

That First Step was launched at McDonald Road Library last month.

The book, funded by Clydesdale Bank, was written by a group of learners from all over Edinburgh who came together with tutor, Soozin Rogers, to write about their experiences of learning as children and as adults returning to learning.

The learners in the group were involved in every aspect of the book, from forming a group contract which listed the way they felt they should work together as a team, to negotiations with the designer about the final layout, the title and the design of the front cover.

Initially, the learners shared their learning stories with each other. They shared ideas and experiences, listened and discussed similarities and differences. Then they planned, through negotiation, what to put into their written stories, worked on the structure and the layout, offered suggestions to each other and added not only to their own stories but to each others.

Outcomes

There are many transferable skills that the group now feel more confident about: negotiating skills, organisational skills and decision making skills.

Most of these learners were not initially confident about their writing abilities. This book will be a testament not only to their abilities but also to their strength and determination in returning to learning. It has enabled them to realise that their skills, knowledge and abilities are far greater than they had previously thought.

Writing their learning stories has allowed these learners to express how they feel, to order their thoughts and to locate them in their lives, culture, society, their world. It has been cathartic, allowing the group to explore topics previously hidden even from themselves.



"We feel better for doing something new; we now recognise our strengths, our own worth, we have a lot of knowledge and experience. We have achieved something together that we probably could never have done on our own and we have had lots of fun doing it!"

That First Step will inspire and motivate both learners and practitioners who have so far been unsure of and perhaps afraid of how to take that first step in exploring their past learning, enabling them to move forward into new and exciting opportunities.

Next steps

With the book completed the group is about to start work on producing a video and audiotape. Watch this space for more information ...

**Check the back page for
comments on the launch**



INVOLVING LEARNERS

CLAN has been working hard to ensure that learners are consulted on many aspects of the partnership and making sure that wherever possible learner's voices are heard. This has been done through holding city wide learners' conferences, the first of which was in June 2004.

Fifty learners from across Edinburgh came together at that event to share their experiences of learning, skills and achievements. Learners discussed how they would like to be involved in the future. The ideas they came up with were:

- **A Learners' Magazine**
- **An Event Planning Group**
- **Telling others about their achievements:**
Stories Group, Learning Buddies



These ideas quickly became a reality and sixteen months later they are still going strong. This issue of Beans will feature some of these groups and give you an update on what has been happening including learners' contributions to CLAN's strategic planning.

Learners Have a Say

This year CLAN was keen to ensure that learners' voices were heard in order to inform the Action Plan 2006-08 and, more importantly, that their voices were heard in order to be acted upon. We asked learners to send in their ideas using a questionnaire and we invited learners to a learners' meeting at McDonald Road Library and to the CLAN Strategic Planning Day (see back page). Overall forty learners took part in the consultation, however not all the target groups were represented. We are keen to look at ways of involving learners from the partner organisations and would be really interested to hear your ideas.

The input we received highlights the huge body of knowledge and awareness which learners bring to the process of planning. Their suggestions mirror work which currently takes place but also highlights key issues which learners feel have to be addressed in order to attract new learners and improve the quality of the learning. Here is a sample of learners' ideas - the full report is available on the Web at www.clanedinburgh.org/info.html

Marketing

- use the radio, TV, a video, the Internet
- make advertising snappy, use cartoons, make it very visual, attractive and accessible
- put leaflets/posters where people are: supermarkets, pubs, shops, doctors' surgeries

Types of groups

- interest groups
- work-related groups
- confidence-building, spelling, reading and discussion groups
- basic signing (BSL)

Facilities

- crèches
- access to good resources
- importance of having right space and environment (campaign for better facilities)

Timing and variety

- offer Summer evening classes and a variety of times
- have drop-ins and be flexible
- big break at Christmas/Easter/Summer too long

Make more voices heard

- more Learning Buddies/peer support to attract in new folk and support them
- more learners' planning events - including social events
- ideas boxes, email and area newsletters
- learners' forum and voting

We are keen to share best practice throughout the partnership in relation to involving learners and welcome any ideas/questions you may have. Contact Lorraine at CLAN. Tel: 0131 270 6072. Fax: 0131 270 6074. Email: lorraine@clanedinburgh.org



The Next **Write On**

Following a successful first issue of **Write On**, the magazine written by learners for learners, the magazine group hope to get a second issue out before Christmas. A questionnaire was sent out with the first issue to get opinions from readers on what they thought of the magazine. Sixty people returned the questionnaire. Here is a sample of the comments.



What did you think of the content?

47 people said	Interesting
12 people said	OK
1 person said	Could be better

Comments on the look of the newsletter

- It is very clear
- I don't like the heading
- It's put together well, although it could be flashier
- Think it looks quite good, I like the colours
- It could be better
- I think the layout's good but a little more colour would be nice
- Like it very much, very professional, neat, sharp. I like the way it is set out and the different colours of writing catch your eyes.

How can we make **Write On** better?

