

ABLE

ADULT BASIC LITERACY AND EDUCATION



Programme Review | 2008

Engage, Inspire, Encourage, Support.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABLE is an adult education programme based in Finglas and Cabra, targeting people, in particular men, who are not engaging in existing training schemes or in the labour market. It was developed in partnership by the Finglas Cabra Partnership, CDVEC, Finglas & Cabra Read & Write Schemes and the Department of Social and Family Affairs. A decision was made to attempt to weaken the link between education / training and income generation, so a training allowance for participation was not provided.

This review of the first year of the Adult Basic Literacy and Education (ABLE) Programme aims to inform decisions regarding the future of the programme. The review included a consideration of documentation pertaining to ABLE, consultation with participating individuals and with those responsible for the management and delivery of the programme.

Programme objectives include: development of basic skills and attitudes, exploration of available employment opportunities, basic computer training, reflection on existing skills and identification of learning goals, to be met through the establishment locally of five centres for practice of the programme. Classes are small (about 3 participants) and tutors have an understanding of social exclusion and marginalisation.

Consultation with participants found that the programme met their practical needs including overcoming low literacy levels, ESOL classes and socialisation. Qualitative aspects of the programme experienced include: appropriate programme content and class size, variety of work topics and materials, and rise in literacy levels and confidence. Participants experienced three key positive outcomes following attendance on the programme: improved literacy and numeracy skills, rise in self esteem and confidence, and improved social and family lives. Most participants wanted to continue on the programme and asked for increased hours, "It makes a change that people have time for you...she (tutor) understands what I need". Consultation with management and tutors concurs with feedback from participants. In addition they note that in future accreditation and recruitment are issues that need further attention.

Key findings include the following: The programme has, in the view of all stakeholders, been successful in meetings its aims, in particular in relation to numbers and proportion of men participating. It has made progress in breaking links between training/ education and income generation. Participants felt that class size, subjects and activities were relevant to their learning needs and their lives. The interagency character of the programme is a key element in its success as each agency brings its own expertise and resources to the programme.

The review concludes with the following key recommendations: Small class size, flexible programme design, the role of Programme Coordinator and the inter-agency character of the programme are maintained. In future, recruitment should be complete by September and the option for accreditation needs to be addressed. The role of all stakeholders must be clarified. Further research on and collaboration with similar programmes as models of good practice is desirable.



1. INTRODUCTION

A review of the first year of the Adult Basic Literacy and Education (ABLE) Programme was carried out during April 2008. The review aims to inform decisions regarding the future of the programme before the designated end date of the programme (13th June 2008). These include decisions to be taken by the steering group of ABLE as well as by individual agencies on their future role in and support for the programme.

The review aims to:

- Measure ABLE against its original aims and objectives.
- identify ways in which the target group successfully engaged with the programme.
- Assess the effectiveness of the interagency aspect of the programme.
- Ascertain learning for future development of the programme.

The review involved:

- A consideration of documentation pertaining to ABLE, in particular the initial proposal for the programme, co-ordinator's monthly reports, steering group minutes and meeting with the programme co-ordinator.
- Meeting with participating groups and individuals active at the time of the review.
- A focus group with those responsible for the management and delivery of the programme.
- The report presents a background to the ABLE Programme; its aims and objectives, it summarises the key findings of the review. These findings are supported by detailed feedback from participants, tutors and the steering group for the programme.

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2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Programme Overview

ABLE is an adult education programme based in the Finglas and Cabra areas of North West Dublin, targeting people who are not, for a variety of reasons, engaging in existing literacy or vocational training schemes or in the labour market. This programme was developed in partnership by the Finglas Cabra Partnership, CDVEC, Finglas & Cabra Read & Write Schemes and the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

The programme grew out of a shared recognition of the significant challenge in attracting men to education, and in particular men from the Traveller Community. It identified a need for an educational approach which would be easily accessible, and so would lead to increased participation by men, members of the Traveller Community, and by those who might be identified as 'non progression ready'. This last group includes those who have obtained no educational qualifications, and might have other barriers to participation in existing schemes.

