

What is Community Based Adult Learning?



About this guide



This guide was **co-produced** by Lead Scotland and a group of disabled people who all have experience of accessing community-based adult learning (CBAL).

Co-produced means working together where everyone's view is important and everyone helps to make decisions.

This our first guide about CBAL.

What is Adult Learning?



Adult Learning is learning done by anyone over the age of 16 who has left school.

Classes are in the community.

Classes can be:

- formal – where you get a qualification
- or informal – to help you get skills for life, work or volunteering

What is Community Based Adult Learning (CBAL)?



Community based adult learning can be provided by:

- your local council
- charities and voluntary groups
- community groups
- colleges

There are usually no more than 12 people on a course and tutors who run sessions are sometimes supported by volunteers.

What are the good things about community-based adult learning?

At Lead Scotland we asked our co-production team and some of their answers were:



- it is more relaxed and you are not rushed
- it is good for people who did not like learning at school
- one to one support can build your confidence to move into learning in a group
- you get proper support
- there is lots of choice of things to study

Who is community-based adult learning for?



Community based adult learning is for anyone who wants to learn at any time in their life.

Many groups may find it particularly useful including:

- **English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)**

Some people come to the UK for work, education, or after an event which has forced them to leave their own country, like war.

ESOL classes allow people to develop English skills, meet new people and understand the culture in the country they have moved to.

[ESOL Course listings can be found on the Glow Scotland website here.](#)

- **people who need support with their mental health**

Mental health charities often offer free courses in local communities on things like coping with stress and worry.

Lots of charities have free apps you can download to your mobile phone or online information so you can support your mental health at home.





- **adults returning to learning**

People can decide to learn something new at any time.

Many adults who change their job may need adult learning to learn new skills.

Many people are using adult learning to get digital skills because of the way the world is changing and more information is online.

- **people who have difficulty with reading, writing and number skills**



Many people did not have the chance to learn these skills properly when they were at school.

CBAL supports people to get the confidence and knowledge they need.

- **people with low confidence or other barriers to learning**

Lots of people want to learn something new but might not be ready because their confidence is low or it is difficult to access a course:

- because of their health or disability
- because of the care they need
- because they are a carer



CBAL is a more flexible way of learning that can often fit around people's lives.

How can you get started?



- if you get support for example from a social worker or support worker, they might be able to help you find local classes in your area
- look online - do an internet search for the name of your council (for example 'Edinburgh Council') followed by 'adult learning'
- find courses from the Workers Educational Association (WEA) on the [WEA website here](#)
- search the [My World of Work website](#) in the 'Learn and Train' section.
You can search for [free online courses](#) as well as under the [further and higher education courses and training search button](#).
- look at the websites and social media pages of your local colleges, universities, libraries, and community centres
- check websites and social media of local charities and voluntary organisations or phone them up



- chat to your friends and family – they might have done adult learning or know someone who has
- look out for posters and leaflets advertising courses in your local community

Where can you do CBAL?

There are many different places to learn including:



- places in your community like your local library, church hall or community centre
- voluntary organisation buildings
- college and university buildings

Classes are often in the evenings and at weekends



- online learning

You might log on to access learning materials in your own time, or you may be matched with a volunteer or a tutor and have online video meetings.

[Lead Scotland has some services](#) that will match you with a volunteer or a tutor, and they will meet you in a community venue, online or in some cases at home.



What can you learn?



A community-based adult learning course can support you to take your first step back into learning.

It gives you a reason to get out of the house, meet new people, and build up your confidence.

For example you could:



- do courses to make your mental health or physical health better
- learn skills to help your communication
- do short courses on things you are interested in
- do work-related courses in areas such as care, retail, customer service or office work
- do an access course for learners who need additional support on things like independent living skills



'The Big Plus' is a free service to help adults get better with reading, writing and number skills.

You work with a tutor in places like libraries, community centres or colleges and you can learn when it suits you.

Call the Big Plus helpline on 0800 917 8000 or go to the [Big Plus website](#).



Using community-based adult learning to make things change

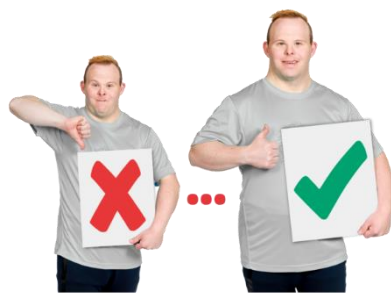


There are courses and organisations that can:

- support disabled people to get skills, knowledge, and confidence to get involved with politics
- learn how to campaign about things that are important to them

Partners in Policymaking

[Partners in Policymaking](#) is a course run by [InControl Scotland](#)



It gives disabled adults and parents of disabled children the skills they need to improve the way services are delivered for disabled people.

