

## **A Case Study on social inclusion from Blackburn, Lancs, UK**

A Learning City recognises that economic growth is linked to social and educational development for all its citizens. Learning is the key that will unlock the door to a more prosperous, stable and rewarding future in every way. The city will therefore develop schemes to raise the general level of education and incidence of learning through learning support programmes for those who may otherwise be left behind. The following describes four such projects in Blackburn to raise the aspirations of its citizens.

### **1. Learning Champions**

Learning champions are a team of volunteers who live in many different neighbourhoods within the Borough. Our volunteers are people who want to offer support to others in taking a new step.

#### **Meet a learning champion**

Have you ever thought you'd like to meet new people, perhaps get involved in a local class, maybe find out about computers or learn more about your rights? Our team are ordinary people waiting to meet up with you.

Learning champions offer individual support to help people make appointments, visit community and learning centres, find bus routes, listen to learning worries and generally help them overcome their barriers to learning.

#### **Becoming a learning champion**

All our volunteers have training in offering learning support. We offer a quality programme by providing a four-session training course which can lead to becoming a qualified adult learner support assistant. We also complete a full criminal records bureau (CRB) check to ensure the protection of volunteers and learners.

### **2. Access points**

There are several Access Points in the Borough where people can discuss their future with trained and sympathetic advisers. They can discuss

Careers guidance and advice on job change or redundancy.

Information and advice on a range of learning opportunities in the community as well as further and higher education.

- Help preparing a C.V. which is tailored to your individual requirements.
- Help completing application forms and letters of application.
- Access to computers and free internet access for job seeking.
- Use of telephones, fax machines and photocopiers.
- Use of stationery and postage of job application forms and letters.
- Interview skills coaching.
- Provision of newspapers, job bulletins and other publications to assist in job search.

### **3. Involving parents as teachers**

Parents are the prime educators until the child attends school and remain a major influence on their children's learning through school and beyond. The school and the parents have crucial roles to play and the impact is greater if parents and schools work together.

There are two main strands to parental involvement:

- Parents' involvement in the life of the school; and
- Parents' involvement in support of the individual child at home and at school.

An 'Involving Parents, Raising Achievement Pack' is available to all parents in the Borough and will provide information about helping parents to help their children fulfil their full potential.

#### **4. Caring Neighbourhood scheme**

##### **Visiting**

This scheme provides volunteers to visit socially isolated or housebound older people in their own homes. Volunteers visit a person to have a chat, build up a friendship and provide a link to the outside world.

Volunteer visitors would usually visit one person once a week, at any time to suit them and the person they visit – so it can fit around work and family commitments.

##### **'Phonelink'**

The 'Phonelink provides an alternative to a visitor. Volunteers telephone a number of housebound or socially isolated people, at the same time each week, to have a chat, catch up on the news and provide a link to the outside world. 'Phonelink' Volunteers are based at our Blackburn office at 4 King Street.

Volunteers have a friendly and caring manner and excellent communication and listening skills.

Initial and ongoing training, support and guidance for new volunteers are provided by the Volunteer Co-ordinator.