From the initial stages of devising and establishing the ABLE programme a decision was made to attempt to weaken the link between education / training and income generation, therefore a training allowance for participation on the programme was not provided.

The aim of the programme was to provide an opportunity for 10 men and 10 women to be re-introduced to a learning environment. These participants were to be identified through existing Finglas Cabra Partnership mediator caseloads, and the programme was intended to provide a progression onto the Education Sampler Initiative (ESI) foundation programme. The ABLE programme would thus provide a bridge between the one to one tuition generally accessed by the target group and participation in small groups.

2.2 Programme Objectives

- Objectives for the twenty participants include:
- Development of basic skills and attitudes, including attendance, punctuality, participation in groups and enthusiasm for learning and training
- Exploration of available employment opportunities
- Engagement with the Finglas Cabra Partnership mediation team
- Basic computer training
- Reflection on existing skills and identification of learning goals
- Basic FETAC certification and training in industry standard skills such as horticulture and culinary skills
- It was envisaged that these objectives would be met through the establishment of five centres in Finglas and Cabra as sites for progressive practice of the programme. The programme would be characterised by a learner centred approach to adult education. The aim was to recruit tutors from within the tradition of adult education with an understanding of social exclusion and marginalisation. A central part of this methodology was the small group format to enhance the educational experience, with the size of the group being appropriate to the learners' needs. This took account of their need for tutor time, but also, and perhaps more significantly, their personal and social needs.
- Five groups were formed independently in the five centres based on common needs, interests and levels of the participants as identified by tutors, mediators, programme coordinators and participants. Participants were recruited on a continuous basis in autumn 2007 and the programme commenced in each centre in November 2007.

Support



2.3 Programme Outline

Group A	St Helena's Young Men, November 12th - 5 sessions* (Primarily literacy & numeracy skills programme)
Group B	Annamoe Terrace, November 12th - 5 sessions* (Job seeking skills programme)
Group C	Avila Park, November 12th - 2 sessions (Driver Theory Programme) (Gardening) March 28th - 1 session
Group D	St Helena's Older men, January 7th - 5 sessions* (Literacy, personal development & local history programme)
Group E	ESOL English Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) programme ESOL for a Purpose (towards work) 3 sessions per week

**1 session conducted weekly by Co-ordinator with remaining sessions being contracted CDVEC hours.*

3. ABLE; FACTS AND FIGURES

- A total of 41 people have participated in the programme.
- Of these 41 three quarters (28) had not previously participated in any programme of adult education or training.
- Three quarters (27) of the 41 have continued to participate, with 14 withdrawing from or dropping out of the programme for various reasons. Of these 27 half (14) had not previously participated in any programme.
- Of the 41 participants 32 were men and 9 were women.
- Participants ranged from sixteen to sixty three years of age.
- In order to ascertain the starting literacy level of participants Read Write Plus Entry Level 2 was used as benchmark. Grouping of participants were determined by ability and proficiency at this level.
- Total number of sessions: 600 hour allocation was given at the start of the programme with projected spend of 587 by end of programme (excluding Co-ordinator sessions). An average session was 1½ hours in duration.
- There was rolling enrolment into the programme, with groups beginning as they were identified and formed around interests and ability.

4. CONSULTATION WITH PARTICIPANTS

Twelve participants from five groups were consulted for this review. The following is the outcome of that consultation:

4.1 Meeting the practical needs of participants

There are a range of needs which participants feel are being addressed through the ABLE programme.

Low literacy levels

Participants described the difficulties they had experienced due to poor literacy, including lack of confidence and competence in spelling. The difficulty and embarrassment experienced when asked to fill in a form was mentioned by many participants. These difficulties have affected all areas of their lives. The programme provides a way for some to increase their range of employment opportunities and there was recognition by many that they need to read and write proficiently in order to get a job. Also (in some cases) gaining employment enables them to remove themselves from situations which have caused problems in relation to addiction. As the programme assists participants in their literacy needs, it significantly enhances their self-esteem as well as being of practical assistance in seeking employment.

