



Learning and Living in NE Fife  
**“A dream place to live – for some people!”**

A Participatory Research Report  
For  
North East Fife Adult Learning & Planning Delivery Group

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## **1. Introduction**

This study was commissioned by Sheena Watson, Team Leader (Community Development) for Communities and Neighbourhoods directorate in Fife Council - North East Fife. It was commissioned to support the existing adult learning partnership to plan the programme profile for the North East area of Fife. The research was undertaken by volunteers living in Fife, who were co-inquirers from across the geographical area of NE Fife. These volunteers expressed an interest in research and attended a training programme devised by Professor Karen McArdle of the University of Aberdeen who also managed the process in association with Community Learning and Development (CLD) staff of Fife Council. Accordingly, this report is an independent account of the research findings of the co-inquirers and does not necessarily represent the views of Fife Council. The role of the volunteers in the research is described in Appendix A.

Professor Karen McArdle has more than 30 years' experience of the education of adults and has taught research methods in adult learning contexts for more than 20 of these years. She is the author of text books on both community learning and development and research methods. She has lived in Fife for less than a year but has worked there in the past and knows the NE Fife area.

## **2. Research Questions**

A concise research framework was established by the CLD staff of Fife Council, who commissioned the research. It was both clear and straightforward for the research purposes. This was discussed with the co-inquirers to ensure that the research would capture the interest of the co-inquirers and be meaningful to local people. None of the interests of co-inquirers was inconsistent with the framework, which became the study's research questions.

- What is it like living and learning in NE Fife?
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- What are the educational needs of people in NE Fife?
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- Do different groups of people have different needs?
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- What can be done/is being done to meet those needs?

## **3. Background**

Fife Council has established seven area committees based upon recognised groupings of the 22 wards. The Area Committee structure reinforces the Council's commitment to localised decision making in addressing the differing needs of our communities. North East Fife has 5 wards and one Area Committee.

Fife is a long-standing, historical county located in Scotland. Cupar is the historic county town of Fife and Fife Council's main headquarters for North East Fife are here. The population is 9,000 and it has a rail station. The region is predominantly rural with the ancient city of St. Andrews also being a focal point with its tourism industry linked to golf and it has an ancient University, University of St. Andrews. The area embraces coastal villages including Crail, St Monans, Pittenweem, Cellardyke, Elie and Anstruther known as the East Neuk of Fife. The area fares quite well in terms of limited representation in terms of disadvantage in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation SIMD. The only top 15% most deprived area (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) is in Cupar. NE Fife is often viewed as a wealthy area and a consequence is that it can be difficult to attract social funding for those living in the area, who do not fall into this category. There are unique issues in regard to poverty in rural North East Fife. Often the poverty is hidden and low wages play a significant part. Many of those in the area, who are living in poverty, are working. Trade Union Congress research from 2015 reported that 34 % of employees in North East Fife earned less than the living wage – this was the highest percentage in Scotland.

The population of NE Fife is 73,405 with an expected decrease of 9% by 2036. It covers 778 square kilometres and is 56.5% of the area of Fife as a whole (Local Strategic Assessment, 2016). Of particular interest to this report is the fact that 30.6% of people live alone, 6.7% are on a low income and 10.6% of children live in poverty. 27.5% of people live with fuel poverty. 62.1% of people are economically active and the principal employment areas are education and health; finance and professional; and wholesale retail and transport. To summarise, there is a highly mixed population living in a largely rural community. In the future, there is expected to be a 27% increase in the number of older people and a decrease of 21% of working age people by 2036.

Programmes for adult learning are provided by the Council in partnership with the third sector. This research was commissioned to assist the existing partnership group in NE Fife to plan its delivery of adult learning across the area. Adult learning in Scotland has a strong tradition of second chance education; literacy and numeracy; recreational programmes, which include the arts, for example; employment programmes; life skills; and more recently ESOL. This is the working and understandable definition of adult learning used for this study. Adult Basic Education and ESOL were not directly the focus of this study but were mentioned by respondents and, accordingly, have been included in the findings as they are related to the complex picture of adult learning in Fife.

At national level, the Scottish Government emphasises the significance of adult learning to its agenda for social justice, as outlined in its 'Statement of Ambition'. Programmes of local government adult learning are regularly reviewed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). Adult learning is also included in the profile of Community Learning Plans, which are required through Scottish government legislation. Accordingly, adult learning has a strong policy and social presence in Scottish politics at local and

national levels, though in times of austerity is increasingly being sacrificed by local government in Scotland. This is not the case, we are pleased to report, in Fife.

#### **4. Methodology**

A primary concern of the commissioners of the study and of the research lead, Professor Karen McArdle, was that the study should be participatory and provide a learning opportunity for volunteers in NE Fife, making best use of local knowledge and expertise. A total of 15 volunteers were involved in some capacity in the research planning and a group of 10 formed a core team to implement the research process with support from a team of Community Learning and Development (CLD) professionals. Volunteers were sourced by the CLD staff in NE Fife and they were characteristically already known to the CLD team, including people, for example, from community centre management committees who had an interest in adult learning. The range of skills was both diverse and pleasing with highly experienced researchers working alongside younger volunteers; those new to research. A programme of education was put in place to assist volunteers and this is outlined in Appendix B.

The study was determinedly qualitative. We were interested in an interpretive study that would secure local people's perceptions of adult learning and their opinions on need and provision of adult learning programmes. Survey or quantitative studies were not chosen, as they would fail to secure the depth of ideas we were seeking concerning living and learning in NE Fife. Accordingly, it was decided that the research would take the form of semi-structured interviews with local 'experts,' to provide an informed perspective on adult learning needs. This framed, triangulated and informed the second phase of the research, which comprised focus groups with local residents to gain an understanding of the needs from the perspective of potential participants.

The volunteer co-inquirers and staff of the Fife Council identified social groupings that would cover the geographical area and represent the local community origins of volunteers. We were unable to cover every town and village in NE Fife but had a wide-ranging sample of different types of town and village. The areas selected were;

Anstruther  
Cupar  
Newburgh  
Newport on Tay  
St Andrews  
St. Monans  
Tayport

We made a conscious effort to include in our research outlying hamlets linked to towns and villages. For example, we discussed rural outliers (e.g. Boarhills, Dunino) in discussing St. Andrews; and Tentsmuir in discussing Tayport; and Crail in discussing Anstruther.

We decided that each volunteer would undertake a minimum of 5 semi-structured interviews in his/her area. The number of interviews in each area varied according to the time commitment of volunteers. The 'experts' we identified were people with good local knowledge. The criteria for selection were that they should know the local community well and know the characteristics of the local population. Accordingly, a wide range of relevant people were interviewed including long-term residents, community councillors, a practice nurse, a former local government councillor, a Homestart worker, teachers, for example. The volunteer co-inquirers themselves had excellent local knowledge that assisted them to identify the people who would know others well in each individual area.

The interview schedule was devised by the co-inquirers, along with the lead researcher, and is included as Appendix C. Training was provided on ethical processes and interview techniques. Interviews were done well and elicited in-depth information that contributes to the findings of this report. Generally, the research was attractive to respondents who were busy people but gave freely of their time to contribute to the research and we thank them for this.

Focus groups were planned to be held in each designated area by 2 volunteers working together. In fact severe, adverse weather and personal circumstances of co-inquirers, coupled with a short timescale for completion of the study to coincide with Council planning timetables, resulted in groups discussions taking place in Cupar, St. Andrews, Anstruther and Newburgh. Newport and Tayport unfortunately were not included in this second phase of the research; it would be important for completeness for these focus groups to take place at a future date to check the findings are consistent with the needs in these areas.

A snowballing method was used to identify residents who would participate. The only criteria employed were that community activists should be interviewed for their opinions, rather than participating in groups; and focus group members should be people who might not otherwise be consulted. We were eager to consult residents, who might have no knowledge of adult learning and who, to use the vernacular, were not the 'usual suspects'. Interviewees from the semi-structured interviews, who knew the communities well, characteristically helped to establish groups in some areas as well as CLD staff. The schedule for the focus groups is included as Appendix D and was devised by the co-inquirers in association with Professor McArdle.

As indicated earlier the focus groups took place at the time of major adverse weather and a number had to be cancelled and it affected attendance badly but a total of 43 respondents participated in the two phases of the research. People who participated were from a range of backgrounds, including elderly people, young parents and those who had lived in NE Fife for both long and short times. We consider that future research would focus in particular on the views of young people.

As indicated above, the content of the interviews and focus groups was decided by the co-inquirers, in association with the lead researcher. Key elements included finding out about the experiences of adult learning of the people interviewed and how they themselves framed adult learning to ensure that we were talking about the same dimensions of adult learning. An important element was finding out about the lived experience of people in the area, hence the focus on both living and learning in NE Fife, as the quality of life experience has bearing on adult learning needs. The existing provision and who offers it was of interest to the co-inquirers but this was not a scoping study. How best to advise potential participants of what is on offer was considered to be relevant along with any barriers to participation experienced by residents was considered to be important.

