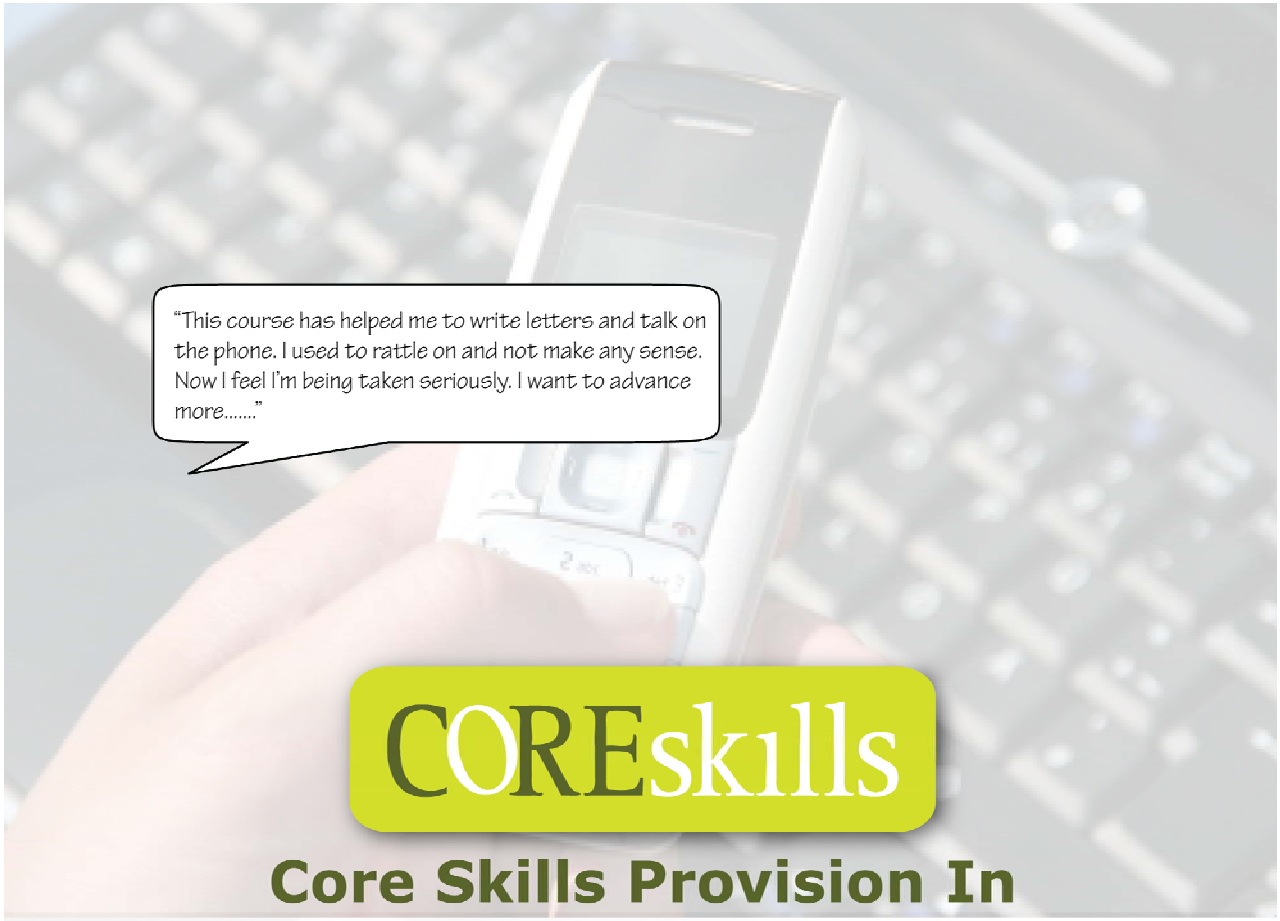

COREskills

Core Skills Provision In Inverclyde

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Section 1: Introduction

This document is for anyone involved in adult literacies provision who may be considering offering accredited learning.

It covers one centre's experience of providing accredited learning in an adult literacies environment — from the initial decision process on whether to offer accredited learning, to how to make it happen. Difficulties encountered and the steps taken to overcome them, are openly documented.