Individual needs

- Participants acknowledge that the tailored nature of the programme addresses specific needs, including individual time constraints caused by social circumstances, counselling support when needed, and one to one support for learning the Roman alphabet.
- English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) ESOL for a Purpose (towards work).
- The need to learn English, both in conversational and written form, was key for those attending the ESOL group.

Social needs

Participants felt that their need for social contact with others with similar difficulties and interests is being met through the programme.

Participants desired outcomes from the programme

There were a variety of desired outcomes of the programme mentioned by participants. Some want to move into employment, both part-time and full-time, some onto further study, while some wish to obtain part-time work which would allow them to continue to study. All felt that these options are considered appropriate by ABLE and that they are encouraged to plan for the employment option that best suits them.

4.2 The qualitative experience of being an ABLE participant

Programme participants experienced the following qualitative aspects of the programme:

Appropriate programme content

Participants felt they were being listened to by programme tutors and coordinators, and working with materials, media and content that was closely matched to their needs and interests. They said that they were being taught what they wanted or needed to know in many different ways. This was very different for some from their previous experiences in a learning situation. This was experienced from the initial interview with the co-ordinator in which people felt put at their ease and really listened to and continued with assessments which assisted in allocating participants to the right class. They felt the classes started at the level they required them to. Many had experience of “feeling stupid” in the past whereas none felt this was the case while attending the programme.

Variety of work topics and materials

Participants appreciated the opportunity to work through a variety of subject matter. They liked the mix of media; speaking, listening, reading, writing and computers. Some said it was the variety that kept them attending while others spoke of how the practical, hands-on learning suited their learning style.

A rise in literacy levels and a growth in confidence

Participants felt that as their literacy levels rose their confidence grew. This was attributed to programme work being at the appropriate level for them. This led participants to seek opportunities to practice new-found skills. One man spoke of going to the post office and banks to pick up forms to fill in because he could. This highlights an outcome more significant than filling in a form provided by tutors in class.

An ability to be more open about literacy difficulties

Many spoke of the learning environment, tutors and other group members as helping them to get over their initial embarrassment and of the classes being a place where they could start to see themselves improving. This improvement occurred not just in their confidence and competence in literacy and in the subject matter, but also in their ability to interact with each other and to be more open with their families. Some felt they had been able to be honest about their literacy difficulties for the first time because of the support they had received through the ABLE programme.

Appropriately sized groups

The size of the group was a key element in ensuring a feeling of safety. For some, being in a group as small as three was just right, and had proved a significant challenge for them from being in a one to one situation. They felt that a group of six would be too intimidating. As a result classes were experienced as “relaxed, sociable, enjoyable, a bit of craic” and a “space to learn”.

4.3 Tutors

Participants were not asked directly about programme tutors however all groups talked of them in a positive way.

Participants described tutors as *“nice, sound, very patient, and very understanding”*. They felt that they made classes interesting and fun. Tutors started from scratch, and really explained subject matter well and didn't mind explaining it again if participants forgot, or didn't understand. They were recognised by participants as being skilled and committed. Participants appreciated that tutors responded to individual interest in the group. An example of this came from a participant who had always wanted to be able to do a crossword so the tutor sought out crosswords for him to do during class. Tutors were experienced as approachable.

4.4 Positive outcomes of ABLE Programme for participants

The ABLE Programme has brought about positive outcomes for participants on a number of levels, including increased literacy skills, a rise in self confidence and self esteem, and improved social and family lives.

Increased literacy skills

Increased competence and confidence in literacy relates to reading for practical purposes, reading a book for pleasure, feeling confident about filling in forms, being able to communicate in writing with children's teachers, reading post, reading the newspaper, and increased oral and written vocabulary. One participant described how in the past they had participated in training and had copied out writing without knowing what they were writing. Another described how previously if he came to a word he didn't know he would just put the newspaper away.

