

Training Link Annual Report 2013–14

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Adolfo Gaspar award

We are pleased to announce that the joint winners of this award for 2013–14 are Yasar Omer and William Nicoll. The award is given, in memory of Adolfo, who was a management committee member and trustee of Training Link until he died in November 2008, to the learner who the IT tutors consider has made the most progress during the past year.

Funders

We would like to thank the following organisations who funded us during 2013–14: The Big Lottery Fund, Lloyds Bank Foundation, London Borough of Camden Community and Third Sector Equality and Cohesion Fund and the Goldsmith's Company Charity. We would also like to thank Camden Adult Community Learning for their support.

Management Committee & Trustees

Trustees: Brenda Goring Moore, Maya Alva, Elaine Arnold, Faize Yakup Bedirhan, Louisa Jean Baptiste.

Management Committee: Brenda Goring-Moore (chair), Maya Alva (vice-chair), Kathleen Hayes (treasurer), Elizabeth Ajith, Emiflor Bahceci, Faye Barnes, Colin Flower, Rosemary Maxwell and Monica Wilson.

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Chair's Report

As the chair of Training Link, I can say that it is a pleasure to address you this year as part of our annual review. Over the last year I have been proud to serve such an inspiring organisation. It is an organisation that is a tribute to all the people who came together over the year to contribute to its work and indeed a tribute to the founders and developers of Training Link through the years.

It has not been easy, but we have maintained our training offer to recipients enabling them to progress towards meeting their goals of employment and or further training; maintained our staff in employment and supported volunteers to learn and consolidate new skills. Many of our learners not only need to develop basic language and literacy skills, but also need the confidence to engage and achieve. The one-to-one

support they receive at Training Link is vital to that confidence building and it is particularly satisfying that staff, volunteers and visiting tutors have continued to develop this way of working with learners.

Apart from continuing, reviewing and developing our training offer, our other main focus this year has been on working to secure the future funding of the organisation. We have moved this year to improve our online presence, marketing and fundraising including work to optimise donations. We shall be reporting on the results next year.

Our continuing presence and health continues to make a positive mark on our local community here in Somers Town. We know this especially from the community's response to our open days over the past year, their attendance on our courses and open drop-in sessions. We are also encouraged by the support of the other organisations here. That is why this year I want to single out particularly the work of our director and his team in helping us to forge new alliances and continue relationships that help strengthen our community and our work. We particularly welcome our links with various local organisations, including Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre, Somers Town Community Centre, New Horizon Youth Centre, Age UK (Camden), The Surma Centre, West Euston Partnership and our continuing relationship with Camden Adult Community Learning.

This is also a time of year especially to say thank you to our funders and donors, not only for their monetary support to Training Link, but also for the other ways in which they show their backing for what we are doing by providing opportunities for networking, sharing and exchanging new thinking. I was pleased to represent Training Link in March 2014 at Camden's 'Thriving, Not Just Surviving' event to share ideas and be inspired by others in the sector as well as explore funding options to continue our valued work.

Finally I want to thank our Trustees and Management Committee for their oversight and challenge during the year; for their time and expertise, wise counsel and other inputs they have given unstintingly to Training Link.

Brenda Goring-Moore

Management Committee and Trustees

The Trustees met once during the year, and the Management Committee met on five occasions. We also held the Annual General Meeting in July 2013. All meetings were quorate.

We are sorry to lose Emi Bahceci from the Management Committee, who is standing down this year. During the year, Monica Wilson joined the Management Committee, and we invited Heidi Blakey to attend a couple of meetings as a guest prior to standing for the Committee at the forthcoming AGM in July 2014.

Director's Report

The past 12 months was a very busy and active period for Training Link. Our principal activity has remained the provision of training courses and education, mainly for people looking for work. There is an ongoing demand for our courses.

Our aims and objectives are summarised in our mission statement: "To relieve poverty, advance education and advance employment opportunities for black and ethnic minority and socially excluded people, by facilitating access to training to enhance employment opportunities."

Objectives

Our objectives for 2013-14 were to meet the targets for learners completing courses; to develop our new Get into Catering project; to attract new learners to the centre; to recruit new members for the Management Committee; to hold Management Committee and Trustee meetings regularly; to revise and update policies as required; to continue to be involved in local community projects in Somers Town and to secure new funding to ensure the future of Training Link.

