

Citizens' Curriculum Case Study: Learn Devon

About the Citizens' Curriculum

The Citizens' Curriculum is an innovative and flexible model for language, literacy and numeracy provision which places the needs of learners and communities at its core. Its aim is to develop new ways of offering learning which engages and motivates adults in all kinds of contexts to improve their English, maths and other 'life skills', resulting in better progression, outcomes and aspirations - into and at work, in learning and in personal, family and community life. The underpinning principles of the Citizens' Curriculum are:

- A holistic approach to provision for adult learners interpreted through the local context
- Learner involvement in determining the curriculum to meet their needs and interests
- An interlinked combination of literacy, numeracy, ESOL, financial, health, digital and civic capabilities

Background

Learn Devon used the Citizens' Curriculum to engage disadvantaged adult learners, both in Exeter and in rural Devon communities. Working with housing associations and other local partners, the pilot used a community cookery course to develop a range of skills and capabilities, including everyday maths, budgeting and healthy eating. Learners shared recipes through blogs and social media, supporting the development of literacy and digital skills. Learn Devon aimed to build learners' confidence and support them to progress to further learning.

Citizens' Curriculum Principle	Locally-led learning, responding to the needs of the local community, economy or specific cohorts of learners	Learner involvement in determining the curriculum	An interlinked combination of capabilities
How it worked	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Delivered in a disadvantaged inner city area with learners who were homeless or had insecure accommodation.● Led by a Community Development Coordinator and an experienced tutor, both of whom had a good understanding of local context and strong links with local support organisations. This enabled them to develop a programme which was tailored to local needs and aimed to address many of the challenges faced by the target group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Consultation with learners at the beginning of the pilot to determine their learning needs. This informed the location, length and content of the programme and ensured the model was accessible.● The tutor took a flexible and responsive approach - the lesson plan and aims for each session could be adapted to the interests and needs of learners as they arose.● The tutor provided opportunities for group and one-to-one feedback so the programme could be altered as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Health - the pilot was a cookery course and taught learners how to make healthy, balanced meals from scratch.● Language, literacy and numeracy - these skills were embedded through reading recipes, talking in groups about the significance of food, and weighing ingredients.● Financial - developed cost effective recipes to reduce shopping bills and support household budgeting.● Digital - learners used tablets to video each other cooking and take photos of the meals they made.

Impact

Learn Devon noted that as a direct result of the pilot programme, several learners made notable improvements to their diet and lifestyle. For one particular learner, not only was the social network they developed through the pilot instrumental in supporting the learner to navigate through a difficult period in their life, but the healthy living focus of the course also helped the learner in making positive long-term decisions.

The main outcome for practitioners was improved morale. Learn Devon reported that their tutors thoroughly enjoyed working with the Citizens' Curriculum as it gave them the freedom to explore learners' needs and interests in more depth and tailor their programmes accordingly. For many tutors, this was a considerable change:

"[The tutors have] both expressed how the freedom kind of made them feel a lot happier in teaching the class. It made them more comfortable with being able to run the sessions. There was less stress about having to tick a box or having to go down a path that maybe it didn't seem so appropriate to go down, just to tick a box." (Learn Devon pilot lead)

Critical Success Factors – Tips for Implementing the Citizens' Curriculum

- Basing the learning around a main activity (such as cooking) helps to create natural opportunities to develop capabilities across the Citizens' Curriculum framework
- Encouraging flexible approaches to teaching and learning, which allow space to tailor the programme to learners' needs 'on the fly', are an important part of adopting a Citizens' Curriculum approach – and gives practitioners greater autonomy, increasing their professional satisfaction.