Rise in self confidence and self esteem

Participants talked about seeing themselves as *“alright at learning”*, where before they had *“felt stupid”*. They spoke of seeing improvement in themselves, of being more confident talking to people and reading aloud. One said, *“If I can read and write, I can do anything”*. Participants expressed their hope that being more confident in reading and writing would help them to gain employment, while others were clearer about the type of work they wanted to obtain and how to achieve this.

Improved social and family lives

One participant talked of his family noticing a difference in him. He felt that participating in the programme had made him feel more outgoing and open. For more than one, it was the first time they had been honest about their literacy difficulties with their families, partners and children, this made them feel good and also allowed them to ask them for help.

4.5 Participant suggestions for future ABLE Programmes

The majority of participants said they would like to continue with ABLE in the future. The exceptions were those who wanted to move to employment possibly returning to learning at a later time. One said he valued it so much he would pay to continue!

The most common suggestion was for more sessions, maybe an extra day in the week, and for the programme to continue for a longer period of time.

Some would like to see the programme include history and geography classes.

4.6 Participant Quotes

*“I didn't want to join a group, kept making excuses. Meeting one of the other participants **helped, saw** we are in the same boat. That felt good. I was embarrassed when I first started, then got over that barrier. The group and the teachers make you feel welcome. A class like this is excellent. We're learning from each other, it's a team”.*

“I was frightened, moving from one to one into a group. They make you feel welcome”.

“You do a test to see what class will suit, so you don't feel stupid. You think you're going back, you'd be embarrassed, but after the first week, it's grand”.

“Homework is more interesting, more what you want to know, forms, computers, it's interesting, fun”.

“You see yourself improving, with spelling, reading, using the internet”.

“There are only a few people in the class, so you get lots of help. A group of three is just right, you're able to listen and join in. Don't think I could cope with five or six in the group”.

“I never used the internet before; now I use it to book holidays. It's easy”.

“She's different. She understands what I need, what I have to study. Some teachers don't care what you need”.
“They help you to organise driving lessons, and an assessment to see how much teaching you need, support to pass driving test”.

“He was easy to talk to, so nice, really listening”.

“When you need something, she (tutor) explains very well”.

“Years ago I went for an interview. They gave me a form to fill in. I just left”.

“It makes a change that people have time for you”.

5. CONSULTATION WITH PROGRAMME TUTORS AND STEERING GROUP

5.1 Background

A review day took place on in April 2008 with programme tutors and the programme steering group.

The following were present:

Fergus Craddock	ABLE Co-ordinator
Anne Fitzgerald	LESN Co-ordinator
Kevin Smullen	CDVEC Adult Education Officer for Dublin NW
Liz McHugh	CDVEC / FCP Education Co-ordinator
Cora Rafter	Finglas Read-Write Co-ordinator
Mary McDermot	Cabra Read-Write Co-ordinator
Helen Geoghegan	CDVEC Community Education Facilitator
Patricia Tobin	Employment Officer Dept. of Social & Family Affairs
Niamh McTiernan	FCP Community Worker with Travellers

Tutors: Cat Kowlowski, Alison McCallion, Aaron Fowler, Caroline Wall, Julie Moloney, Noel Flynn (Voluntary ESOL Tutor).

The purpose of the day was to review the work of the first year of the Adult Basic Literacy and Education (ABLE) programme.

Those attending shared their experience of an aspect of the programme in which they had some involvement / knowledge of, that had been successful.

Tutors and the steering group were presented with feedback from participants. The feedback was positive, referring to five areas of participants' experience of the programme (as outlined above P.8-11):

- Meeting the practical needs of participants;
- Qualitative experiences of being an ABLE participant;
- Tutors;
- Positive outcomes of ABLE Programme for participants;
- Suggestions for future ABLE programmes.

Members of the review group noted in particular the 'extraneous' effects (relationships with family, sense of self), not all of which had been anticipated.