Achievements

BIG Lottery courses

The courses funded by the BIG Lottery are still the main focus of our work, and are very popular. The courses are:

- Level 2 Business Administration
- Level 2 Food Safety & Hygiene Certificate
- Customer Care

- Introduction to First Aid
- Touch Typing
- Listening Skills

For the Business Administration course, we changed the course provider to National Open College Network from the OCN London Region. This was with some regret because we had worked with OCN London for a long time, but the two organisations are now separate entities – to provide more competition in education – and OCN London did not have a franchise for ESOL courses. Rather than try to work with two bodies, we decided to switch to the National OCN, who are based in Sheffield. This did not make any difference to our learners.

The Business Administration course was smaller than before, with only six learners, although we are still on target to achieve 50 learners in five years as required by the BIG Lottery grant. As with some of our other longer courses, it is becoming more difficult to recruit learners who are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance because of all the other demands on their time, and the compulsion of activities organised by the Job Centres. All the learners passed the course. The units studied remained the same, but we have plans to change them for 2014–15 because we cannot include Level 1 units on a Level 2 course any more due to a change in exam regulations.

The short online courses in Food Safety & Hygiene, Customer Care and First Aid continue to be popular and we met all the targets in those courses. The flexibility of them is very good for us, with some learners working at home, but taking the test at Training Link. For touch typing, we have encouraged learners on our Introduction to Computers course to attend, so they do a full day at the centre, and develop their skills more quickly.

The Listening Skills course was again run in partnership with the South Sudan Women's Development Trust. Seven learners attended, and enjoyed the course, which was again facilitated by Sam Llewellyn.

Projects

The Get into Catering and Adult Literacy projects are both complex to run and time consuming, but both achieve a great deal. Maria's job has evolved so that she spends more time on these areas of work. The details of the projects are covered elsewhere in this report. Without a determined and resolute team of volunteers the Adult Literacy project could not run, and it is also pleasing that we have been able to help some of our volunteers develop their careers in teaching or tutoring.

London Borough of Camden courses

Our funding from Camden was extended by another year. This has meant that we were able to run an ESOL Entry 2 class, aimed primarily at the learners who completed Entry 1 in July 2013. We also continued the Adult Literacy project, which continues to be much in demand, and the Introduction to Computers classes.

We also continue to host computer classes run by Camden Adult Community Learning on Wednesdays. We are pleased to have Tracey Hamilton as the teacher. The classes are popular and usually well attended.

Reading Group

Funding from the Goldsmiths' Company Charity enabled us to run a Reading Group. It met weekly, and was very well co-ordinated by Lourdes Pareja, one of our volunteers. The group read a wide variety of novels, and enjoyed both reading and discussing the books.

Camden tenant & resident training

Following discussion with a local tenants & residents association (TRA) about the training that was available to them, we approached Camden's Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement team and agreed that we could offer training to TRAs which they would fund. This has included both training for committee members, and for individual officers. This has been a welcome additional source of income, and has also helped us publicise our other courses and projects.

Local activity

We have been involved in two main areas of local activity over the past year. We are regularly represented at the Employment & Training Group of the Somers Town Neighbourhood Forum, which is working on a two year employment advice project for Somers Town. We attend the Living Centre Working Group, a community facility that is part of the Crick Institute which is being built next door. We had a stall at a local festival last September, which was useful both for fundraising and for publicising our courses.

We held Open Days at the start of each term, which were usually attended by between 30 and 40 people, with other learners booking courses online. We leaflet the local estates, with a leaflet produced

jointly with Camden Adult Community Learning. Thanks to Steve McCarthy for doing the leafleting. We also send leaflets to employment advisers and local groups, and put an advert in the *Camden New Journal* to publicise the events. This has helped raise our profile. Far fewer people come in now saying "I always wondered what this place was..."

People

The Management Committee and Trustees have continued to meet regularly. They are a great support to the work of the staff, and my work. Brenda Goring-Moore continues to be an inspirational chair, although she seems to be even busier now that she has 'retired' from her job with Harrow Council. We are fortunate to have a committed and stable management committee and trustee team. Emi Bahceci is coming off the Management Committee this year, and I would like to thank her for many years service to Training Link, as a volunteer and then MC member.

The staff team is also stable, and I would like to thank all of them for their continued work and support. Khadija Wolff left Training Link in September 2013 after four years running the Adult Literacy project and Maria Trimikliniotis took over that area of work. I would like to thank Khadija for all her hard work developing our Adult Literacy work.

The only other change during the year was that Franco Gioacchini resigned as office cleaner in October 2013 to return to Italy for family reasons. We offered Kim Cooper her old job back, and she was pleased to accept.