Data was collated, analysed and interpreted by the co-inquirers with the lead researcher and used thematic and discourse analysis in a workshop environment to process the data. Interviews were recorded in note form and focus groups were recorded using digital recorders. Interpretation of the data was done both in words and pictures. This report was prepared mainly by Professor McArdle in discussion with volunteers because of the limited timeframe for the research and because some volunteers expressed a lack of confidence or willingness to write up the findings. They did, however participate in analysis and interpretation of the findings, bringing local knowledge and expertise to this process.

Ethical issues were not considered to be complex, as all respondents were adults, who would have an interest in the content of the research. No vulnerable groups were targeted and young people were all over the age of 16 and could give informed consent. Ethical training was provided to volunteers. Interviewees gave informed consent and were assured of the confidentiality of individual comments from the perspective that they would not in any report be identified with quotations of what they had said. In terms of focus groups, assent was required for recording the sessions and confidentiality of group discussions was negotiated prior to commencement of the group. Participation in all dimensions of the research was voluntary and required informed consent.

## **5. Validity and Transferability to NE Fife as a whole**

The quality, transferability and validity of the research are considered to be high. Strengths included, principally, the participation of the Co-inquirers who provided a knowledgeable basis from which sampling, analysis and interpretation could be derived. Secondly, the depth and quality of responses suggest the study is a reliable account of the views of the respondents. The volume of respondents, a total of 43, and depth and consistency of responses given, suggest the results may be considered authentic and trustworthy.

Transferability to other areas of NE Fife is consistent with the depth and authenticity of the findings. Generalisability is not a feature of qualitative research but transferability of the findings to other contexts is valid. It is usual in qualitative research to analyse transferability to a wider community on the

basis of knowledge of the characteristics of the wider community and its similarity to the characteristics of the sample. Validity is high in terms of the honesty, authenticity and trustworthiness (Tracy, 2010) of the data as a product of the involvement of the local community. Accordingly, we can confidently suggest that this research is transferable to the wider NE Fife and Fife communities, where similar populations reside.

Limitations of the research lie in the unavoidable fact that the timescale for the research was rather limited for a participatory approach, as results were intended for Council planning purposes; and this meant that the volunteers needed to give considerable time to the research in a constrained timeframe. They did this freely and willingly. Further work can be done in the future to complete or extend this study through the involvement of young people and to complete the process in Newport and Tayport. Outside of the control of the researchers were the adverse weather conditions, which affected participation in focus groups. Overall, however, the limitations did not detract from the quality of the data, which is considered to be authentic, trustworthy and well grounded in local knowledge.

## **6. Findings**

The findings of the different geographical study areas are discussed together and the findings of both phases of the research process have also been taken together. This is because the study concerned NE Fife as a whole and the findings of the data were consistent between the two phases. The individual geographical areas are not considered in any sense to be the same but have not been singled out, except where a difference of people's experiences or culture was apparent and important. Quotations are ascribed to each area as we consider this to be important to the reader's understanding, such as identification of specific needs.

We asked about the experience of living in the different areas of NE Fife as this is important to understanding the context for adult learning. A question asked for the best things about living in each area? There were two main categories in which answers clustered. These were firstly the physical environment including beaches, walks and lack of traffic as well as security and proximity to other places such as Edinburgh and Glasgow. The second main category was the social connections such as a friendly community and sense of belonging. A sense of belonging is important as it implies social safety, inclusion and well being.

### **What are the best things about living in (name of place)?**

*"It is a good community – you know everyone ... might not know names but know everyone will help one another if someone needs help. It is small enough and also big enough we have facilities ... schools, doctor's surgery, trustee savings bank, two chemists, vet."*  
(Anstruther)



*"Everybody friendly and welcoming. It is not a busy place with lots of cars like Glasgow! It is a living village. We have shops we need. People live here all year round (not like Elie) people work here too."*  
(Crail)

*"You've got the hill and the river and still handy for Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. I can get anywhere."* (Newburgh)

*"Beautiful area, beaches, harbours go for walks....everyone knows everyone. Good thing in some ways - and it is quiet."* (East Neuk)

*"People and place. Care and connections. Strong sense of belonging."*  
(Cupar)

*"Friendly community. Location."* (St Andrews)

*"The beach. It's small but has lots of amenities. Very well served by facilities."* (St Andrews)

*"St Andrews...It means peace to me...where I lived before not so peaceful, caused me a lot of anxiety and stress - unemployment drugs in a rough area of Glasgow. I was constantly worried about things....I could never walk on my own or go out at night on own".* (St Andrews)

*"Easy transport link to places like Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow. It is central."* (Cupar)

*"The beach – close to the beach (Excitedly)* (St. Andrews)

*"Lovely town. Everything on the doorstep. . . .Not far from big towns."*  
(Cupar)

*Peaceful environment. Friendly people. Not too large to be anonymous. Integrated community."* (Tayport)

*Crail small, can be good or bad. You have a sense of security 'cause you know everybody. Not much crime. Nice environment* (Crail)

*"Easy access to walks, countryside, a small place you get to know people and people know me."* (Anstruther)

*"In Anstruther - it is a beautiful place. Environment. Close to the sea. 5 mins walk. It is stunning, beautiful, friendly, very arty, creative. Not as much wealth though here as St Andrews."*

*"Community feeling."* (Newburgh)

*"Lots places to walk around. Scenery lovely, beaches, we have a good Chinese restaurant, lots of parks .Library quite good up at Waid"*

*..the learning centre. Easy to get to St Andrews with buses. Get to main places..(not all group agrees on latter)” (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*“There’s a lot of things happening. A lot of opportunities...East Neuk Centre has Fife College classes. Creative people move here and live here. Artists end up teaching classes as have to also earn other income and be self-sufficient. Some do yoga. Have to be resourceful to make a living.*

*There’s always lots of events. Thousands of things. Put word out, if you’re active about looking for things.*

*It could also be a mental thing, lots a things happening for a small group of people. People involved a lot are new to the area and it is a way to meet people.*

*We have fresh sea air! Lovely countryside. Well being. Lots things to do for families we cannot get bored.” (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*“Fife is a lovely place. I’d never been to Scotland before I moved here.” (Cupar Focus Group)*

*“Cupar is a nice place to be. Just moved to Cupar a year ago from Kirkcaldy.” (Cupar Focus Group)*

*“I like it ‘cause it’s quiet here and a good place to bring up kids. Shops are no good. If you need trainers you have to go to Dundee.” (Cupar Focus Group)*

*“Quiet. Not too busy. But can escape – still travel to Dundee, Kirkcaldy. Good train lines.” (Cupar Focus Group)*

*“Café down here fantastic. Always a warm welcome.” (Newburgh focus group)*

*“Friendly people (ironic laughter)! They are friendly actually. It’s only when I had my heart attack, I went to the café and met people.” (Newburgh focus group)*

*“Lots going on in the community. Dominoes Friday night. Bingo. Music session on Tuesdays.” (Newburgh focus group)*

Some people chose to focus on the negative in this question as a contrast to the positive answers, raising a range of issues that are echoed in answers to other questions.

*‘I see young people’s poverty - clothes kids wear - here poor people have not so much in their pockets. Can live close to rich people. More isolation here for travel etcetera. Everything is a bus journey and you*

*need money to travel to get to a town nearby. Not enough for young people here, need buses and need to get last bus etc. early. Parents cannot always drive - and young people want some independence, not to rely on parents. Adults have a bit more choice if they drive.'*  
(Anstruther)

*"The people are so friendly. . . Another good thing about Newburgh is the way people connect. They know what's going on . . . A real sense of John Donne's 'no man is an island.'"* (Newburgh)

*"Not much. Nice walks. It's cut off. Completely cut off. I always wanted to escape. Nice place to bring up children. Safe. Used to be! But always wanted to escape. (Newburgh)*

*"I come from Peat Inn, it's quiet, there's nothing for kids, just a restaurant. I've never seen a bus, there's a school bus but I've never seen a public bus.'" (St Andrews focus group)*

We then asked what are the challenges of living in (name of place)? Here we learnt much more about the lives of some of the people living in NE Fife. Respondents found it easier to focus in detail on challenges than on the positives. There were differences in the opinions about challenges according to where people lived. The concerns in Cupar were about amenities and access to facilities. In St. Andrews, however, there was a much greater concern about social equity and in Tayport about a general lack of concern for the poor as illustrated by the quotations below.