The group then took time to reflect on four ways of looking at ABLE Programme:

- Purpose / vision of ABLE;
- Project / activities of ABLE;
- Organisation / structures that support the work of the programme
- ABLE Network / Steering Group

The review group considered the future of the programme.

5.2 Purpose / Vision of ABLE

In addressing the vision or purpose of ABLE the group referred to what the programme aims to do, who it intends to work with, and how and why it works with that target group. The main points made in the discussion were as follows:

- ABLE is about creating a safe and enjoyable structured learning environment that accommodates flexibility.
- The purpose of ABLE is to stimulate value and encourage learning, and to encourage the valuing of learning. ABLE aims to engage "non-traditional" participants /students in education. These are often a group who are marginalised both through being long-term unemployed and because of poor levels of literacy.
- ABLE takes a holistic view, is person-centred rather than accreditation led, and works with and through small groups.
- The target group of ABLE is those who have not previously participated in a programme; however criterion for participation is not clear cut. Would someone who previously began a course but failed to complete be included? In asking how many of the participants might be described as engaging for the first time a clear definition would need to be agreed. It was noted that men, and particularly older men and members of the Traveller Community have traditionally been less likely to engage with education. ABLE makes particular efforts to be accessible to these groups.
- The target group were also described as those who are "non progression-ready". These are clients for whom there are specific barriers (social, low self-esteem, poor literacy, personal issues) to further education, training and employment.
- ABLE is about social inclusion and providing support to a point for the target group to be engaged in their community.
- A further purpose identified for ABLE was its role in capacity building for existing literacy schemes; learning from ABLE can be transferred to existing literacy schemes.
- The nature of ABLE's vision requires the recognition and recording of qualitative measures; the wide-ranging effects of the project on the lives of participants.

5.3 Project / Activities of ABLE

In discussing the project / activities of ABLE the following points were made:

- Programme activities are structured so that participants are taught what they wish to learn.
- The complexity of needs of clients demands unique ways of working, which has only been achieved by the innovative creative response of each of the agencies in collaboratively devising this intricate collaboration. The result is multi-faceted, co-ordinated support for clients whose needs include mental health, housing, social welfare, adult literacy and employment support services. The effective combination of all the agencies is crucial.
- The methodology of ABLE includes the provision of teaching in small groups of about three, which provides a bridge for progression from learning in a one-to-one situation to learning in groups. These very small groups suit certain clients who need the feeling of security they provide, and allows for the development of materials and activities for individuals, as well as the level of attention made possible by the ratio. Other learning occurs in groups of sizes up to six or seven people.
- Subjects covered in classes reflect the interests and articulated needs of participants, including wide-ranging aspects of literacy and computer skills, driver theory tests, map-reading, gardening, spoken and written English language, local history, etc.

- Recruitment has and will continue to be a core activity of the project. Flexibility, collaboration and creativity have been evident in recruitment processes.
- Lots of time, energy and resources have been required for recruitment in the early stage of the programme. The flexible nature of the programme makes it difficult to recruit to. It may be helpful to advertise the concrete possibilities arising from participation as well as remaining flexible; a timetable of activities and subjects could be distributed to referral agencies.
- The referral structure includes the VEC (Adult Literacy Officer) and Finglas Cabra Partnership (Mediation and Outreach Teams, and Community Worker with Travellers).
- It was suggested that:
 - promotional resources should be developed to target referral agencies, including leaflets, flyers, and a timetable that might help agencies to refer appropriately
 - Clear outcomes for potential participants should be highlighted while maintaining the need for flexibility for individual participants.
- Outreach work is an important aspect of the recruitment process. This involves working with local community centres and social support services and also "street" /outreach work. Building relationships and highlighting an alternative approach to education provision is difficult with measurable outcomes being slow to emerge. A measure of success at an early stage is the development of relationships and increasing trust between agencies and between agencies and participants.
- Measures of achievement of ABLE should ultimately include hard to measure outcomes including ways ABLE is experienced by participants, tutors and other relevant parties and its effect on participants's lives. There should also be records of measurable outcomes such as attendance, time-keeping, progress in literacy and other learning goals which have been achieved by participants.
- Accreditation is an issue that needs further attention. The value of accreditation to participants should be explored. The student led approach of the programme would suggest that FETAC or other accreditation could be useful as a record of achievement; however it may undermine the core principles of the programme if it began to drive the learning. Such accreditation would probably require tutors to be trained in FETAC accreditation. The question was raised as to whether participants should be offered the choice of accreditation. Currently there is in-house accreditation.