Our volunteers continue to contribute an enormous amount to Training Link. The work done by the Adult Literacy project is inspirational, and can really start to transform people's lives.

Our IT learning assistants show great patience working with our learners, both in classes and our weekly open sessions on Tuesday afternoons. In the office, Nana Amma has been volunteering regularly doing filing and other admin tasks, which she does with enthusiasm and determination.

Partners

Our partnerships, both with local and national organisations, are very important to us. We were sorry to have to move away from working with OCN London, and will certainly consider working with them again in the future should the opportunity arise. Somers Town continues to be a vibrant, active area, and our local partnerships are very valuable to us. We are well established in Camden, but still find new opportunities for joint work or exchanging information.

The building

Our facilities are much the same as in the past. At times we desperately need more space, and have to send adult literacy volunteers and learners to local cafes and libraries to do their work if we cannot accommodate them. The fabric of the building is much the same as before, but will need decorating in the near future.

Fundraising

We have taken some initiatives over the past year. We are now registered for Gift Aid, and have started a campaign to get small, regular donations by standing order, which is starting to take off. It is early days for this, but if we could raise £50 a month it would make a difference to our finances. We need to secure more long-term funding as the BIG Lottery grant comes to an end in March 2016. We have submitted a major application for a three year ESOL programme, and are looking at funders who are not high profile – often family and company trusts – rather than continuing to apply to previous funders who are well-known.

Conclusion

There is still an ongoing need for Training Link's services. One learner told me that "By using the new skills that Training Link has given me I have since landed a very good job and moved into a new flat." With almost 25 per cent of adults in Somers Town not having any formal qualifications, there is clearly much to be done.

Peter Lush

Projects

Get into Catering

This project developed because we felt there was a need to offer further support to learners who were doing the Food Safety & Hygiene course, to actually help them find a job. The project is funded by the Lloyds Bank Foundation, and started in June 2013. I would like to thank Lloyds Bank Foundation for their support.

Maria Trimikliniotis has organised the project, including booking participants in for the courses, arranging the work placements and employment advice sessions. That a complex project has generally run smoothly is very much to her credit.

Participants do the Food Safety & Hygiene course, and the Customer Care course online. We then offer them targeted employment advice and help drawing up a CV. This is provided by David Hermanstein from West Euston Partnership. We are fortunate to have been able to involve such an experienced employment adviser. Each participant can have up to four sessions of employment advice. Most of the participants are from Camden, with a few from neighbouring boroughs.

Some people do not have any experience of catering in a commercial context. To provide this, we have a partnership with Somers Town Community Centre, who run a community cafe round the corner from Training Link. Most participants go for just a week. I would like to thank Frances Holloway (the Community Centre's deputy director), Nicola Wright and Elizabeth at the cafe for all their help and support with the placements.

The target for the project was 50 participants over two years. We had a target to April 2014 of recruiting 25, which we achieved and in fact recruited 28. Of these, 25 have passed the Level 2 Food Safety & Hygiene certificate. 19 have passed the Customer Care course. The beneficiaries have been unemployed people. Of the initial 25, five got jobs in catering, including one who is managing a cafe in a local museum. Three got jobs in other sectors; one has a long-term volunteering placement; one returned to Portugal for family reasons, another has a wrist injury which restricted her ability to apply for jobs and a couple dropped out of the project.

Thirteen participants did work placements; there were 54 employment advice sessions, which included helping people develop their CVs. Five people attended a workshop on 'Starting work', which I ran. This was aimed at people who had never worked in this country, or had been out of the workplace for a long time. We used a 'Quick Read' book called *Life's too short* about different issues at work to supplement the more formal teaching material.

We also drew up a list of local employers and employment agencies to help participants find work. It is frustrating that some insist on commercial catering experience before they will take someone on. We have also been trying to build links with the company that runs the school meals service in Camden, but this has proved to be difficult.

The project will continue until June 2015. Unfortunately, we had a small under-spend in the first year. This was partly because we ran the advice sessions here, instead of renting premises for them. Also, we did not need to provide as much support as anticipated to participants who got jobs. The under-spend will be deducted from the second instalment of the grant.

Maria has started a newsletter for the participants, letting them know of jobs coming up. We are also in the process of developing links with Kings Cross Recruit, a new local organisation which aims to recruit for local vacancies.

Peter Lush

Adult Literacy

I found this project to be a new and enjoyable challenge. Special thanks to Khadija Woolf, my predecessor, for having laid down the groundwork for this for four years.