- More stories that are true from the past could make it more interesting
- I would change the layout. Use more colours
- Change the colours, add frames to photos, etc.
- Make it more eye-catching with bright colours
- You could have more about Scotland

For more information about **Write On** contact Claudia Esslinger. Email: claudia.esslinger@educ.edin.gov.uk



Learning Buddies Tour



The Learning Buddies took to the road in September when they were asked to do presentations at different events about their involvement with the project.

Pam and Jeanette co-presented two workshops on behalf of the Learning Buddies at Murrayfield Stadium on 8 September, International Literacy Day – Celebration of Adult Literacies. Along with CLAN Training Officer, Gillian Lawrence, they explained the Learning Buddies' role – to attract new numeracy learners by going out to community groups and giving talks about their own learning experience – the background and benefits of the project.

Participants at the workshop appreciated the Learning Buddies' enthusiasm and expert input and felt these ideas could work in other areas in Scotland. As one participant highlighted, 'Their inspiring input eclipsed anything professionals could say'.

Then, along with Liz, Tam and Tanya and support worker, Winnie, they travelled by train to Inverness on 13 September to meet other learners from Highland Region and do two presentations – one was more of a dialogue with local learners and providers and the second was in the Inverness Council Chambers – to eleven staff and learners from Orkney, Shetland, the Highlands and Aberdeen.

PAM COLLECTED COMMENTS FROM THE GROUP

PAM: The learners and tutors we have met tonight seemed really interested in what we are doing. Have been asked lots of questions and so tried to answer as many as possible. Getting lots of feedback.

TANYA: It was good to meet other people, learners we had not met before from another city. Their presentation was really good.

LIZ: We have it easier to get to class and they have it a lot harder.

JEANETTE: They had produced the Learning Journey DVD about coming to a crossroads and not knowing where to go and what road to take.

TAM: Very friendly people and the DVD was really good.

GILLIAN: The Highland learners had got money to run as a voluntary group which they called Forum. The meetings with other learners and providers were very successful.

From these workshops the Learning Buddies have now been asked to do another presentation at the National Adult Numeracy seminar in Glasgow in December.

For this second year of the project which again is funded by Clydesdale Bank, we are looking for new members. If you know of any learners who'd like to get involved with the Learning Buddies project, contact rosemary@clanedinburgh.org

● Strategic Planning Day

As part of the process of building our Action Plan 2006-08, CLAN held a very successful Strategic Planning Day at Update on 21 September.

We were joined by learners, tutors and practitioners, CLAN partners and employers and the CLAN core team. Participants reviewed a range of key papers and reports shaping our planning and heard a presentation of learners' views. The workshops allowed a range of priorities to emerge as we reviewed our proposed targets and how we might achieve these in 2006-08.

Our thanks is due to all who participated and for giving their time and ideas to the planning process.

Where do we go from here?

A new format for presenting our Action Plan emerged last week from the Scottish Executive. CLAN is presently studying the requirements of this new format and we will incorporate within it the key ideas and developments that learners, tutors and many others have expressed in these planning events. The draft of our Action Plan will go to the CLAN Action Group on 10 November and once approved by the Action Group will be published on the CLAN website. The finalised Action Plan has to be with the Scottish Executive by 31 December.

Once again our thanks to all who worked with CLAN in this process - our plans are all the stronger for your help.

Angus Whyte



Comments from the book launch (from the front story)

It was wonderful to hear the speakers tell their stories with such confidence. I had a lovely time reading the stories and looking at the photos around the room. All in all it was inspirational.

It was fabulous today to see my mother speak so well in front of a group of people. I am so proud of her.

Very interesting experience, good to know the help is out there. It's made a big difference to Margo, pleased to be here.

Wonderful to hear and see learners telling their stories. An audiotape of that kind of real experience would be a really good publicity stratagem.

Very interesting hearing everyone's story. It was good, the people had the confidence to stand up and speak. I think everyone did extremely well.

Very impressed with everyone's stories. Fantastic to hear that one small step can lead to so many wonderful things.

TRAINING EVENT

Working with People with a Learning Disability in Adult Literacy and Numeracy

Saturday 12 November, 10am - 3pm
The Number Shop, 188 - 190 The Pleasance

A discussion based workshop for literacies workers: (trainee) volunteers, tutors, project workers, community education workers. We will be looking at barriers to learning including attitudes, values and principles and how we break down the barriers and make our practice more inclusive. The trainer for this course is Jacqui Bain.

If you are interested please contact Claudia Esslinger by **Friday 4 November**. Tel: 0131 469 3000 ext. 4009. Email: claudia.esslinger@educ.edin.gov.uk

The next edition of Beans will be out in November. If you would like to contribute, send your items to Fiona Holmes, CLAN Edinburgh, 1-3 Canon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5HE.

Tel: 0131 270 6073. Fax: 0131 270 6074.

Email: fiona@clanedinburgh.org

Web: www.clanedinburgh.org

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BYTES**