5.4 Organisations / Structures that support the work of the programme

The following were identified as the key structures supporting the work of the programme:

- Regular steering group, team and coordinator meetings have been held at intervals suited to the stage of development of the project. Tutors and coordinators share working space; this facilitates strong informal communication between co-ordinators, mediators and tutors.
- Formal tutor meetings allow tutors to:
 - Share resources, materials and necessary background information relating to participants.
 - Address issues relating to resources.
 - Give and receive support.
 - Share relevant feedback from participants.

- It was suggested that the attendance of the VEC Adult Literacy Officer might increase support for tutors and access to VEC resources, and may increase the opportunities for VEC learning from the ABLE programme. An alternative option may be to review ways learning can be shared in formal and informal ways between ABLE staff, the steering group and relevant agencies. The review group feel that the CDVEC Literacy Development Outreach Worker should be more closely linked to the programme as they provided initial assessments, one to one support to participants, and support in moving from one to one to small group settings. It may also be helpful for a programme tutor to participate in the steering group.
- Representation from Cabra on programmes is often limited, and it was felt that it was important to note the level of participation from Cabra residents on the programme. There is a clear process for following up participants who have stopped attending the programme. This involves three follow-up initiatives to facilitate re-engagement; they may be referred back to LES mediators.

5.5 ABLE Network / Steering Group

A review of the steering group and the agencies involved in the programme reveal the valuable contribution made by each. The ABLE steering group includes Finglas Cabra Partnership, CDVEC, and the Department of Social and Family Affairs. FCP has provided staffing and access to many of the target group via the LES Mediation Service, DSFA have contributed discretionary funding and support, while CDVEC have contributed teaching hours, knowledge and expertise. This steering group manages the ABLE programme which is staffed by a co-ordinator and a team of tutors.

It was suggested that the VEC literacy tutors provide direct delivery. It was observed that this could only occur if ABLE staff and steering group have a role in selection of tutors, as the shared values of the steering group members and tutors, and approach of the programme are intrinsic to programme delivery.

5.6 ABLE; the future

The following were suggested for consideration in addressing the future of the programme:

- Inclusion of groups and individuals for whom there has become an expectation of financial reward for learning / training, especially from the Traveller Community.
- Continue to work to included older men. The programme model is based on a community education model. Men may be recruited informally in places where they meet and socialise. DVDs and tapes of men talking about ABLE, including oral and visual images, could be successfully used for recruitment.

It is important to document the ways in which agencies have been able to work together.

5.7 Issues to be resolved

The following issues need to be addressed through further consultation between stakeholders:

- The role and make-up of the steering group should be reviewed; has the role of the steering group changed? If so, does this affect the ideal make-up of the group?
- This question might be considered from the point of view of the steering group itself (what will be its most effective form?) and also from the point of view of individual members and the agencies they come from (is the steering group the most effective, efficient way for them to contribute to ABLE?).
- Should a tutor sit on the programme steering group?
- Should the VEC Adult Literacy Officer attend tutor meetings?
- Should a dedicated, formal space allotted to sharing learning be established?
- Should the venue for meetings of ABLE steering group be varied?
- How can informal sharing and learning, and placing value on working in partnership be retained?
- Is there potential to deliver ABLE programme through existing literacy schemes?
- Should FETAC accreditation be introduced to ABLE programmes?
- How can the CDVEC Literacy Worker be most effectively linked to ABLE structures?
- Can recruitment be assisted by developing a clearer description of the ABLE programme? Could this be done by describing more concrete programme activities and outcomes?
- ABLE must clearly define a first-timer client / student (someone who has never before attended or completed a programme)
- Could ABLE programmes be delivered directly by VEC tutors while safeguarding its ethos?
- Is there is a need for some continuity of contact over the summer months when classes may cease?
- How will current clients be supported in the future, with or without ABLE?