The project has gone very well this past year, with as many as six one-to-one pairs (volunteers and learners) meeting in our small meeting room, back-to-back throughout the day. It has been a very inspiring experience to share in the successes of the one-to-one groups. This has been a project funded from Camden Council's 'Equalities and Cohesion Fund' and unfortunately the funding will end in December. It has been a great opportunity to bring together people from different walks of life that might not, ordinarily have met, who through the experience of working together one-to-one, have gained and been enriched by the project. Around 40 learners have been involved in the project over the last year.

Maria Trimikliniotis

Staff and tutors

Nelly Pineda (IT Co-ordinator)

It has been another busy, yet rewarding, year. The typing course was a challenge as usual. Learners are surprised to find out how much effort and stamina, using their fingers, wrists and eyes, they must have before typing a good short sentence. By now I have learnt not to take it personally when a learner drops out of this course. We encourage the Introduction to Computers courses learners to do the typing course as well, so that they can do emails more quickly and use computers better.

I am so pleased to see three students new to computers on this course do very well and benefit from it. From never having used a computer, William has now got in touch with his family overseas through email & Facebook. Yasar has built his confidence in photography through doing one of the Camden Adult Community Learning courses, and found out how useful the internet is for reaching government officials. Chris is now confident to move on to a higher level course. Chris and I are both attending a beginners iPad course!

Most of our learners on the Introduction to Computers course are directed to us by the Job Centre with the specific aim of using the internet to search for jobs and have an email address. Not only do we teach them mouse and keyboarding skills, we work to build up their confidence and instil a sense of routine before attempting to use the internet. In this way learners have a good foundation making it easier to progress and do courses at a higher level.

Learners have the opportunity to attend the drop-in sessions on Tuesdays afternoons. Generally those who never miss a class come to practice and our volunteers are happy to work with them one-to-one.

ECDL is the only course at Training Link for which there is a fee. This, and the limited promotion of the course makes quite difficult to recruit learners, which is a pity because it is well worth the money for a course that give a good foundation for anyone looking for a job. We are pleased that no student had to re-sit an exam. For some of our learners, their employer pays for the course.

We got the good news that everybody on the Business Administration Course passed. I teach Level 2 Word and Level 1 Excel on this course. We all worked very hard on their portfolios which will provide them with a Level 2 Business Administration qualification.

Maria Trimikliniotis (Office manager & Adult Literacy co-ordinator)

This year I represented Training Link at jobs and opportunities fairs, such as Choices Day at Working Men's College and the Job and Careers Fair organised by the Surma Centre. These are events at which we are able to recruit to our courses and to raise our profile.

Also, on behalf of Training Link, I took part in the Camden Adult Learning and Partnership meetings, giving Training Link the opportunity to contribute to local discussion and developments. The partnership is composed of the major adult education organisations in Camden – City Lit, the Mary Ward Centre, Working Men's College (WMC) and Camden Council. The group aims to foster partnership working between organisations and to consider and work towards the five Strategic objectives of the Camden Plan 2012 – 2017 as follows: Providing democratic and strategic leadership fit for changing times; Develop new solutions with partners to reduce inequality; Creating conditions for and harnessing the benefits of economic growth; Investing in our communities to ensure sustainable neighbourhoods and Delivering value for money services by getting it 'right first time'.

On 5 February the CAL partnership organised a 'speed-dating' event at which Camden groups, interacted and discussed possible collaboration in five minutes slots. This was a fun morning and some of the interactions may lead to some possible funding for some of our projects.

I also managed the Food Safety and Hygiene, Customer Care and Introduction to First Aid courses. For the second year we offered the Food Safety & Hygiene course to learners at Working Men's College looking for work in the health and care sectors. A major part of my work is managing the Get into Catering and Adult Literacy projects, which are covered elsewhere in this review.

Chris Carr (ESOL & English tutor)

Already another year has passed working at Training Link! I teach the English courses at the centre. Nearly seven years have passed since I first came here and I'm very pleased Training Link has managed to keep going and offer free courses for people in the community – in a time of recession and cuts, it's not easy to keep places like this going. I hope that we will be able to run some new English classes in September.

This year I taught two units on the Level 2 Business Administration course: Punctuation & Grammar and Business Communication. I also taught the ESOL Entry 2 course which has three units, Reading, Writing and Speaking & Listening. I liked teaching the courses and I think that both were a success. Hopefully it's helped the learners move onto other things and I wish everyone the best of luck in the future.