We hope this document will address any concerns you may have around offering accredited learning to adult literacies learners, and help with the decision process on whether offering accredited learning is right for your centre, your tutor/assistants, and most importantly, your learners.

Section 2: About the centre

The centre caters for accredited learning options offered within the Community Learning and Development service of Inverclyde Council and is based in Port Glasgow, Inverclyde. More specifically, the centre is responsible for the delivery and assessment of various SQA accredited qualifications including:

- All five Core Skills Units: Communication, Numeracy, Problem Solving, Working with Others, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Professional Development Award: Introduction to Tutoring in Adult Literacies Learning (PDA: ITALL)
- ESOL Units
- Various IT Units (eg Introduction to Computers)

Problem Solving and Working with Others at SCQF Level 3 were offered to learners in the past on two occasions:

1 to the first pilot group of learners, when the centre was working towards approval, and

2 to another small group of learners who based their work around the threatened closure and amalgamation of their children's school. This real-life situation gave the learners plenty of opportunities to develop their individual problem solving skills and to gain experience of working as part of a group.

We aim to offer these Units again in the future, by incorporating them into projects/activities that the learners are already involved in (eg Drama).

The provision of the ICT Units have generally been the responsibility of the Adult Learning Team, as literacies funding does not extend to accrediting ICT learning.

The main focus of our Core Skills provision is Communication and Numeracy at SCQF Levels 2, 3 and 4.

We currently work with around 100 Core Skills learners every year. These learners work mostly on Communication, but the number of learners taking Numeracy is gradually increasing.

Most learners work at SCQF Levels 3 and 4. However, the number of learners working at SCQF Level 2 is rising, as learners with learning difficulties decide to go for accreditation. The learning difficulties are mainly caused by dyslexia, but there are learners with brain injury, mental health problems etc.

We encourage/facilitate the learners' progression to college (or other appropriate training or education providers) should they wish to continue with their learning.

Note: For the remainder of this document, any reference to Core Skills Units means Communication and Numeracy, unless otherwise stated.

Staffing: full-time (core team)

The development of the Core Skills provision is currently the main responsibility of two full-time staff members in the adult literacies team: the Core Skills Co-ordinator and the Core Skills Development Worker.

The Core Skills Co-ordinator also holds the role of SQA Co-ordinator (ie oversees the delivery and assessment of all SQA Units). The role of the Core Skills Development Worker is to offer Core Skills opportunities to learners in co-operation with a number of partner agencies in order to cover more excluded, harder to reach, and less confident learners, eg people in rehabilitation programmes.

Both members of the core team are also assessors and internal verifiers for the Units.

Staffing: sessional

The Core Skills Units are mainly delivered by adult literacies tutor/assistants. The Development Worker is usually involved in Core Skills delivery at the pilot/initial phase of new developments, eg when delivery of a Core Skills Unit is integrated in another course for the first time, or is offered to a new group etc.

Staff training/qualifications

All ALN staff are required to do the ITALL course. Whether somebody goes on to complete the PDA: Introduction to Tutoring in Adult Literacies Learning (which the centre delivers) depends mainly on whether they have qualifications in a relevant subject, for example, Adult Education. ALN staff who do not have relevant qualifications are required to complete the PDA. Both members of the core team are qualified to, at least, degree level.

We organise Core Skills awareness-raising training sessions to make sure that all tutor/assistants are aware of what Core Skills Units are and which Units and SCQF levels we offer, so they are able to discuss the option of accreditation with their learners.

Further training is on offer for those tutor/assistants who want to deliver accredited learning and/or train as assessors, for Communication, Numeracy or both.

Each tutor/assistant has a designated development worker to support them in their work in adult literacies.

There are no specific qualifications needed to deliver the Core Skills Units. However, those involved in delivery should have a qualification in the same subject area at a

level higher than the level being delivered, or have appropriate work experience. Ideally, they should be working towards the A Units (previously D32 and D33) or hold a Scottish teaching qualification.

Note: Further information on the Assessor and Verifier Units can be found on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk

Section 3: SQA approval to deliver Core Skills Units

The Core Skills Units are context-free nationally-recognised qualifications which can be used to develop learning programmes or to provide a means of accrediting existing learning programmes. In 2001, staff in the adult education team felt that offering Core Skills Units would provide an appropriate progression option for learners.