6. KEY FINDINGS

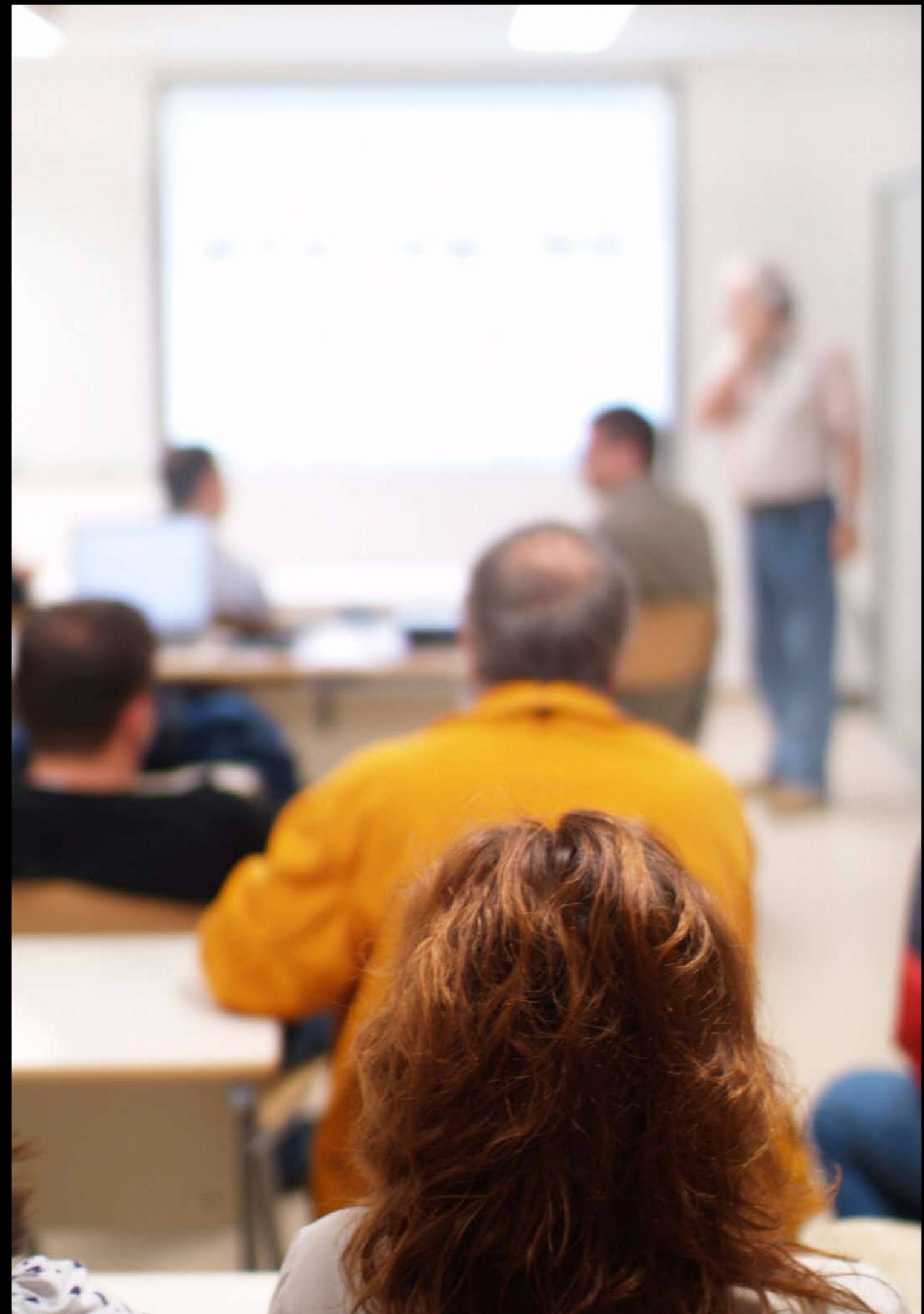
Key findings from interviews with participants and programme coordinators, review of relevant documentation, and focus day with programme management team are outlined below:

