keeping and Gareth Haynes, IT.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Training and Education is the foundation upon which GL11 has been built and for which there is an increasing demand. We have offered a varied programme with our partners during the year, and these partners include:

Gloucestershire AdEd (Adult Education)	Stroud College
Lower Kingshill Management Co-operative	Treetops Children's Centre
Home Start (Stroud & Dursley)	Orchard Medical Centre
Vale Vision	Stroud District Council
Gloucestershire County Council	Gloucestershire Youth Service
Gloucestershire First	May Lane Surgery
Gloucestershire Association for Mental Health (GAMH) – now Independence Trust	Rapido Training
Parentline Plus	Dursley Town Council
Cam Parish Council	
Prema Arts Centre	

One of our students, Amanda Benning, was nominated for an adult learner award as part of the Adult Learners Week celebrations. As a result, Amanda attended a celebration event at Shire Hall to receive her certificate.

We record all adult and child attendances and monitor variations year on year.

In the first 4 months, adult attendance increased but our detailed statistics show fluctuations on several occasions throughout the year. There are a number of contributing factors – late start of childcare courses in September, office closure for re-decoration and Christmas/New Year, and snow in February.

Overall we have seen an attendance increase of 10% across the year.

Courses included Childcare (levels 2 and 3), Computers, How to Manage Your Money, Basic English and Maths.

Our retention rate on courses ranged from 58% to 94%, with an average retention of 82% (this compares to last year's range between 50% and 92%, with an average retention of 79%).

Consultation continues to highlight lack of childcare as a barrier to learning. Our crèche facilities are well used and offer quality childcare while parents/carers study. We believe this, combined with a relevant and varied training programme, are contributing factors to the overall increase in attendance, and retention rates.

DROP-IN GROUPS

A number of other organisations hold drop-in groups at GL11 – these include Home Start Stroud & Dursley, Orchard Medical Centre's Art Group and Treetops Children's Centre Rockers & Rollers baby group. This arrangement increases opportunities for us to engage with residents, particularly young families and we find that many move on to courses and other activities we provide.

Bright Buttons is our weekly Toddler Group – it's where parents/carers and their pre-school age children can socialise, make new friends and where parents can develop an

understanding of how children learn through play. We have an excellent outdoor play space which is well used throughout the year and see an average attendance of 15 families per week.

The Over 50s Group meets monthly and continues to enjoy social get-togethers, and trips out – including to local amateur dramatic shows and Christmas shopping. The group is led by Rose Stower who works closely with Jane to organise a programme throughout the year which includes making hanging baskets, quizzes, art and craft sessions.

Little Ducklings is a multiple-birth group and has welcomed several sets of twins, and one set of triplets since it was launched in January. It has been slow to get established but we will monitor the numbers during 2009.

We are now running 3 Youth Groups which meet on a weekly basis. A successful application to the County Council's Vulnerable Children & Young People fund has provided support for each of these groups.

Sparkles is our teenage girls group – with an average attendance of 18. In response to the girls requests, we have organised professional speakers to visit and talk about relationships, health and well-being, alcohol and drugs awareness. The girls are always keen to help GL11 in promoting our work, and in the summer of 2008 they supported us at Dursley Town Festival. We were part of the procession through the town for which the girls made their own dresses which were a 'black and white' theme. Their support continues in many ways, including helping us with funding applications as we continue our search to cover running costs.

For a number of months The Bike Shed was without a paid worker, and we are very grateful for the support given by our volunteer Kirk Turner during this time to ensure that the young people attending were supported and encouraged. Funding through the County Council has enabled us to employ a part-time Support Worker, Zac, who joined us in March 2009. He has been an active supporter of The Bike Shed since it began in 2007 and in the coming year will be helping us to promote the Bike Shed to a wider audience by attending community events such as the annual Scratch N Skate event at Jubilee Playing Fields, Meadowvale Community Day, and organising bike sales.

Funding secured also enabled us to launch a new youth group in January – called Bedlam. This is for 11+ year olds and has rapidly developed with a regular attendance of 14 young people. To support this new group, Karen was employed as a Support Worker working with Jane to make sure that the time the children and young people are here is positive.

We were pleased to continue our working relationship with Sanctuary Shaftesbury Housing Association this year who, with Glos County Council Extended Services, provided funding for The Den – a Summer Activities Programme. This offered young people a chance to experience sports including archery, rock wall climbing and cricket.

The aims of each of our youth groups or programmes of work support the outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda through which children are given opportunities to: Achieve Economic Well-being; Make a Positive Contribution; Enjoy and Achieve; Stay Safe and Be Healthy.

VOLUNTEERS

All of our business, operational and fun activities are supported by volunteers. Examples of their involvement are:

Management Committee – which meets approx 10 times a year and works with the Project Manager to set the business plan and strategic direction of GL11

Fundraising events – including the May Fayre and an autumn Craft Fayre running stalls and barbeque, refreshments

Planning and supporting activities for drop-in groups such as Over 50s and Toddlers

Reminiscence work with older clients

Volunteers bring with them a wealth of experience, enthusiasm and skills as well as their time. It is these collective elements which make volunteers an immensely valuable resource for us – they add value to all that we do, and their contribution enables our funding to be used to the maximum potential.

In addition to our own volunteers, we were supported by a team of volunteers from Lloyds TSB who provided us with a make-over in December when they re-decorated our premises. This was a corporate team building event for them, and an early Christmas present for us.

An enormous 'thank you' to all our volunteers.