Staff also felt that offering the opportunity for accreditation in a community setting would be the best option for adult literacies learners as it would retain the opportunity for learners to learn in small groups and 1:1 situations at a pace which suits each individual learner. These conditions are important for all literacies learning, but become even more important when the learner is working towards accreditation; an option that, from its very nature, carries negative connotations, as it involves being assessed.

The decision was made to apply to SQA for approval to deliver Core Skills within the centre.

To offer SQA qualifications, a centre has to gain:

- initial approval as an SQA centre
- approval to offer specific qualifications

The initial approval process is a check by SQA to ensure that the centre has the management structure and quality assurance systems in place to support the delivery, assessment and internal verification of SQA qualifications.

Approval to offer specific qualifications involves another check by SQA to ensure the centre has: the staff; reference, learning and assessment materials; equipment and accommodation needed to deliver and assess specific qualifications.

To facilitate this process, a pilot group of five learners was established, while the centre put in place all required systems and procedures for the delivery and assessment of the Units, supported by monitoring tools and relevant documentation.

Note: Further information on SQA's approval process can be found on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk — or you can request a visit from one of the Customer Support Team to chat through the process.

Section 4: Encouraging accredited learning

There are different pathways through which learners enter Core Skills provision.

Dedicated Core Skills provision

Sometimes learners decide to take up Core Skills from the beginning of their involvement with us. Very rarely do they know about Core Skills at the initial interview stage, but when they find out that there is an option for accreditation, they either decide to take it up straight away or they say they will consider it and then, after further discussion with their tutor/assistant, they decide to take it up.

A more common way, though, is when learners have already been in our 'general' literacies provision and, at some point their tutor/assistant suggests to them the option of accreditation. The tutor/assistant would usually do this on two occasions:

1 If the learner has already been working on areas similar to the Core Skills Outcomes, eg reading and writing letters, researching their favourite subject and writing about it, or managing their money, calculating their bills, or understanding timetables.

2 If the learner has been working on various areas of literacy and/or numeracy, but currently lacks a specific focus.

This usually applies to learners who have been attending for some time, have achieved their initial goals, enjoy progressing in their learning for personal satisfaction, and want to keep learning. Working towards Core Skills Units helps focus their learning, gives them a specific goal to work towards, and generally breathes new life into their participation in literacies provision.

These discussions between learner and tutor/assistant can happen at any time, but many tutor/assistants use the opportunity of learning reviews to suggest the option of Core Skills to learners.

Another way is when learners are 'inspired' and decide to do Core Skills because another learner in their group is already working on a Unit. For example, there was a case recently when a learner in a roll on/roll off group did his oral assessment. He had decided to do his talk in front of the whole class and he had prepared a PowerPoint presentation (which is quite unusual, but this was his preferred way). Everybody was captivated by it, mainly because he had decided to speak of his favourite subject, which he was very passionate about. A couple of the other learners then asked why he was doing the presentation and it was explained to them that it was because he was working on Core Skills Communication. Following further explanation of what Core Skills Units are, they decided to go for them themselves.

In actual fact, they decided to go for Core Skills Numeracy, because that's the area they were working on, and maybe Communication when they finish Numeracy!

Integrated Core Skills provision

In this case the learners have the opportunity to do Core Skills Units as part of a training course or wider programme of activities. Most learners find it useful to brush-up on their literacy skills, since this may be the first time they are back to studying after many years and many then go on to achieve the qualification.

Section 5: Delivering Core Skills provision

Over the years, the way Core Skills are offered to learners has widened. We now offer the following delivery options:

Dedicated Core Skills provision

When a learner decides that they want to start working towards a Core Skills Unit, their tutor/assistant completes a Core Skills Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with them. This ILP can be additional to the general literacies ILP the learner already has (if the Core Skills work is only part of the learner's goals at this moment in time) or can serve as the learner's ILP (if the Core Skills Unit Outcomes cover all of the learner's aims and objectives).

There are as many Core Skills ILPs as there are Units and SCQF Levels, each outlining the Outcomes of the Communication and Numeracy Units and what the learner needs to do. (An example of a Core Skills ILP is included in Appendix 1.)

The learners work entirely at their own pace (they set and review the target date for completion of the Unit) and generally have plenty of time to get lots of practice. They can produce the evidence for the Unit outcomes in any order, eg if they feel more comfortable with the speaking Outcome, they can do this first and then the reading and writing Outcomes of the Communication Unit.