### **What are some of the challenges of living in (name of place)?**

*"It's cut off. There is that perception that people are well off. There's a stuffiness in the Arts. The Byre (local theatre) always plays classical music, which is fine but other people want different things. It can be expensive. People feel left out. The feeling of being forgotten in the golf, ice cream and money economy – born and brought up here but not a part of it."* (St Andrews)

*"Whole town focuses on tourists and students to the detriment of some people. Shops sell high-end stuff. For people born and raised here there is no full time employment. For long term residents there is a high bar; they cannot afford services. Local people often do not use St. Andrews. Nothing for them there. They use the outskirts or Dundee, if they can afford to go to Dundee. Rural people are very isolated and have a very difficult time. Natural gravitational point is St. Andrews but they cannot afford it."* (St Andrews)

*"It is in the middle of nowhere. Younger and elder people can't drive - it is a problem - only 1 bus an hour and only certain times of day goes to the Pinkerton part of village. In dark it's not good to walk from bus stop ...I am scared too. They did protest about cuts to Pinkerton bus in years gone by..*

*Not much to do here - nothing for teens or middle age groups. There is a toddler group, Brownies, Beavers.*

*Out of my class at school –primary school 26 students – but only a few still here. People leave for Uni and do not come back. No jobs. Also expensive houses we cannot afford. Unless want apprenticeships at college nothing to do. Colleges not nearby. Cupar and Kirkcaldy colleges - there is no direct bus.*

*“The Council doesn’t really recognise us too well. Village mentality. There’s a lot of people who never have seen much but Newburgh. They haven’t seen the bigger picture of other ways of doing things.” (Newburgh)*

*There is holiday homes everywhere .In my street, lots. I have no idea who lives there. Sometimes it makes me feel a bit scared. People come and go and at winter.” (Crail)*

*“If people get an idea that something is as it is, it stays that way. If a family gets a bad reputation they’re stuck with it. If someone does something wrong, it stays with them. The main thing is that for a town that’s always done things a certain way, there’s a resistance to change. There’s a fear of change. ‘Oh it’ll never work.’” (Newburgh)*

*“This is an older community. No work here that’s a challenge, for families and people have to commute ... stops younger families moving/living here. We have too many holiday homes lying empty for most of the year. They also put up prices of homes and local young people cannot afford to buy. Not enough rental properties and they are too expensive rents. (Crail)*

*“Transport – only one bus an hour - but at least regular - if you have appointments at a hospital it can be challenging with connections to Kirkcaldy or Dundee. If your working transport is a problem and finding work close by is a problem. You would have to commute.” (Crail).*

*“If low income, not a lot of shops that you can use. Only Co-op in Anstruther. Corner shops are expensive. Transport is expensive on buses. Leven bus fare costs 8 pounds and how can a young mum carry shopping, have kids, stroller etc. Not much to do for families with no money. Nowhere to go..*

*There are toddler groups but a bit ‘cliquey’ – an (unspoken) culture of exclusion. Low income mums not fitting in and do not get invited to some things.*

*Husbands can be away working. Fishermen on big boats. When weather is good they make big money but not good weather no money! Women are on own with kids a lot; even those women with more money.*

*Vulnerable mums – how do you get to these families? We have Citizens' Advice and food banks we work with, and parents etc. can help.*

*There is a lot of new housing in Anstruther, for instance, with quite a lot of social housing, but nothing for families to do. There is also private let and scattered flats. Homeless temporary accommodation till family gets a house. They have to stay there until a house is vacant - that's not always easy on young families". (Anstruther)*

*"If you're a newcomer you get a label. You have to overcome it yourself and do not be bullied by it. Because I was a nurse in the community it helped me – I had a certain status.. Also with youth centre job it broke me into the community - also at Youth centre I gained new skills - I did talks on things I knew like first aid. It built my confidence. Also a sense of humour was important when I came here but I also had to learn to check what I say to get Anstruther humour. At first that was a challenge." (Anstruther)*

*"I know a chap who has to commute to Glasgow and stay in a B&B Monday – Thursdays because lack of well paid jobs here and commute too difficult. Fishing industry not coming back. We are losing hotels.. Craw's Nest, Balcomie (Crail), Mayview (St Monans). Scottish government rates are making it hard for tourism. Our only decent sized guest-house is gone. Also tourism is seasonal. We need something more than that B&B has nothing for functions, although East Neuk Centre has renovated a room for community functions it is lovely." (Anstruther)*

*"There is a perception East Neuk is well off but we have as much poverty here as anywhere else. It's just a bit different. We have a food bank that is well used. Circumstances are beyond people's control and people's health suffers, mental health, stress, (substance misuse) alcohol, drugs. This is also a strain on our health services, which are already stressed. Social causes create a strain on health sector." (Anstruther)*

*"People cannot even afford the clothes from charity shops. The disadvantaged poor are not on the indicators. People see the lovely old building but not the disadvantage and rural isolation and the lack of jobs." (St. Andrews)*

*"Sense of being forgotten by social services, especially specialist services for the 'poor', disabled, unemployed, youth." (Tayport)*

*"Limited amenities. Lost so many local businesses." (Tayport)*

*"Nothing much goes on social-wise at nights. You've got the Steeple I suppose but I've never been. You've got the bowling club – can be*

*very cliquey. I never want to come in here once I retired. I'd rather jump on a bus to get out of Newburgh." (Newburgh)*

*"Poor internet. Rural areas get left out. Carers, chemists et al. Lack of choice of services." (Newburgh)*

*"The traffic system is not good. The town centre needs a greater variety of shops." (Cupar)*

*"Can't always buy everything. Can't always do everything e.g. shoes, cinema. Travel to hospitals. Challenges are outweighed by benefits." (Cupar)*

*"Money for transport 8 pounds for a return to Leven! There is nothing to do. Swim lessons at Leven costs money and time. With kids on bus not easy.." (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*"We are too far away from the colleges. To get to colleges you have to leave very early and for Glenrothes you need to take 2 buses! It is hard for us because childcare is hard. There are not enough spaces for 2 year olds. We would have to go to St Andrews. Time I get there on the bus.( and the bus fare too) and come back it is not worth it. Pittenweem and Crail have some spaces but only for 3 year olds. Only 1 playgroup here; and there is a waiting list and it is 8 pounds a day - expensive. It would be better if part of this fee was subsidized. The kids really enjoy going to nursery.*

*Housing. Hard to get a house. I had to wait 2 years .I was in my mum's house and it was overcrowded with us all in there.. We were also next door to a junkie's house. There were problems". (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*"Seasonal work. If you cannot get a job you cannot think about going to classes? You get isolated. A job first then other things happen and you are able to socialize and get out etc. We are disjointed in the area with transport system. only 2 buses an hour. Things can be scattered...some communities can be more insular..Crail and St Monans" (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*"St Andrews is quite wealthy on one side and poor on the other. Money from wealthy students and tourists doesn't show the real story. It's expensive to live here. Properties are expensive, rents are high, poll tax is expensive. 70% of the houses on the road out there (Kilrymont Road) are students, there's a big turnover, you don't get to know your neighbours, there's less of a community. Someone sells up and it gets bought as student accommodation, but that doesn't cause any problems really." (Focus group St. Andrews)*

*"The sheer number of students; they are building more accommodation all the time. My husband is an employer here and his staff can't afford*

*to live here. My house has tripled in price since I moved here.” (Focus Group St. Andrews)*

*Personally, I think it's the lack of knowing what's on. Not much on. Where we stay it's all old people. My kids are 4 and 10.” (Cupar Focus Group)*

*“Getting a job. Employment.” (Newburgh focus group)*

*“You can be isolated. You need to rely on public transport. If you don't drive there's the lack of a bus.” (Newburgh focus group)*

*“Fear of going places. Price is prohibitive if you've got children. I think it's ridiculous prices are.” (Newburgh focus group)*

*“Winter conditions. Roads are terrible. Pensioner have to come out and walk and there's nothing done to the street. It's hellish! Some folk do the neighbourly thing and some are self-centred.” (Newburgh focus group)*

Interview respondents were asked about their understandings of adult learning and our local people provided sophisticated and pleasing definitions, which covered the range of dimensions outlined at the beginning of this report in our definition of adult learning. They were however different in the quality of the expression individuals gave to the circumstances of the people who engage or need to engage with adult learning. We have underlined these dimensions of the definitions given.