Partnerships

Local partnerships

Age UK Camden
Arlington House (One Housing Group)
Basement Dance Studio
Broadway St Mungo's
Camden Adult Community Learning
Francis Crick Institute Living Centre Working Group
Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre
London Borough of Camden (Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Team)
London Borough of Camden (Voluntary & Community Sector)
New Horizon Youth Centre
Origin Housing Group
Our Camden
Richard Cobden Learning Centre
Single Homeless Project
Somers Town Community Centre
Somers Town Neighbourhood Forum Business, Education, Employment & Training Group
South Sudan Women's Skills Development
Surma Centre
University College London Union – Volunteering Services Unit
Voluntary Action Camden
Volunteer Centre Camden
West Euston Partnership
Working Men's College

National partnerships

BIG Lottery Fund
British Computer Society
Charity Evaluation Services
Goldsmiths Company Charity
Lloyds Bank Foundation (Formerly Lloyds TSB Foundation)
London Training & Employment Network
National Open College Network
Separation & Reunion Forum
St Giles Trust
UK Online

Financial Report

When I began volunteering with Training Link four years ago as a literacy tutor, I was really only aware of the literacy programme. However, joining the management committee and becoming treasurer has really opened my eyes to the wide range of educational services on offer. It also made me very aware of the challenges that TL has to meet and manage on an ongoing basis. Like all other charities, in these days of austerity, securing funding for our courses is a constant test for us. We need to be coming up with new and innovative ways of raising funds and making our charity known when so many others are doing the same.

I became treasurer in July 2013. I receive an income and expenditure report from Peter each month, and a full finance report is presented to every Management Committee meeting. I am also involved in drawing up the annual budget. We have made a small surplus this year due to our extra fundraising efforts, which is to be welcomed. However, we still need to manage our finances very carefully.

Kathleen Hayes
Treasurer

Background information

During 2013–14, we looked at all our expenditure. We saved a small amount by changing insurance companies, but also got a policy more appropriate to our needs. We saved over £150 on telephone calls by

using a separate line for outgoing calls to mobile phones. We now have a 'dual-fuel' deal on our gas and electricity. We had to change exam boards from OCN London to National OCN because the London region did not offer ESOL, but this also saved money because they do not charge a membership fee. Volunteer costs increased due to the growth of the Adult Literacy project, but we now do not recruit volunteers who have large travel expenses. Our fundraising from donations has increased, but a group that used our office for meetings decided they could no longer afford to rent them regularly, which resulted in a fall in our general income.

Course statistics

Big Lottery Fund courses

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Business Administration | 6 learners |
| Food Safety & Hygiene | 48 learners |
| Introduction to First Aid | 48 learners |
| Customer care | 30 learners |
| Listening Skills | 7 learners |
| Touch Typing | 10 learners |

LB Camden Voluntary & Community Cohesion & Equality courses

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Adult Literacy | 40 learners |
| ESOL Entry 1 (To July 2013) | 12 learners |
| ESOL Entry 2 (To July 2013) | 10 learners |
| ESOL Entry 2 (From September 2013) | 12 learners |
| Introduction to Computers | 15 learners |

Get into Catering project

25 learners registered for the project. All of them completed the Food Safety & Hygiene course. 20 completed the Customer Care course. They all received employment advice and support on developing their CVs.

Goldsmiths Company charity

Reading Group (To December 2013) 8 learners

Camden Adult Community Learning courses

Tracey Hamilton teaches these courses. The following were run at Training Link:

Summer term 2013:

Digital Cameras and image editing for beginners
Introduction to Spreadsheets
Create your first website

Autumn term 2013:

Working with photos
Introduction to Word
Internet and Email

Spring term 2014:

Introduction to Spreadsheets
Using Computers for everyday life, work and study
Create your own website

Free Internet cafe and Drop-in

These sessions were held each week on Tuesday afternoons. Between five and 10 learners attend, and are supported by Nelly Pineda and IT Learning Assistant volunteers.

Training Link was founded in 1985 as Women's Training Link. Twenty nine years on, we are still working to fulfil our mission statement:

“To relieve poverty, advance education and advance employment opportunities for black and ethnic minority and socially excluded people, by facilitating access to training to enhance employment opportunities.”

You can support our work by:

- Becoming a volunteer on one of our projects – contact us via our website or email admin@traininglink.org.uk
- Making a donation – see our website for access to the MyDonate facility, or email director@traininglink.org.uk for information about setting up a monthly donation.
- Supporting us when you shop on line, by registering to support Training Link with www.easyfundraising.org.uk

www.traininglink.org.uk