While the learner is going through the Core Skills ILP s/he discusses with their tutor/assistant how they feel about the various Outcomes: which ones they feel more confident about; which ones they think they need to work on; which ones they would like to leave for last, until their confidence increases. The learner also scales him/herself regarding how they feel about each individual Unit Outcome, which helps track progress at review stages. S/he also notes down the areas s/he would like to learn about or practise [eg spelling, paragraphs, speaking in front of people (Communication), long division, percentages, drawing charts (Numeracy)].

By doing this, every learner is clear from the start about what is involved in their chosen Core Skills Unit at their chosen SCQF Level and have effectively put together a learning and teaching plan, which is useful for their tutor/assistant too.

Integrated Core Skills provision

Integrated Core Skills provision refers to courses where Core Skills tuition has been offered while learners have been participating in a structured programme of training or activities wider than ‘pure literacies’. While the courses themselves are not accredited, the participants can choose to go for assessment and accreditation of the Core Skills.

Examples of courses offered by partner organisations include:

- Communication within a Care training course
- Communication within a call centre training course
- Communication within a Choices course
- Numeracy within a Choices course

The Choices course is also called Employeeship — a ‘first step’ type course to prepare people for going back to work.

The materials used in tuition and assessment of these courses are those produced naturally through the course content, eg participants read and write about different disabilities, produce CVs or covering letters for their writing assessment, do a role play of a job interview for speaking etc.

Examples of two pilot projects where ALN is the lead provider:

- Inverclyde Goals

This is a football themed training course for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). The course contains various elements, such as career guidance, employability skills, health for life, first aid, football coaching, financial literacy as well as general literacies support throughout. The Core Skills Unit we have embedded is Communication.

- Communicating our Money Choices

Money Choices is a financial literacy course, which also prepares the participants for the Communication assessment as well, eg when the participants were reading texts relevant to financial learning such as credit cards, credit unions etc, participants were asked questions relevant to the Communication Units, such as what is the purpose of this text?

Integrated provision/projects organised by partner organisations with another primary focus (ie not training), for example:

- projects that work with people in the process of rehabilitation after being addicted to drugs/alcohol
- projects that work with groups of people with severe disabilities such as brain injuries

In these courses, we have specific slots when there is Core Skills tuition by our tutors, but there is more scope to accommodate participants' personal interests while preparing and assessing them for Core Skills Units.

Core Skills are offered in the workplace in co-operation with the employer. The main aim of such provision is to improve effective communication in the workplace as well as the self-confidence and self-esteem of the employees. It can be part of their general continuing professional development, or be put in place to prepare employees for further in-service accredited training such as ECDL and PC Passport. The content is influenced by the type of communication required by the employees in their working life, such as e-mails, reports, presentations, etc. There is also scope to accommodate the interests of the individuals, which works out well.

Section 6: Assessment

We try to make the assessment experience as relaxed and non-threatening as possible for the learners by trying to smoothly integrate it into the learning and teaching process and around the individual learner's interests. Assessment takes place in a familiar environment during the usual learning sessions.

All learners keep a 'Portfolio of Learning' which they can use to look back over their work and see for themselves how far they have come in their learning journey. Learners choose pieces of work that have specific meaning to them. They might select their best work, but sometimes they choose two pieces to show their progress on the same area, or examples that they are particularly proud of (perhaps because they show they did something for the first time).

The selection of pieces for their portfolio of learning can also be a suitable time to suggest moving on to accredited learning. The tutor/assistant explains to the learner that, by putting together pieces of work similar to the ones they have already done or are currently doing, and maybe doing some work on another area (eg on speaking, if they had only been working on reading and writing), they can also get a certificate. Sometimes, the tutor/assistant offers the learner the opportunity to try 'sample' tasks, so they can see for themselves that what they have to do is within their reach.

Where a learner decides to go for accreditation, they have a separate 'Portfolio of Evidence' which they use to keep the work they are doing for Core Skills separate from other literacies work they may be doing at the same time. This portfolio is not used for assessment purposes as such. Its purpose is to show that the learner has been working towards assessment and is a back-up in case some of the evidence produced for summative assessment is borderline.