### **What does adult learning mean to you?**

*“It's important - people always developing - exciting to learn new things. I also have time - nothing to do so I learn. I do self-learning. On line and learn new skills, read books, practice new things”(Crail)*

*“It covers a wide range of courses beyond school age. Either recreational or according to need. A lot of people fail in the school system and need that gap filled. It covers OU degrees to basic literacy and numeracy.” (Cupar)*

*“Learning. Interesting. Hobbies. Whatever. It's what you want it to be. Something that suits you.” (Newburgh)*

*“Never stop learning. Give opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills.” (Newburgh)*

*“For herself (respondent) to be more active and do things other than work. Good for body good for soul.” (Cupar)*

*“Professionally, it is a revelation how people's lives can be altered through adult learning. It really makes a difference to people. There*

*are lots of social issues and it helps people overcome challenges.” (St. Andrews)*

*“Letting adults be big kids – hands on stuff. Group stuff. Letting people go for it. Broaden their horizons. (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*“Lifelong learning. In her (respondent’s) time a lot of learning was given in one space of time – you had one chance. Adult ED is you grow up and update your skills all the time. You do not have to learn everything by the age of 19. When we are older we have more life experience so learning is more meaningful. It is empowering – an opportunity to redress imbalances in life.” (St Andrews)*

*Adults who need to learn new skills. Needing support to learn new skills.” (Newburgh)*

*“Anstruther – main needs. We ask the community but we do not get enough info back. It’s a problem. When we opened for 3 days we had an open house and asked people what they think we should provide? We did not get enough feedback.*

*Maybe it’s how we are asking people? Maybe needs to be asked in a different way. We have a different process. Give people more of chance to get involved - not just a form but a proper consultation?” (Anstruther)*

The respondents understood its complexity and breadth; the importance in particular of its role in building confidence and self esteem, as a basic building block for other learning. They also understood the need for it to meet individual needs and its role in lifelong learning. People were passionate about adult learning and it had met their individual needs.

*“Improving your education from whatever standard.” (Cupar)*

*“Any activity that increases knowledge and understanding.” (Cupar)*

*“So much more than night classes.” (Cupar)*

*“Education /learning has meant a great deal to me - self improvement - led me to where I am, leisure and certificates (Anstruther).*

*I would be known as a failure at school but I went to evening classes when I left school and was working. Then I went full time to university and did a degree in social sciences.” (Anstruther)*

*“I feel more confident when I go to those groups. I feel better when I come out.” (Newburgh focus group)*



The common notion that it is just about night classes, a response we had expected, was not apparent in the semi-structured interviews. Answers also focused on the processes of adult learning differentiating it from teaching and education.

*“Adult Education brings to mind the teacher-pupil relationship.*

*Learning is more informal.”*

*“Learning gives a more open feel. ‘Education’ implies testing etc.”*

Respondents were asked what are the key learning issues facing people in your town/village? Learning needs are often expressed as concerning knowledge, skills and/or attributes. Here the opinions expressed, largely, were congruent across NE Fife and focused strongly on skills and attributes rather than knowledge. Employment skills, confidence building and other personal qualities were particularly prominent. Local availability and access were also issues raised. Food and cooking were mentioned frequently. The needs could be considered to be life skills and qualities rather than recreational, Arts or hobby classes, which were only mentioned by one person.

**What are the key learning issues facing people in your town/village, do you think?**

*“Access to facilities. Lifelong learning not so much now at East Neuk Centre. Would have to go to Leven. (Anstruther)*

*But here we have job club at East Neuk centre so those unemployed can sign on and look for work on line. They can do it at Anstruther or Leven. (Anstruther)*

*“In current economic climate, How to present for interviews, CVs etc. and the ability to find courses to retrain.” (Cupar)*

*“A lot of girls I work with have not finished secondary school. They left without any qualifications at 4<sup>th</sup> year. I do not know why they were discouraged to finish school? No grades, no national certificates, no higher. Some even left without taking any exams.. I do not work with families with qualifications....*

*They could go onto college and get basic courses to get qualifications did not get at school - NC, HNC - but they will need prep first.” (Anstruther)*

*“Main issue there is NO learning classes in Crail. Anstruther has Waid - some activities pottery etc. Arts. They also have the town hall done up and classes. We have nothing like that.” (Crail).*

*“Confidence. Range of skills.” (Cupar)*

*“Perceived to be wealthy but there are a lot of areas of deprivation.”  
(Cupar)*

*“Young people –basic cookery, house-keeping, household management skills. Literacy – hidden issues.”  
(Cupar)*

*“Upskilling for jobs. Lack of employment. Jobs are specialist in the area. Confidence building to get them to use the opportunities available. Jobs go to more confident outsiders . . . There is a need for hospitality skills, basic skills, step-in courses, courses for long term unemployed. Life skills. How to read bills. (St. Andrews)*

*“Families around healthy eating – offered by stealth. Well-being, confidence, self esteem. On woman was so proud that she got here by bus as she could not get a lift and was afraid of public transport.”  
(St Andrews)*

*“That’s too big a question. Everyone has a different need. Too general to give a reasonable answer. ‘I’d like to teach the world to sing’ springs to mind.” (Newburgh)*

*“Access to relevant, good quality work, after training.” (Newburgh)*

*“Confidence building for hard to reach families, and it would need a crèche. I’m a child minder and all courses take place during the day when I can’t go. I need to renew my First Aid but it would need to be an evening. There are child minder courses in Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes, but there’s never resources left to put them on here.” (St Andrews focus group)*

*“It’s a very wide ranging group of people. I’m not being judgemental but there’s a lot of people with special needs, ‘ken, living on their own.”  
(Cupar focus group)*

*“If people want to learn another language, there’s a need. Other languages, IT or programming to progress, to advance.” (Cupar Focus Group)*

*“I think a lot of middle aged and younger folk could take a leaf out of older people’s books. Learn to appreciate the older generation.”  
(Newburgh focus group)*

*“Domestic skills for men and women. We could all learn from each other if we put our minds to it. . . . Someone in the community centre could do it. . . . Learn from others how to do things . . . promote for the community.” (Newburgh focus group)*

Respondents were also asked to identify any needs that were less mainstream, to ensure minority needs were not left out. Once again personal qualities were strong, with confidence and self esteem being considered to be important and the need to ensure access to courses offered.

**Can you think of any other needs that are less mainstream?**

*“Transport is an issue in rural areas. Courses may not be flexible. Three hours’ study at night is difficult for a woman with three children. The learning had an impact on her (a woman discussed earlier) that I could see; she was doing more things with the kids; she had a spark about her.” (St. Andrews)*

*“If you don’t have access to own transport you can’t access further education opportunities.” (Newburgh)*

*“Guardbridge Paper Mill has closed and the RAF base. Lost main employers. Army base has less jobs and army wives are seeking a second income. They’ve lost the main employers of non-academics.” (St Andrews)*

*“Some of our school leavers do not have basic skills. That needs improving.*

*Seniors/adults need technology/computer skills (like example of young school leavers helping seniors to skill up) we need these skills for life now. Always need retraining. We need retraining on everything technology has to offer, small business courses, finance, communications. Social media, advertising. Also with the pension age increase, adults have to work longer; they will need these skills! (Anstruther)*

*“People do not have knowledge of what is available. They do not notice posters or paper on walls. They use social media. I think it is also mums getting confidence to go and do a course, learning. Unless you’re in frame of mind it is difficult to imagine. What about childcare too? There is also the issue of cost. Can you put on a learning allowance?” (Anstruther)*

*“Young parents could be doing with extra support.” (Cupar)*

*“Literacy – people who can’t read.” (Cupar)*

*“Basic Education.” (Newburgh)*

*“Management. Taking risks. Being open to change. Change as a difference as a positive not a threat.” (Newburgh)*

*“Basic Education.” (Newburgh)*

*“Nutritional information. Exercise.”(Cupar)*

*“We need things that target young people and teenagers.. We do not have common areas.. Every hall we have to pay. If we even had one night a week for homework help and youth can help one another. So it does not get boring.*

*For adults. 1<sup>st</sup> aid courses for people as it takes an ambulance 1 hour to get here! For instance, if someone in your family has a heart attack? Things where people can socialize, creative things?” (Crail)*

Barriers to engagement in adult learning were discussed at the interviews. The responses were often phatic or superficial in nature referring to lack of information. Phatic refers to language used for general purposes of social interaction, rather than to convey information. The lack of information available is a simple way of explaining why people do not participate but is not necessarily the real reason. Phatic answers are often an excuse given for deeper problems in accessing adult learning such as lack of confidence, which was also mentioned frequently. Transport was commonly seen as an issue, especially for those in outlying areas.

