

The Kirkcaldy Student Forum

WHO ARE WE?

The service “Adult Basic Education” (ABE) of Fife Council offers free training to those who want to improve their reading, writing and numeracy.

DESCRIPTION

First of all, the Student Forum, is a place where learners can meet each other, physically... as well as virtually on their website:
<http://www.kirkcaldy-abe-studentsforum.org.uk/>

The Forum represents learners from Kirkcaldy. This Forum deals with issues that affect learners such as access to training premises, the way the training programmes are delivered, and the organization of activities for learners.

The Forum is organized and managed by learners. They meet once a month.

TRAINING THAT TAKES LEARNERS INTO ACCOUNT

In Kirkcaldy, groups comprise 6 – 8 participants and meet two hours a week. A training plan is developed with tutors and this is tailored to the needs of each participant: short and long term objectives are set for everyone. ABE Training programmes are not like the school model. Learners work at their own pace to reach their own objectives. There is no pressure, because everyone is considered to be “in the same boat”.

WHY A STUDENT FORUM?

There is no doubt that joining Adult Basic Education can be difficult. People are reluctant to come for help. And that was one of the reasons for creating the Kirkcaldy Students Forum. This is a space run by learners for learners, where they can support and reassure each other.

If someone is hesitant about joining Adult Basic Education, he or she can phone or email to arrange to meet up with another learner or an ABE buddy for a chat.

Members of the Student Forum get together over a cup of coffee and biscuits to organise activities for learners which provide opportunities for everyone to get to know each other. It's what makes people feel welcome and confident.

This does not prevent learners on the Forum from working on serious issues such as how to integrate new learners into groups, ensure easy access to learning and influence the delivery of training programmes which are relevant to learners lives.



The learners draft and share recipes. Together they have formed a reading group and a group working on the written part of the driving theory test. The Forum is also in contact with Digital Fife which offers free training modules. For example, learners can learn how to use e-mail, to do banking transactions online, be aware of internet security. They also learn how to manage their digital photographs and raise money for their projects.

The Forum also organizes short-term courses and workshops on all kinds of themes, ranging from origami to digital photography.

WHY ENCOURAGE A DYNAMIC SUCH AS THE KIRKCALDY STUDENT FORUM?

At the Forum learners can voice their points of view and opinions on a variety of issues which impact on their learning. Their involvement in the Forum also gives them the skills and confidence which can influence their everyday lives, their family lives and their community lives.

The Forum enables learners from different groups to come together in a positive way. They can influence the content of their learning, ensure the learning environment suits their needs and, above all, they can make suggestions on how things can be improved.

Learners in the Forum can also express themselves on behalf of other learners; for example, they can draw the attention to the lack of computer equipment in the training premises. Recently they organized an open day when they invited local elected officials to sensitize politicians to learning conditions, and also to the learners' determination to learn.

The learners' participation in the Forum increases self-confidence to such an extent that one learner, the Chair of the Forum, felt sufficiently self-confident to approach the Deputy Prime-Minister of the Scottish Parliament on a street in Glasgow, and talk to her about the Eur-Alpha project, and the issue of adult literacy learning.

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