THE LEARNING COMMUNITY – TLC

TLC is a specific project within GL11. The 3-year funding from The Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund began in October 2007 and work has progressed during the period of this annual report to ensure successful delivery of agreed outcomes. These are:

- Improved employability because of increase in skills and ability to access further more formal educational opportunities
- Improved personal independence because our project will provide gateways to learning that is bespoke to the individual (ie they can choose the time/style/content and venue from a range that suits local people)
- Reduced isolation because the learning is a group activity and is carried out in venues where those attending are made aware of other community services and learn with others. There are also elements of peer learning and increased participation in community activities.
- Peoples feelings about themselves will alter and be more positive and thus promote well being and better mental health
- That people will have chances and opportunities that learning brings via the training and development built into the project especially those who have had little or bad educational/learning experiences in the past

Community involvement was at the heart of an initiative in Uley during the summer months. This was to breath life into the Uley Dragon (not literally). With the help of a professional artist, local families, Uley Parish Council, Prema Art Centre, and funding from a number of local donors, our TLC Co-ordinator, Viv, organised a week-long event which saw a concrete dragon which has played an important part in the lives of Uley residents for many years, turned into a most colourful creature to be enjoyed for years to come.

Partnership work with the Orchard Medical Centre has benefitted a number of referred clients who have attended health talks and art groups. Next year we anticipate this to be strengthened through our collective working with Parentline Plus.

Supported by Gloucestershire Adult Education (AdEd), we conducted a programme of research with local employers looking at their workforce training needs. We developed a questionnaire which formed the basis of visits, telephone and e-mail contact with over 60 local employers. Data collected through this initiative has highlighted a common need amongst employers for locally delivered training in a number of subjects such as First Aid, Food Safety and Customer Services. This information is useful for us in our discussions with a range of training providers but the whole exercise has raised our profile amongst local employers and generated additional good links.

The Partnership of Older Peoples Projects (POPPs) provided funding to support work with local doctors, care homes, Gloucestershire Archives and Prema Arts Centre for the benefit of older people experiencing memory loss or at the early stage of dementia. As part of the "Try to Remember" project, we trained volunteers in Reminiscence Skills, and worked with a Dementia Writer/Poet to capture thoughts and memories of this vulnerable group of people. This has been recognised regionally, and we have been invited to attend the UK Dementia Congress event in November 2009 to talk about the role of the voluntary sector in such schemes.

Developments from this initiative include dialogue with Glebe House on the potential of establishing a Memory Clinic, and the setting up of a new social group for targeted individuals who are isolated and possibly in the early stages of memory loss. This will be called POPPINs and we look forward to reporting on its development next year as we work more closely with local health professionals, particularly in supporting Dementia sufferers.

Funding secured in March 2009 from Magnox Electric's Socio Economic Fund will support the development of an outreach programme working within Coaley, Stinchcombe, North Nibley and Uley. Over the coming months we will be liaising with local parish councillors and community development workers as we embark on a series of consultation events to identify the needs of these more outlying and diverse communities.

FINANCES - A full set of Annual Accounts are available separately.

Our grateful thanks go to all sponsors who have supported our work in the last year. We are delighted to recognise the continuing support from a number of local organisations, including the Dursley branch of Stroud & Swindon Building Society, and Dursley Lions Club whose contribution has enabled us to improve the facilities for all our users. We are also pleased to be one of Dursley Rotary Club's chosen charities for next year.

The search for funding remains a challenge, and this will increase when the full impact of the recession is felt within grant giving charities and trusts, and overspends within local authority

departments are addressed through cuts to services. The Project Manager has responsibility for writing funding applications and negotiating contracts and service level agreements, and this occupies an increasing amount of time.

In Summary

This year has been one of steady growth, despite the financial activities remaining very much in line with the previous year. The Project Manager working with the Management Committee continues to be vigilant with all financial and operational activities ensuring that we maintain the confidence of all funders whilst delivering positive and beneficial experiences for our service users.

The Future

The Board of Trustees has previously agreed that GL11 Community Project should become a Company Limited by Guarantee, in addition to its charitable status. This process has now started, with Dave Butterfield, Geoff Wheeler and Paul Ayland being elected as Directors of the Company, and Ann Wheeler as Company Secretary. The aim is to complete this process, which includes registering as a company, re-registering as a charity and new bank accounts by October 2009. In addition, we will:

- Review the Gardening Scheme
- Monitor and review how we use space operationally at Fairmead
- Strengthen existing, and develop new, partnerships
- Continue the search for funding to support all activities
- Develop an Outreach Programme
- Respond to the deepening impact of the recession upon individuals and families
- Investigate all opportunities to support the needs of local people

Chair's Comment

I am grateful to my fellow Trustees and Committee Members for their support in the year, and during this time we have welcomed Caroline Eardley as a Trustee.

We meet regularly to monitor and review the activities of the staff and volunteers in delivering the agreed workplans and objectives of the organisation.

It is essential that we carry on the work of engagement to ensure that we are truly providing services that meet the needs of diverse communities. With the recession continuing deep into 2009, it is more important than ever that we are accessible, welcoming and supportive. Our role is to help individuals and families raise knowledge and skills levels, reduce their personal sense of isolation, raise their confidence and self-esteem and provide positive opportunities.

We could not deliver all that we do without the commitment of our staff and volunteers, and without the goodwill and support of our many partner organisations. This is an appropriate opportunity to place on record my thanks to everyone who supports GL11. These individual contributions combine to create a professional voluntary sector organisation with a strong reputation for quality service provision.

Thank you.

David Butterfield

Chair, GL11 Community Project Management Committee