**What do you think stops some people getting involved in adult learning in your area?**

*“They think it’s not for me. People feel they will not fit in. It is too high falluting (i.e. history society is above them. It is not; it is local - maybe intimidated by professor etc.) - they may also have a thing about going out on their own or not fitting in” (Crail)*

*“Fear of admitting they don’t understand.” (Newburgh)*

*“Shy to admit needs.” (Newburgh)*

*“Embarrassment. Transport. Lack of motivation.” (Newburgh)*

*Need to do as much as possible in East Neuk as cost of travel is an issue and availability of buses etc.to access educational initiatives.” (Anstruther)*

*“Lack of information.” (Cupar)*

*“Stubborn. Embarrassed.” (Newburgh)*

*“Small village syndrome. Stuck in their ways. Reluctant to change.” (Newburgh)*

*“Stigma! Cooking on a budget; people would not come to it. It’s to get*

*you out of the hoose. If you haven't got a job it gets you out of the hoose." (Cupar Focus group)*

*"Give them something free. 'A free gift', One of the great drivers is if it will help the children. The other thing is to link it to tradition like the scarecrow festival." (Newburgh)*

*"Not enough confidence to go along. Feel like they're not good enough to go." (Newburgh)*

*"Money, information, family commitments, timings, transport, fear, shyness." (Tayport)*

*"Lack of knowledge of courses/classes available. Childcare. Whether or not they have transport." (Cupar)*

*"Fear – frightened that they will be challenged – fear of the unknown. Genuine fear of the unknown. Don't know how to get information." (Cupar)*

*"Intimidated by going back to education because of bad experience. Time and money. Doubts whether it will be valued by employer." (Cupar)*

*"Lack of confidence. Lack of encouragement for people to take part." (Cupar)*

*"Confidence. Can't afford to get there. Public transport not cheap. Personal barriers – self belief. Lack of motivation. Not thinking they can do things. . . Fuel poverty is a problem. Family commitments can be a problem". (St Andrews.)*

*"More access. More courses and locally run here - not St Andrews or Kirkcaldy. It is too hard to trek there and no nursery for kids to go to. Also another thing that stops people going is they do not know about classes. What is going on?" (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*"Some people not involved...Its through word of mouth mostly. And if your social group not chatting about these kinda things you will not know.*

*Sometimes can be about money they do not have. Take for instance the ceramics craft cafe. Who goes to that? ..Lots of families do not know if they would like it. Not done before would never go in the door.." (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*"The lack of childcare. More funding is required for parents to pay for childcare. There used to be 25 to 30 child minders here in St Andrews, now there's only 11 and we are not full.*

*Transport. Buses are expensive, it's cheaper for me to drive and pay parking to work in Dundee two days a week than to get a bus." (Focus Group St. Andrews)*

*"When there's someone going with you, friends, it is easier." (Cupar focus group)*

*"Too few people. A vast area to cover – impractical. If there were more folk could do it. Local people could volunteer if they had a group of folk . . . one or two people passing skills on." (Newburgh focus group)*

*"Lack of confidence to go. . . Still needs a bit of courage to come oot the hoose." (Newburgh focus group)*

*"People living alone get out of the routine – Easter Holidays, Christmas holidays; weekends are a killer 'cause there's nothing happening." (Newburgh focus group)*

We sought people's views on what could be done to encourage people to attend adult learning. We found many responses covered financial measures. Answers also combined practical and emotional encouragements, recognising the importance of personal contact.

### **What could be done to encourage people to attend?**

*"Try to reduce barriers. We've given them bus fare from our own pockets to attend. Transport vouchers." (St Andrews)*

*"Should be free classes, little cost, easy to get to. Discussion about what each course/workshop involves. What they should expect etc. outcomes. How will help the learner? How would benefit them? Come along and do this!" (Anstruther)*

*"It would be down to the publicity being worded right. To take away the fear. Keep the cost down. Cost is a big thing for some people." (Newburgh)*

*"Good opportunities could be pushed more by benefits people. Being sent to a course is not good or motivating. It can seem like being forced to go back to school for people who did not like it in the first place. But encouragement is good and helping people to see the good side of learning is important. For rural people - time things with buses." (St Andrews)*

*"If friends come others will come- word of mouth in Crail. Could engage on social media. Have a Facebook page - doing this; you should come along. Inform people what's happening - post pictures - looks fun!"*

*In Crail all the same people go to everything - older people. A great idea would be for elders who are skilled to tell younger people - transfer skills. Also would be an interaction between generations. Think of where we have wifi—youth can also teach seniors on computer/technical stuff on computers/tablets/phones, why not? We can try and learn if it works” (Crail)*

*“Not know. But a long way to go to Kirkcaldy or Leven colleges. We could do with more local stuff. Everything too centralized at hubs does not help us...” (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*“More marketing. Provide a social aspect for gatherings. Coffee etcetera. Cost.” (Cupar).*

*“The idea of cooking is very interesting. People have limited finance. It’s not just the food. How to get the best out of what you’ve got.” (Cupar focus group).*

*“It’s a transient population, that’s an issue, there’s diverse nationalities too.*

*The Cosmos Centre needs a better web presence, and better signage to promote what they do and where they are. Word of mouth is a good one, I met a Pakistani parent who needed ESOL classes, my neighbour is a tutor so we got her into the class.” (St Andrews Focus Group)*

We sought respondents’ views for ideas for new adult learning opportunities that could be provided to meet needs. Once again life skills were prominent. Answers were divergent in understanding of the questions and covered topics, different populations and methods of meeting needs.

### **Do you have any ideas for new courses that could be run?**

*“Budgeting, healthy living/eating. Example of programme had in past where families came together and cooked a meal and then all ate together. It also encourages health and social aspect. Mellow mums group at Cellardyke. It’s a good community”. (Anstruther)*

*“Basic cookery for people who won’t, can’t cook. Basic money handling.” (Newburgh)*

*“Workshops. Tasters not courses.” (Tayport)*

*“I feel school leavers should be given more guidance and advice on career choice.” (Cupar)*

*“Assume basics such as English, maths ESOL. Courses on employment that is here – catering industry, general admin and shop skills.” (St Andrews)*

*“Back to work.” (Cupar)*

*“In an ideal world more for families. Conflict resolution for families with teenagers.” (St Andrews)*

*Family learning together. Cookery for elderly people. Teenage living skills. (Cupar)*

*“Mental health and well being – there is a big move towards this. Wonder whether there is scope for this – dealing with challenges of life and how to cope with this.” (Cupar)*

*“I think they (CLD in Fife) do pretty good. They do confidence stuff, outdoor stuff, walking - but they don’t advertise well. They need a Facebook page. Maybe social prescribing could be offered. See benefits of peer influence and making connections. (St Andrews)*

*“A cooking course would be good. How to make meals on a small budget.*

*A maths course so you could boost your grades and improve your qualifications. Also if there was little course say on “nails,” manicure and pedicure. We could do some of this in house. Things that can maybe lead to employment. I worked at McDonald’s and that’s how I went back up north for a wee while to get work opportunities. Things would be easier with work.” (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*“I just especially think there are people who need to know how to cook, bills, so they have more independence . . . cooking on a budget.” (Cupar focus group)*

We asked people what adult learning opportunities they were aware of and who they were for and who ran them. Knowledge was variable but was more likely to include programmes offered by Colleges, at designated centres and Universities (SRUC, East Neuk Centre, Cosmos Centre and other Council community centres, University of St Andrews, OU, U3A). The more formal a programme was, the more likely it was to be known. There was limited knowledge of for whom learning programmes were provided. We also asked for the best ways of telling people about adult learning opportunities. Social media were considered to be important.

### **What could be done to encourage people to attend?**

*“They have chaotic lives. If they go to two classes then miss one then they lose track. Rolling programmes where people can drop in and out will help.” (St Andrews)*



*“Word of mouth. Get out and talk to people. Use social media.(flyers not work with my group)” (Anstruther)*

*“Social media would be better to help share information with potential participants.” (St Andrews)*

*“Social media, fliers, notice board. Use of local papers.” (Cupar)*

*“Local Press. Fife Herald. Public noticeboard. Shop windows.” (Cupar)*

*‘Facebook. Depends on person and who you are targeting. Networking. Word gets out. I do leaflet drops but cannot get to everyone.’ (St Andrews)*

*“Definitely the advertising matters. If you’re new here, you need word of mouth. It’s always the same people there.” (Cupar focus group)*

*“There is a Cellardyke young mums group who were meeting and could do with a bit help/guidance how to set up program but no one there to support from council. And they need the space/service to help them and their kids. I think of some local families who, if you’re on low income, where do you go? How do you fit into these other things that are happening? It is not easy. They cannot afford to do some things and feel left out. How do they start? The support they need is not there. That is a problem - and they are trying. Where do they turn? They need some support how to set up play group etc. It is much needed to break isolation?” (Anstruther)*

We asked respondents in focus groups an additional question to those put to interviewees, about what they would tell people who were new to the area.