- The programme has, in the view of all stakeholders (participants, tutors, coordinators and steering group agencies) been largely successful in meeting its aims.
- In terms simply of numbers participating, the original aims have been significantly exceeded.
- The proportion of men participating (78%) represents an almost complete reversal of the usual male female ratio of 20:80 experienced CDVEC Adult Literacy Schemes. The programme has therefore been very successful in attracting men into education.
- It is less clear how successful the programme has been in attracting members of the Traveller Community to participate consistently in the education offered. There is evidence, however, of relationships being developed which may lead to further participation in the future.
- The programme has made significant progress in breaking the link between training and education and income generation. Participants interviewed for this review recognised that the education itself was of value to them, and sufficient recompense for their time.
- There are indications that the lower level of participation by Traveller men may be connected to efforts to break the link between income generation and training and education. The high level of uptake by Traveller women in training and the subsequent division of labour within the home may also have had an effect on take-up.
- The methodology of the programme is key to its success. The programme is designed around the interests and educational needs of individual participants. Consequently, while the initial intention was to develop some programme elements locally and to use others from existing programmes, most of the programme classes and resources used were designed by ABLE tutors for the groups and individuals they worked with. Participants felt that classes and activities were very relevant to their learning needs and to their lives.
- An important element of the methodology is the use of small group activities (about three to a group).
- The role of the co-ordinator is vital to the success of the programme, both in terms of organisation and in developing relationships with participants.
- Participants experienced three key positive outcomes following attendance on the programme: improved literacy and numeracy skills, rise in self esteem and confidence, and improved social and family lives.
- The interagency character of the programme is a key element in its success. Each agency brings its own expertise and resources to the programme and collaboration between the partner agencies has been effective with no one agency able to achieve on their own what has been possible through this innovative collaborative approach.
- The programme commenced in November, this led to some early difficulties regarding recruitment. While these were overcome through imaginative initiatives and effective teamwork, it was felt that in future preparation should be completed in time for recruitment to begin in September, in line with traditional educational calendars.

- Accreditation and how it might effectively contribute to the goals of ABLE will require further consideration. It was felt that accreditation might be seen as a record of achievement of individually identified learning goals rather than driving the learning.
- There are some minor organisational and structural questions outstanding. These relate to the role of some stakeholders and where best these fit into the programme structures.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Class sizes remain small (about 3 participants per class).
- Programme design continues to be flexible and centred around the interests and educational needs of individual participants following consultation with participants.
- Members of the Traveller community, particularly men, are targeted for recruitment in future programmes and programmes are designed to meet their needs. The expectation of financial reward for learning / training among this group must be addressed.
- The role of Programme Coordinator is maintained.
- The interagency collaborative character of the programme is maintained.
- Future programme preparation should be completed in time for recruitment to begin in September in line with traditional educational calendars, so that the maximum amount of participants are in a position to participate on the programme. Creative methods of recruitment could be developed including outreach work/ recruitment days to places where the target group may currently meet and socialise.
- The issue of FETAC accreditation and how it might effectively contribute to the goals of ABLE must be addressed.
- The role of all stakeholders must be clarified.
- Documentation of the methodological successes of the programme (programme design, interagency collaboration, tutor profiles).
- Research of and collaboration with similar programmes nationally which demonstrate good practice in programme design and delivery. This can improve the learning from the ABLE Programme and to add to the successful delivery of future programmes.



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