Note: Further information on assessment using the portfolio approach is available through the following publications:

- Guidelines on Building a Portfolio of Evidence for Core Skills in Community Settings

There is also a range of documents providing examples of learner work which meet the Core Skills Units in Communication and Numeracy, all of which are available to download from SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk/coreskills

National Assessment Bank materials (NABs)

Every Core Skills Unit has a NAB for each SCQF Level. The purpose of the NAB is to expand on the requirement of the Unit by defining what is to be learned, the standard of learning and the evidence the learner needs to produce to show they have met the Unit standards. It also clarifies the conditions in which assessment must take place. For example, all performance criteria for one Unit Outcome has to be achieved in one go. This may seem daunting, however tutors should only suggest a learner 'has a go' at summative assessment when s/he is confident the learner is likely to achieve the Outcome based on the work the learner has been producing as part of their general literacies. There are no time limits on when Unit Outcomes have to be achieved, or a set order in which they have to be achieved, or what the context has to be. This allows the learner to work at their own pace and build up to an assessment, try the Outcome they feel most confident with first and choose the context (ie personal, social, educational or vocational) on which the assessment is based. Learners are more likely to achieve the assessment if it is based on a topic they are interested in.

The NAB also provides 'instruments of assessment' which are suggested tasks and questions that meet the Unit Outcomes. These can be used as off-the-shelf assessments, or put into a context which suits the learner's chosen topic.

For Communication, we very rarely use the NABs any more. This is because we have developed our own texts, questions and marking guidelines. Every learner's summative assessment has to be carried out using one of them.

While they are working towards summative assessment, the tutors give the learners texts and questions for practice. Based on how the learners are doing, the tutors know which aspects they need to work on for them to achieve a particular Outcome. For example, if in the Reading Outcome, the learner is struggling with identifying the purpose, the tutor may work with a couple of texts and only talk about different types of purpose and how to identify them. When the tutor thinks the learner is ready ie can achieve the Outcome, they will discuss it with their learner, then give them one of our approved texts and questions. The learner works with this, and the tutor then submits the answers for assessment.

For the writing Outcome, the process is really the same: the learner and tutor work together until the point that they agree that the learner is ready. The learner then produces a piece that they want to be assessed on. The tutor signs it off as being the learner's own work and that it was produced in their presence, then submits it for assessment.

For the Speaking Outcome, the tutor agrees with the learner the date that they want an assessor to visit them and listen to their talk, presentation etc. They have usually done a dry-run with their tutor before and have prepared their notes, cue-cards etc. We have recently started to record the oral assessments on voice recorders (when the learners are agreeable), which makes verification easier.

For Communication, because the evidence for the three Outcomes is very distinctive, there is no need really for a reference matrix, as, what we get is one text and questions answered on it, one piece of writing and one talk.

Also, we often get another folder with a collection of texts, pieces of writing etc. that do not necessarily fulfil the criteria but show that the learner has been working towards the ones submitted for assessment.

For Numeracy, we mainly use the NABs as we have focused on developing resources for Communication because that is what the vast majority of our learners so far have been doing.

The tutors know what is involved in each Unit and level and work with the learners to prepare them for meeting these requirements. Then, when the tutor feels the learner is ready, and the learner wants to give it a go, the learner is given an assessment paper and the respective resources from the NABs.

We have created an assessment paper where all the questions and exercises are based on the theme of painting and decorating and are currently working on one around the theme of financial literacy.

These assessment papers need a reference matrix (to show which question/exercise/activity covers which Outcome) and a marking scheme.

We are hoping to develop our bank of resources for summative assessment of Numeracy around the particular interests, needs and circumstances of our learners in the same way we have done for Communication.

Note: SQA offers a free prior-verification service to check any instruments of assessment created by centres meet the Unit standards.

The Assessment Process

Tutors do not assess their own learner's work, as we have a team of trained assessors to do this, some of whom are also tutors. The only exceptions to this are for the third Communication Outcome (Speaking and Listening) and for the practical tasks (measuring, weighing etc.) in Numeracy. If the tutor is also a trained assessor it makes sense for them to assess these practical tasks (otherwise we would need to find another assessor that was available at the time of the session, which can be difficult and time consuming).

The tutor passes on learner evidence to the Core Skills Co-ordinator who identifies an assessor and forwards it onto him/her.