### **What you would tell someone who just moved here about living here?**

*“If you cannot drive and have small kids do not move here. You are isolated from everything here. You can tell them nice beaches, nice parks. . . also if you know someone it is not so bad . . . makes it easier..” (Focus Group Anstruther)*

*“Mostly coffee shops and charity shops.” (St Andrews focus group)*

*“It’s a good place to be, eh?” (Cupar focus group)*

*“I dinnae want to ken a lot of people. There’s plenty buses for Dundee and that. Here you’ve got to think about your travel.” (Cupar focus group)*

*“A lot of history. Good University. The beach, St. Andrews. For children, things going on if you have the money.” (Cupar focus group)*

*“Lots going on!” (Newburgh focus group)*

*“Go to café, meet some new friends.” (Newburgh focus group)*

## **7. Discussion**

The title of this report, “A dream place to live – for some people!” is a quotation from a respondent in the town of St. Andrews. It reflects the overarching findings of this report. NE Fife is indeed a desirable place to live according to our respondents - but not for everyone. The picture of NE Fife, as revealed by our data, as a place to live, is one of environmental beauty and a place of well being for residents but this is, indeed, only the surface or depth for ‘some people’. We found that ‘some people’ found living in NE Fife quite a challenge.

An expectation that the study would result in a list of learning needs that could then be met through the provision of classes is far from the mark of the findings of this study, as we hope will become clear in our discussion of the data. The role of adult learning *inter alia* is to assist in the management of the challenges we have identified and to assist with empowerment of individuals and groups to overcome the difficulties they face. The picture on the front of this report represents this objective, to work towards equality of experience for all people in NE Fife; an objective for the residents themselves but also a challenge for those who make decisions on their behalf, such as government at all levels and funders of services.

It is helpful here to refer to the concepts of positive and negative freedom. These terms distinguish between the ability to make choices or take opportunities because circumstances allow (i.e. the door is open); and the inability to make choices or take opportunities because of things that affect the motivation of the individual (i.e. the door is open but the person does not want to go through). There are many causes of the latter situation, such as a negative experience of compulsory education; lack of confidence. Both positive and negative freedoms were represented in our findings.

### **7.1 Social Isolation**

One of the challenges facing some residents in NE Fife is a quality of social isolation. This may be ascribed to the rural character of the area, where indeed there may be few people around. Public transport was considered by some to be expensive and meant people were isolated from the hum of everyday life, which includes adult learning. Many classes are in the daytime though some classes were reported as being in the evening and are therefore inaccessible by public transport. Childcare issues can contribute to social isolation and non-participation in learning. Rural isolation can mean an absence of social contacts and lack of ready access to services such as council services, the doctor or dentist. Social isolation affects confidence and self-esteem, which in turn affect sense of empowerment. People can be

distanced from decision-making and from centres of power. The role for adult learning is to tackle these issues of confidence and self esteem in particular.

## **7.2 Gaps Between Rich and Poor**

Social isolation was also apparent in the towns where there was a perceived gap between rich and poor. In St. Andrews, this was expressed as a difference between those who saw St. Andrews as '*golf, ice cream and money*' and those who saw it as a place that '*catered for others*'. There was social isolation that manifested itself as a divide between residents of different geographical areas. '*The police told me there was a line at the Kinnessburn between the haves and the have nots.*' There is a body of evidence that disparity between populations contributes to stigma, lack of self-esteem and personal confidence (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009). It is hard, said one teenage mum to be seen with the wrong pram; she was discussing stigma. This social isolation affects well being and quality of life for those born and bred in St. Andrews, who do not fit the profile of University, retail or tourism industry employee. The role of adult learning can be to work with communities to overcome stigma and the consequence of perceived gaps between rich and poor. This gap was not restricted to St. Andrews, the coastal villagers also expressed differences between sub-populations and the likelihood of participation in adult learning.

## **7.3 Physical Isolation**

Lack of transport was frequently mentioned for people living outside the main centres and in the villages. This was particularly the case in attending adult learning classes in the evening and the cost was also an issue. It should be noted that many of the classes are, indeed, in the daytime. In terms of adult learning this transport issue implies a need for provision of learning in local communities rather than the main centres for people who rely on public transport. For people in St. Andrews, who wished to use the cheaper shops in Dundee, transport costs were reported to be a problem. Assistance with the cost of transport was suggested. In rural communities physical isolation can be linked to social isolation as a result of sparse populations.

## **7.4 Employment/Unemployment**

The need for employment skills was frequently mentioned in an adult learning context and the problems for people, where 'outsiders' are employed, is an issue for those 'born and bred' in NE Fife. A lack of confidence and life skills was considered to be a problem for young people in particular and transport for access to learning at Colleges was perceived to be an issue. It is important to note that many life skills are indeed possessed by young people who can manage other aspects of their lives; it was particularly those linked to employment that were considered to be in deficit by our respondents. The challenges of seasonal work and part time employment were discussed by respondents.

## 7.5 Hidden Poverty

*"I met a woman. She was homeless and was put to stay in St. Andrews tourist hostel. She was sharing a dorm with both men and women and she was an older woman, so it was not right. There was drink, drugs and noise and they would not let her even open the window. She was an alcoholic. There is some real poverty here."*  
(St Andrews)

Poverty underpins many of the issues raised. It is considered by the inquirers to be a hidden problem. The term 'hidden' suggests according to the dictionary it is not on view and may be concealed, secret, camouflaged, disguised, shrouded, veiled or masked. Each of these terms implies agency in the hiding of poverty and this was apparent in the stigma that was reported as being felt by those in this situation. It is common sense that poverty is not considered to be a desirable, acceptable situation to be in and has negative social connotations. NE Fife to the tourist is a very attractive and wealthy area but the community is diminished, if the positive culture is not experienced by all who live there. One interviewee from St. Andrews reported that some people who live there on the outskirts never go into the centre of the town, as it is not for them. It is for students, golfers and tourists.

It is important that the readers of this report do not collude with this hidden dimension of poverty. The vision of NE Fife as a wealthy and attractive place is accurate but only in part. If the poverty remains hidden then UK government, Scottish Government and other funders will not see the hidden needs, that they can contribute to tackling. Yes, it is important to see the positive picture that many people might experience, but one must be inclusive and value and contribute to the experiences of the whole community.

Hidden poverty is multi-dimensional in our findings. We did not start out to explore poverty and we have not measured this poverty; rather we have encountered hidden poverty in our results from people who have testified to us that it exists for them or for those with whom they live or work. Hidden poverty may include, for example, fuel poverty; difficulty securing housing; and isolation because of lack of money to use public transport. It also includes job poverty as a result of seasonal work, establishments that close in winter and part time work. It causes inconvenience in terms of access to services and affordable shops and affordable homes to rent. There is stigma associated with poverty and this is a cause of problems with self-esteem and confidence, which can cause a vicious downward spiral, militating against employment and relief from poverty. Poverty is a wider socio-economic problem than can be tackled by local government alone but Fife Council has an important role to play with its educational, economic and social policies to tackle this hidden poverty. In this study we are concerned with learning and the well being of communities and policies linked to CLD. Community development processes, which underpin adult learning are important means of addressing the causes, experience and consequences of this hidden poverty.

## **7.6 Communities with resilience and potential**

It is important, in considering the challenges of living in NE Fife for some people, not to lose sight of the positive dimensions of the research. The strong environmental character and closeness for some people of communities suggests that the communities have a quality of life for many people and the potential for resilience. Community resilience is defined in many ways; most frequently in terms of response to challenges. It is generally understood to be the sustained ability of a community to utilize available resources such as energy, communication, transportation, food, for example to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations. We would add to this that the community works towards equality for all residents. The communities have many assets. The strong personal ties of people in the villages and towns suggest that community development approaches will find support and the quality of life possible is incipient in these communities for all people.

Qualities that contribute to resilience include *inter alia* local knowledge and mental health on the part of the communities. Local knowledge will hopefully be ameliorated by this report, as the issues it raises are somewhat hidden from mainstream public view. Mental health of a community relies on equality of positive experience and well being, a goal towards which adult learning is commonly directed, which is the case in NE Fife.

## **7.7 The role of adult learning in addressing these challenges**

All of our respondents had participated in some form of adult learning. Without exception, they reported predominantly positive experiences. The specific needs identified in this study may be loosely described as life skills. Life skills are the abilities required for flexible and positive behaviour that enable people to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life. The subject varies greatly depending on social norms and community expectations but skills that contribute to well-being and aid individuals to develop into active and productive members of their communities are generally considered to be life skills. This may include literacy/numeracy, ESOL and employment skills as well as qualities such as confidence and self esteem which enable people to function well in the communities in which they live and work/volunteer. The needs identified were for life skills, particularly for young people, though needs for all people were recognised including young carers, young mums and elderly people. Ideas for new programmes were again linked to life skills such as cooking and careers guidance. It is important to emphasise, that many life skills are possessed already by the populations discussed here and life skills may be considered to be linked to a particular view of the way the world should be. Life skills are however important to many dimensions of well being in our society.

