

Citizens' Curriculum Case Study: Derby Adult Learning Service

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

Derby Adult Learning Service (DALs) used their Citizens' Curriculum pilot to enhance their ESOL provision with learners working at Entry Level. They brought together specialist ESOL, numeracy, IT, careers advisers and dedicated tutorial tutors to design a coherent programme of study for their learners. Focussing on topics such as managing money and using local public services, the pilot aimed to build language skills by embedding the core capabilities into everyday scenarios. Derby Adult Learning Service wanted this model to enable their learners to better support their children with schoolwork and support them in finding voluntary or paid employment.

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">• DALs serves a population comprised of around 54% black and minority ethnic (BME) individuals.• ESOL classes delivered in a variety of community settings, including schools, in disadvantaged areas.• DALs worked with children's centres, primary schools and voluntary organisations to establish local need and promote the course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aimed to make ESOL course more engaging by linking it directly to learners' 'real world experiences' and challenges.• Held learner forums and focus groups to identify needs and interests and used this to develop the programme.• First session incorporated initial and diagnostic assessments and in-depth conversations to decide on learning goals and plan the content of the course in detail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language and literacy – learners worked towards ESOL units and qualifications.• Numeracy – learners had the option of working towards Functional Skills maths.• Digital – Learners had the option of working towards Functional Skills ICT qualifications.• Health, Civic and Financial – embedded through healthy eating, volunteering, community awareness, equality and diversity and personal finance management topics.• Employability skills including personal presentation, job search and CV writing.

Impact

As part of their Citizens' Curriculum pilot, Derby Adult Learning Service delivered an ESOL programme with embedded numeracy, digital, civic and health capabilities. To support delivery, an ESOL specialist tutor worked in partnership with a maths specialist tutor and an ICT specialist tutor to ensure that embedded skills were fully accessible to learners. The pilot lead reports that 'one of the barriers we did have at the beginning was [the specialist tutors'] ability to understand how ESOL learners worked'.

Working closely with the ESOL tutor and learners in the class allowed both the maths and ICT tutors to learn how to develop and adapt their own teaching techniques and materials to the needs of English language learners. Both tutors subsequently 'said it amazed them how quickly the learners had gone from having poor English to having a reasonable use of English, and they were amazed by how quickly people had picked up the language on the course'.

As a direct result of this experience, 'the maths teacher is doing her CELTA training [to teach ESOL] and has decided she'd like to do ESOL as her second subject specialism.'

Derby ALS's pilot has been so successful that they will be embedding it across their Community Learning provision going forward and have created an ESOL and Citizens' Curriculum Manager role in their new organisational structure.

Critical Success Factors – Tips for Implementing the Citizens' Curriculum

- Bringing together curriculum teams and tutors with different specialisms can help deliver a more integrated Citizens' Curriculum for learners
- Providing opportunities for practitioners to work across specialisms can also support professional development
- Active engagement and consultation with learners can help to identify new topics and contexts for language, literacy and numeracy skills development