Once assessed, the assessor gives the learner evidence back to the Core Skills Co-ordinator for internal verification — which is either 100% if the assessor is new, or samples if the assessor is experienced.

Section 7:How learners find the Core Skills experience

Learning and teaching

Learners who do a Core Skills Unit as part of a training course, for example, usually see doing the Core Skills element as part of the course rather than a separate thing as the subjects they read, write and speak about are relevant to their main subject anyway (for example care, financial literacy). Of course they know the requirements for the Unit and level they are going for, and have identified areas they feel they need to work on during the process of completing their ILP — and the assessment and accreditation aspect is always at the back of their minds while doing the course.

Learners who decide to undertake a Core Skills Unit at some point while in the 'general' provision, like the fact that they have a clear goal and that there is a clear focus to their learning. They know that exercises, tasks and learning objectives are geared towards achieving the Unit at the end and that, in this sense, some things, such as 'practice papers' for example, may have a specific structure and criteria that define if an answer is right. In general, though, they usually see the learning and teaching process in the same way as general literacies tuition: learning things they need to learn anyway as outlined in their real-life goals, using resources relevant to them, reflecting on their learning etc. Many are excited to start working towards a qualification and proud of themselves that they are in a position to do so.

Assessment

It is probably fair to say that many learners are worried about the 'assessment' part of the process. Although we try to make it as informal as possible and explain to learners that the people that will assess them are members of the literacies team and not 'external' assessors (that they can have another go if need be etc), the idea of an 'assessment' is still scary to some degree. Many learners find the oral part of Communication daunting, even though the assessor is sometimes their tutor/assistant or another member of the team they already know. But, on the other hand, actually plucking up the courage and 'doing it', gives them a boost and sense of achievement in itself.

Has offering the Core Skills Units made a difference to learners?

For many learners it is ‘the first certificate they have ever got in their life’ and as such it has a profound impact on their confidence. This effect is magnified even more in the cases of learners that have been told in the past that they ‘are stupid’ and they ‘will never learn’, as it represents ‘external’ and valid recognition of their learning and ability. As already mentioned, many learners that start at SCQF Levels 2 and 3 continue with SCQF Level 4 or decide to do Numeracy after Communication or vice versa. Some move on to college to study at higher levels (eg SCQF Level 5) or to other training. Many learners say that, before they did Core Skills Units, they would never have thought that they could get a qualification, let alone go to college. For learners who move on to work, recording achievement of Core Skills Units on their CV is a useful addition. This is especially the case for learners who are making a fresh start in their life after a period affected by drugs/alcohol problems, severe mental health problems etc. The achievement of the Core Skills qualification can be mark a new beginning for them. It is also an indication to any prospective employer that the person is taking positive steps towards building a new future and that s/he is capable of learning and achieving despite any past difficulties.

Does gaining an SQA certificate appeal to learners?

Due to the nature of adult literacies, a lot of the learners we work with have already had a bad experience from the formal education system and/or left without any formal qualifications. Many of these learners feel they have missed out and relish the opportunity to get a qualification now. A relatively high percentage of literacies learners have always found learning difficult and/or have been discouraged in the past to go for qualifications due to their learning difficulties. For people who have always believed, and/or been told, that any type of qualification, especially in ‘English’ or ‘Maths’ is beyond their reach, this opportunity is invaluable.

Section 8: The challenges

It has been a challenging experience for everybody involved, no doubt about it! The challenges have changed over time, but here are some of the main ones.

Becoming SQA approved

At the initial stage, a lot of thought had to go into the structure and roles, ie making sure all the necessary systems and procedures were in place and clarifying who was responsible for what etc. Identifying the right people for all the roles from the start is important and a requirement of SQA. This includes tutor/assistant(s), assessor(s), and internal verifier(s) for the Core Skills Units as well as a Head of Centre and Centre Co-ordinator (these can be the same person). When the people are identified, the challenge is for them to provide suitable CVs that are acceptable to SQA. This is because few people will have Core Skills experience (in tutoring and/or assessing) at the beginning, even though they may have a lot of experience in general literacies.