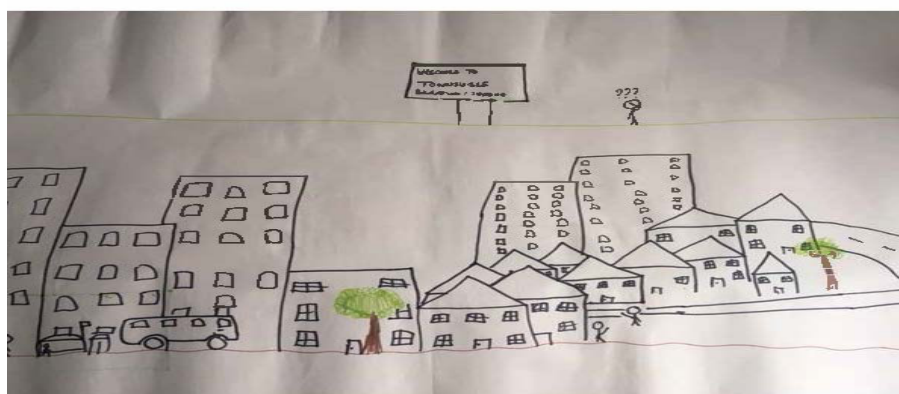
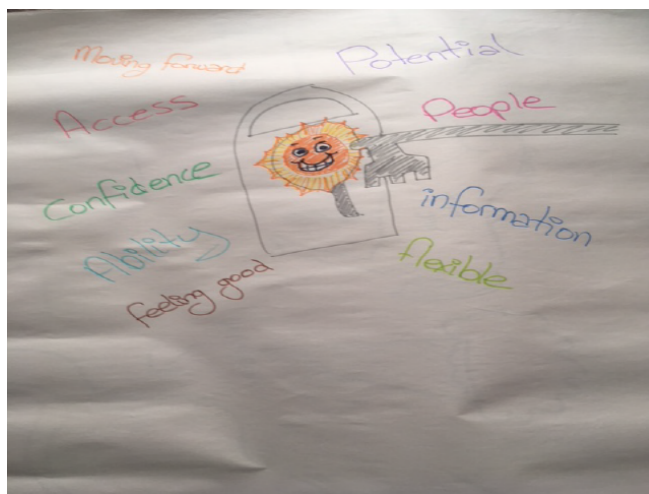
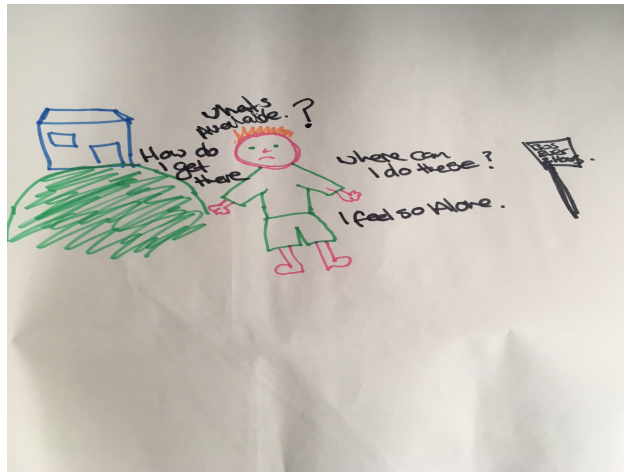
There is a need to address the isolation of rural learners. Working with them in their communities will be important to build trust and confidence so that

they may choose to access learning in more populated centres. This requires performance outcomes in terms of learning, rather than performance being measured in terms of attendance at courses.

It may be argued there is a journey that people take which leads to acquiring the aforementioned life skills. For some, this journey is experiential and is part of growing up and is largely unproblematic. For others life is more challenging and there are steps that need to be taken before life skills are acquired. Providing classes on life skills may be part of the solution (doors open) but there are steps that need to be taken to assist people to access these opportunities (choosing to go through the doors). Adult learning needs to address these early steps through developing in people of all ages the qualities needed to access learning. The CLD professional service can meet these needs with partners through synthesis of the fields of youth work, where life skills can be addressed; through community development where individuals and communities are empowered for self-help; and through adult learning where the emphasis on inclusion and lifelong learning can ensure that life skills learning is available and accessible. It is considered by the author of this report that community development needs to underpin the adult learning provided by Fife Council and partners and this is discussed in more detail in the Conclusions and Recommendations.

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

In analysing the data, co-inquirers made visual representations of the early data we collected and three of these are reproduced below as exemplars, as they underscore the emotional intelligence the data generated. Pictures often are able to represent the sub-text of an experience and represent what can remain unsaid. The first picture represents doubt and uncertainty experienced by some potential learners. The person in the picture is asking what's available, how do I get there and says he feels so alone. The questions appear to be crowding in on the learner the co-inquirer has drawn. He appears under threat. The second picture represents the importance of people in unlocking potential. It shows how important adult learning can be to the individual unlocking confidence and well being. The richness of this is unlocking process is represented by the multiple colours used and the smile on the keyhole. The third picture summarizes much of the tone of this research. It is a metaphorical representation of a very lonely, isolated, forlorn individual with questions to ask. Hidden underneath out of view are all the possibilities available through life and adult learning.



## **8.1 Longitudinal Community Development**

The major finding of this study is that work on adult learning needs to be founded on a longitudinal community development approach that tackles what can be deep-seated issues, which have a complex emotional dimension as illustrated by the above pictures. The approach needs to be longitudinal because the issues raised, such as poverty, can only be addressed over time and continuously, as the issues will re-emerge as new generations experience these challenges. The challenges are sometimes structural and beyond the scope of local government alone to address. Community engagement with adult learning is a very important dimension of this community development approach, as adult learning is often the first step on the journey to address individual and community issues.

## **8.2 Community Engagement**

Community engagement is important to reach people who may be isolated for social and economic reasons as well as reasons linked to rurality; such as transport issues, fuel poverty and physical isolation. Community engagement is important because it has been shown that 90% of health determinants, for example, are not health system related but social and economic (Kilpatrick, 2008). Studies suggest that the majority of 'engaged' individuals perceive that there are benefits for their physical health, psychological health, self confidence, self esteem, sense of personal empowerment and social relationships (Milton et al 2010). The social outcomes of community engagement may be particularly important for 'at risk' populations such as residents in poor social and economic circumstances, young people starting out on their life journey and older people who tend to be less well connected socially (ibid). Accordingly, the approach to adult learning needs to be founded on community engagement not solely the provision of classes and other formal learning opportunities.

There was no indication that adult learning service provision was inappropriate according to the respondents. Much good work being done to tackle the issues was apparent, provided by Fife Council and other organisations, through family learning and life skills in community centres, for example. Appendix D outlines many of these programmes. There was strong recognition of the quality and importance of these services for the individuals and the community. What is needed is a greater emphasis and longitudinal vision and commitment by Fife Council to meeting the 'hidden' needs in NE Fife through community development. To reiterate, the most important point that emerged from the study is that adult learning services need to be placed in a community development context.

Reflection on the findings on the part of the researcher and co-inquirers has led to this conclusion that all adult learning services need to continue to be part of a wider, longitudinal community development process. There are many definitions and models of community development and it is not the purpose of this report to outline or summarise these. Community development may be understood in simple terms as a process, which



increases the capacity of people in disadvantaged circumstances to work to improve the conditions in their own localities.

### **8.3 Community Development Approach**

The United Nations defines community development as *"a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems."* The community can work to explore empowerment to overcome negative barriers; and to tackle the problems of social isolation through a shared community commitment. This will not work if driven solely by the professionals. It requires the involvement of key community drivers and the buy in of the community itself. This requires that means of engaging individuals are sought which build on respect and trust in the community, which once again take time to deliver. There is no short cut to trust. It requires a presence in the community and the development of respect.

This is a considerable challenge as community development is time consuming and, once the core domain of Community Learning and Development (CLD) and other services offered by local authorities, it has become less attractive in times when shorter term successes are required by cash strapped government bodies. Social capital and human interaction are at the core of the issues in NE Fife and social capital can be strengthened by improving relationships on a community-wide basis and encouraging community initiative, responsibility and adaptability.

### **8.4 The Community Development Professional**

The Community Learning and Development professional has an important role to play in identifying and seeking opportunities, assisting with the setting of long term and short term goals and maintaining a strategic overview for community activities that can lead to change. In seeking change, a common process involves identifying the change necessary, to which this report has contributed. Then, communicating the change to residents; modelling change and creating the conditions for change to emerge that will lead to repositioning of communities.