Inclusion Scotland

[Inclusion Scotland](#) has:

- the [Access to Politics](#) project
- the [We Can Work](#) project that supports disabled people to get a paid **internship** and new skills while learning in the community.

Internship is work experience.





Glasgow Disability Alliance

[Glasgow Disability Alliance](#) (GDA) has a programme called [Drivers for Change](#) and [Young Drivers for Change](#) that help disabled people get more skills, build confidence and speak up for themselves.

Using CBAL to develop digital skills and get assistive technology



Having 'digital skills' means having the confidence and ability to use devices including computers, laptops, smart phones, and tablets (like an iPad).

Basic digital skills support you to:

- get online
- send and receive emails
- use online video conferencing like Zoom to meet people
- make an electronic document (like Word)
- take part in online learning



What is Assistive Technology?



Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment, software programme or product used to give people more independence and a better quality of life.



People who most benefit from using Assistive Technology include:

- disabled people
- older people
- people with health conditions

Examples of assistive technology are:

- apps and computer programmes that give disabled users access to social media and other forms of communication, as well as making learning materials more accessible
- talking smart phones or accessibility apps for Android and iPhone
- talking cooking utensils such as microwaves or scanning devices
- scanners that translate print material into speech



Where can you get training in digital skills and assistive technology?

There are many organisations that give training in person or online including:



- [Lead Scotland](#)
- many local councils and third sector organisations also offer CBAL in digital skills.



- [Ability Net](#) gives free services including digital support in people's own homes across the UK.
- The Royal National Institute of Blind People [Technology resource hub](#)
- [AppleVis](#) for blind and low vision users of Apple products such as the Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, and Apple TV

How to keep safe online



Lead Scotland has [National Cyber Security Centre information](#) in alternative formats.

We also have [online webinars](#) about digital accessibility and cyber security.

Sign up to our [newsletter](#), follow us on social media or check our [webinars](#) page for the latest events.

Community-based adult learning and Mental Health



Community-based adult learning is a good way for people to learn in small groups and find information and ways to make their mental health better.

Other learners may have gone through similar things and may have the same feelings as you.

Your rights as a disabled learner



LEAD have a guide called: [The Equality Act in post-school learning](#).

The Equality Act protects people from discrimination and helps to make sure people are treated fairly.



You can find out more from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) or in this [Easy Read information](#).



The law says any service providing adult learning must make sure you have equal access and the right support to take part.

There are lots of changes organisations can make that do not require spending lots of money.

For example:



- using all the free built-in accessibility features of Microsoft and Apple and utilising free apps
- making sure all electronic documents are fully accessible
- using plain language in any communications
- having breaks during sessions for people who might have bad pain



What is a reasonable adjustment?



Reasonable adjustments are changes organisations must make to give a disabled person the same choices and chances as anyone else.

Some examples are:

- supporting people to apply for a course by video, using a BSL interpreter, or over the phone
- offering course materials in formats like large print, Braille or Easy Read
- providing communication and support services like readers, note takers, or interpreters



Call the Lead disabled students' helpline on 0800 999 2568 for advice.

Finding funding and support



- Lead Scotland has a [guide to charitable trusts](#)
- the ILF Transition Fund gives young people funding to try out new things and be more independent
- Skills Development Scotland gives learners £200 for an [Individual Training Account](#) to find learning to help them be more ready for work
- find free courses on the [My World of Work website](#).



Podcasts can help you decide if you want to learn more about something.

Look online – for example by typing in ‘podcasts about fixing cars’ or ‘podcasts about sewing’.



Your local Third Sector Interface (TSI) will have information on organisations supporting people in your area.

Find your local TSI by:



- looking online
- contact your local [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)
- ask your local council office or library

Using Self-directed support to access learning



Self-directed support is funding that gives you more control over your support.

Find out more on the [Care information Scotland website](#).

You could use self-directed support money to pay for a support worker to help you access adult learning.



There are examples of how people have used their self-directed support budgets in this [online booklet from the Glasgow Centre for Independent Living](#).

Using person-centred planning



A person-centred plan is a great way for people to decide what they want out of life.

You could do it with family members, support workers or anyone who knows you well.

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