This centre was fortunate to have people in the team that already had extensive experience in literacies. The team member who was identified as the internal verifier for Core Skills, went on the assessor and internal verifier training (A and V Units) run by SQA. Since Core Skills Units are internally assessed, the onus is on the centre to make sure that standards are maintained throughout the assessment process and having an internal verifier who combined literacies experience with assessing knowledge and skills was a good starting point and gave everybody involved confidence in the process.

Getting to grips with Core Skills

There is a lot of new knowledge, skills and understanding involved in both tutoring and assessing Core Skills Units — eg what the Units involve and differences between the levels. Therefore, drawing on SQAs support is important, especially at the initial stages. Centres can request a development visit from one of the Core Skills External Verifiers at any stage of the process for support, guidance and reassurance on what the centre is doing regarding Core Skills provision. Our experience is that SQA is willing to help, so the advice to all new centres is: use them!

Understanding how Core Skills fit with existing literacies provision

One of the biggest challenges for everybody involved, and especially the tutor/assistants, is understanding how the social practice approach can be maintained.

Compared to general literacies provision, working towards Core Skills Units can seem a very formal way of learning. People tend to think that it requires a different attitude and approach, similar to any learning and teaching process that prepares learners for ‘an exam’. This is far from the case. Tutor/assistants working with learners who have chosen to do a Core Skills Unit maintain the learner-centred approach and employ the use of resources relevant to the learners’ lives and circumstances in the same way they would normally do for ‘general’ literacies tutoring.

To aid this understanding, the centre put together Core Skills Individual Learning Plans which combine the principle of any literacies learning being structured around the individual learner’s needs and goals with the Outcomes of the Unit and SCQF Level the learner has chosen to work towards. This means that when the learner works eg on the Reading Outcome for Communication, the resources used will be based on the types of texts s/he would normally come across (TV guides, letters from housing association, work reports, etc.)

Understanding assessment

A large part of the tutor/assistant role is to provide feedback to the learner on the work they are doing and agreeing steps to be taken to improve their work so that they can achieve their goals. For the tutor/assistant to provide feedback, they have to ‘assess’ the learner’s existing knowledge and skills and use that information to inform future teaching, learning and progress.

Many tutor/assistants believe that, since there is a formal assessment at the end of the process, they should only use specific ‘approved’ resources to prepare the learners, or that they should follow a specific study course or curriculum. It has to be explained to these tutor/assistants that they are free to use any suitable resource they would normally use for general literacies tutoring, ie by taking into account what the learner wants to learn and selecting materials relevant to the learner’s life, and according to the learner’s ability and preferred learning styles. The only difference is that tutor/assistants should, at the same time, keep in mind the requirements of the Unit and SCQF Level the learner is preparing for. For example, if a learner is working on improving their writing skills, general literacies resources can be used to cover most aspects of the Communication Unit such as planning the content, layout,

structure, punctuation and spelling. The tutor should encourage the learner to produce pieces of writing long enough to satisfy the word count of a particular Communication Unit.

It also has to be explained that learners should only be formally assessed when the tutor and learner feel ready.

Coping with the demand for Core Skills

The general drive for accreditation by the Scottish Government and employers, as well as the decrease in unskilled jobs available, has resulted in an ever-increasing demand for Core Skills from employers in the area of Workplace Literacies and from our general literacies learners.

The Core Skills team in Inverclyde is still fairly small, which can pose a challenge if there are many assessments that need to be done simultaneously (eg when there are a couple of groups finishing their course at the same time). This is addressed by forward planning as much as possible, as well as having one worker (currently the Co-ordinator) who has the overview of all Core Skills provision (existing and being developed).

Integrating Core Skills tuition into other courses

The courses may not be long enough to offer sufficient time for Core Skills tuition and assessment, therefore making it difficult for all participants who also wish to achieve the qualification. It is therefore important to be realistic when negotiating with partner organisations on the feasibility of integrating Core Skills accreditation into their course. Any prior information that the partner can offer about the course participants based on previous experience or the recruitment criteria (eg characteristics of their educational background), as well as details on the course content, can be invaluable when devising a course.

The fact that the number of participants in a course can be big (compared to the usual literacies small groups), combined with the reality that these groups are usually multi-level (literacy-wise), usually poses a real challenge to the tutor/assistant. Furthermore, other issues may arise since the Core Skills sessions are part of a bigger course with specific content (on which the Core Skills sessions are based). For instance, part of the course curriculum may require more discussion than anticipated (eg financial literacy) meaning that there is even less time left for ‘pure’ Core Skills tuition and assessment.