Social isolation can be geographical, and emotional as well as social and all these dimensions were apparent if in small ways in the data. Social isolation is linked to loneliness and lack of communication and contact for co-operative activities. The work of the community development professional is to link people and to develop groups and networks to minimise isolation and this becomes increasingly possible in a technological world. The literature on social isolation links it to low self worth, shame, loneliness and mental health issues. This signals to the community development professional, the need to work on ways of developing confidence and contact for at risk residents. The respondents were aware that this can be done through the simple means of classes on, for example, quilting or a men's shed with a sub-text of improving social well being.

## 8.5 Community Resilience

The positive culture of NE Fife need not be lost: it is important to history and traditions but it needs to reposition itself for more modern approaches to quality of life that are more shared and inclusive. Culture 'death' is not suggested; rather some realignment in the ways of thinking in the community, that are consistent with the current economic and social conditions for certain populations.

Community resilience is key to this community development process as disempowerment in relation to social change being experienced by some people was apparent. Communities that are resilient have healthy and engaged people and have an inclusive culture, which creates a positive sense of place (Carnegie, 2011). Trust is crucial to community development. The community development professional needs to work to build trust. Trust can be defined as a reliance on the integrity, strength and surety of a relationship. This demands a long-term process in which reliance is developed. Another definition of trust is 'the confident expectation of something, hope'. This confidence is built over time and from experience. Key methods of generating this respect and trust involve asset-based approaches such as community-led mapping, risk analysis and oral history as some examples. These non-threatening activities will generate relationships that can be used in good time for more targeted adult learning objectives.

## 8.6 Recommendations

Because the issues that need to be tackled are deep-seated and complex, it is important to have shared and partnership approaches that build on the strengths of public, private and third sector organisations. It is however crucial that a shared longitudinal community development vision governs these activities. Fife Council, with its longer term funding and planning capacity than partners in the third sector, should take the lead and use its community development expertise to manage the process of vision development and communication of the issues in NE Fife, to work with partners to tackle the issues raised by this report. Funders of local government and of the third sector should be made increasingly aware of the hidden needs in NE Fife.

It is, accordingly, recommended that:

- A one day conference be held by Fife Council to raise awareness of the issues raised in this report with Councillors, service providers and community organisations in Fife. This will be held in order to more fully engage with communities, concerning the findings of this research and work with key third sector agencies to develop a plan of action.
- Increased emphasis be placed by the Fife Council on longitudinal and sustainable community development approaches to work in NE Fife;

- Increased importance be given to work in adult learning, which prioritises tackling issues of rural deprivation in NE Fife;
- Scottish Government and other funders be made aware of the hidden deprivation that occurs in some parts of NE Fife.

The Communities and Neighbourhoods directorate within Fife Council has recently restructured, resulting in staff having an increased focus on community development and neighbourhood work. The CLD staff team is made up of generic workers. Previously the staff had specialist roles in the disciplines of adult learning, youth work and capacity building. This shift is resulting in strengthening community development approaches and this team is well positioned to improve outcomes locally.

To conclude this discussion, we return in summary to the research questions, which framed this research and informed the findings of this report.

- What is it like living and learning in NE Fife?

The simple answer to this question is that it is mixed and depends on who you are and your social, economic and personal attributes.

- What are the educational needs of people in NE Fife?

The educational needs of the people of NE Fife are varied but are linked to needs in social, economic and life skills.

- Do different groups of people have different needs?

Yes different groups have different needs, as expected, but the needs of those experiencing poverty or social isolation are complex and multi-faceted.

- What can be done/is being done to meet those needs?

Good work is being done to meet these needs by a range of providers but this could be co-ordinated through increased partnership working and a shared vision underpinned by longitudinal and sustained community development work.

The final word goes to the respondent who agreed NE Fife is, indeed, a dream of a place to live but only for some people:

*“There is a perception the East Neuk is well off but we have as much poverty here as anywhere else. It’s just a bit different.”*

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## Appendix A

### The Role of the Researcher

The researcher will work with other volunteers and Professor Karen McArdle to undertake a research project for Fife Council looking at the adult learning needs of people in NE Fife.

#### 1. The researcher will:

- attend training;
- do interviews;
- run a group;
- consider findings;
- decide what they mean;
- participate in reporting findings;

along with others with support to find out the needs of people in the community.

#### 2. Knowledge required

Knowledge of the local NE Fife community will be very helpful.

#### 3. Skills Required

Ability to take notes and to communicate well with residents of all ages and backgrounds.

People skills.

#### 4. Qualities Required

An interest in finding out new facts, ideas and what other people think

An interest in adult learning NE Fife.

#### 5. Time commitment

This is difficult to estimate but there will be in the order of 10 days' commitment required. Expenses will be paid and there will be support for child care.

## Appendix B

### Learning and Living in NE Fife: The Learner's Voice

#### Training schedule

##### Day One

Introductions to each other and to the project.

Why do research?

What is research? Different kinds of research.

Participatory Action Research – working together.

Research Questions: What they are and how to develop them.

##### Day Two

Methods of doing research in the community.

Sampling choices. Finding and engaging with people.

Semi- structured Interviews

Designing the interview schedule

Ethical choices

##### Day Three

Focus groups – planning

Leading a group/Managing complex groups/Observation

Devising the focus group schedule/Diary

Ethical choices

##### Day four

Managing data – different methods

Practical Data Analysis

Working with the data we have gathered

##### Day Five

What does it all mean?

Making sense of the findings.

Interpretation and Communication

Planning reporting back to the stakeholders.

Next steps.

The training will follow a workshop format. No prior skills or knowledge of research are required – just an interest in finding out.

## Appendix C

### **Learning and Living in NE Fife: The Learner's voice**

Research is being undertaken by Fife Council to explore what learning needs there are for adults in NE Fife.

The research will be undertaken by volunteers in the community with Professor Emerita, Karen McArdle, and will consist of interviews and focus groups conducted in the first 3 months of 2018.

The research findings will be fed back to the local communities to help influence what is offered in Community Based Adult Learning.

You have been chosen for interview because we think you know your community well.

The report will ensure that your name is not linked to your answers to the questions.

Further information is available from

Karen McArdle  
k.a.mcardle@abdn.ac.uk

## APPENDIX C

### Learning and Living in NE Fife: Schedule for Semi-Structured Interviews

*(Explain what the research is about. Reassure the interviewee that the report will not identify them with their answers. See attached sheet)*

***Please read the questions exactly as they are written (Except brackets!)***  
***Please write exactly what is said (as close as possible)***

1. Can you tell me which town/village you live in?
2. Can you tell me about any adult learning you have done recently *(last 3 years)*?
  - *(Prompt)* What was it like?
  - *(Prompt)* Who offered it?
3. What does adult learning mean to you?
4. What are the best things about living in . . . . . *(name of place)*?
5. What are some of the challenges of living in . . . . . *(name of place)*?
6. What are the key learning issues facing people in your town/village, do you think?
7. What do you think are the main adult learning needs in your town/village?



8. Can you think of any other needs that are less mainstream?

9. What do you think stops some people getting involved in adult learning in your area?

10. What could be done to encourage people to attend?

*(Prompt)* Do you have any ideas for new courses that could be run?

11. What adult learning opportunities are you aware of in your area?

*(Prompt)* - Who are they for?  
- Who runs them?

12. What are the best ways of telling people about adult learning opportunities?

*(Prompt)* Social Media, Text, Email, Noticeboard, Flier?

13. Finally, can you tell me your job title *(or the area in which you volunteer, if not working)*?

***(Thank them very much for their time and contribution to research. If they wish to see the report, write their email on the bottom of the page)***

## Appendix D

### Focus Group Schedule

#### Introduction

1. The focus group is about gathering information on adult learning. Adult learning covers things like job skills, literacy and numeracy, confidence building and recreational classes such as cooking, art.
2. It is research done by Fife Council and Uni of Aberdeen. A report will be produced and a presentation held.
3. Confidentiality – no names will be used in report. Please keep people's comments in the group confidential.
4. Can I use the recorder? Thank you

#### Focus Group Discussion Points.

1. **What is your first name and how long have you lived in Fife?**  
*What has changed over time.? Where did you live before?*
2. **Have you done any adult learning in last 5 years?**  
*What was it like? Who ran it?*
3. **What are the best things about living in . . . ?**
4. **What are the worst things about living in . . . .?**
5. **What do you think are the learning needs in . . . . ?**  
*What adult learning have you done? Who ran it? Was it good?*
6. **What opportunities could meet this need?**  
*Who should provide this? Where?*
7. **Is there anything that gets in the way of people learning?**
8. **What would you tell someone who has just moved into . . . about living here?**
9. **What adult learning is already offered in . . . ?**  
*Who offers it? Where and when?*
10. **Is there any adult learning you would like to participate in yourself?**  
*What is it? Who would run it?*

Thanks and please remember confidentiality  
Please leave email/phone number if you want to be invited to presentation