It is important that these aspects are considered when negotiating timeframes and planning the sessions.

‘Individualisation’ of assessment resources

We want to be able to offer all learners instruments for formative and summative assessment that are relevant to their personal interests and/or circumstances at work/study. The process of identifying and adapting suitable resources that fulfil all of the Core Skills Unit criteria, including writing up questions and marking guidelines, is very labour-intensive and requires a lot of time. This issue will continue to be a challenge, until a substantial bank of resources is put together that are relevant to the interests and circumstances of our learners as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.

The benefits of offering Core Skills

We started offering the option of Core Skills accreditation to literacies learners about five years ago, because we thought it could:

1 provide focus to their learning and a specific goal to work towards

2 validate the learning they were already undertaking and offer a sense of achievement

3 offer a nationally-recognised qualification to increase opportunities for employment/a better job/promotion

4 be a foundation for lifelong learning and personal development

Today we actively encourage our learners to take up this option, as it has become evident through learners’ testimonials and progress that Core Skills accreditation can deliver all the above. But even if the only outcome was the great boost to learners’ confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, it would definitely still be worth it!

INVERCLYDE ADULT LEARNING AND LITERACIES

Core Skills Individual Learning Plan

Learner's Name ..... Date ……..

Target date for completion of Unit .....

COMMUNICATION (SCQF Level 4)

Outcome 1 READING Working on this Outcome will help me to: ……....

Area/s of my life this will affect (Ind/Educ, Family, Community, Working) .....

Respond to simple but detailed written communication.

Work out the main points in a piece of straightforward writing and answer questions to show that you understand it.

Say how well it achieves its purpose.

Things I need to work on for Outcome 1

How confident do you feel about this Outcome at the moment? Say where you feel you are on the scale from 0 to 10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Communication Intermediate 1

DO1B 10

INVERCLYDE ADULT LEARNING AND LITERACIES

Outcome 2 WRITING

Working on this Outcome will help me to: ……..

Area/s of my life this will affect (Ind/Educ, Family, Community, Working) .....

Produce simple but detailed written communication.

Produce a piece (or pieces) of writing of about 300 words.

Write down several important ideas, opinions or bits of information.

Write in a way that the reader will understand and include a picture or diagram if it helps.

Take care with sentence structure, punctuation and spelling.

Things I will need to work on for Outcome 2

How confident do you feel about this Outcome at the moment? Say where you feel you are on the scale from 0 to 10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

INVERCLYDE ADULT LEARNING AND LITERACIES

Outcome 3 ORAL COMMUNICATION (Speaking) Working on this Outcome will help me to:……....

Area/s of my life this will affect (Ind/Educ, Family, Community, Working) .....

Produce and respond to simple but detailed oral communication.

Give a short talk or take part in a discussion with one or two other people. You need to speak for at least 3 minutes.

Give several ideas clearly, in the right order and at a suitable pace.

Listen to other people and answer any questions you are asked.

Things I need to work on for Outcome 3

How confident do you feel about this Outcome at the moment? Say where you feel you are on the scale from 0 to 10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

INVERCLYDE ADULT LEARNING AND LITERACIES

REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Learner's Name ..... **Date .....**

Outcome 1 (Reading)

Things I am more confident about now –

Things I still need to work on –

How confident do you feel now about this Outcome? Say where you feel you are on the scale from 0 to 10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Target date for assessment of this Outcome**.....** Date**.....**

Communication Intermediate 1

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INVERCLYDE ADULT LEARNING AND LITERACIES

Outcome 2 (Writing)

Things I am more confident about now –

Things I still need to work on –

How confident do you feel about this Outcome now? Say where you feel you are on the scale from 0 to 10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Target date for assessment of this Outcome..... Date**.....**

Communication Intermediate 1

DO1B 10

INVERCLYDE ADULT LEARNING AND LITERACIES

Outcome 3 (Oral Communication)

Things I am more confident about now –

Things I still need to work on –

How confident do you feel now about this Outcome? Say where you feel you are on the scale from 0 to 10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Target date for assessment of this Outcome..... Date**.....**

Communication Intermediate 1

DO1B 10

Tutor/assistant Notes/Comments