

MAKING LIFE BETTER



highlife Highland Adult Learning

Annual Report 2023

#learningmakeslifebetter

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Foreword

Freya

Adult Learner, Dingwall

Adult learning can help people with their confidence to learn new things and it's a good way to meet other people. You are well supported with anything you don't understand. It's an unintimidating way to learn and even though people aren't at the same level, people are there for the same reason. Other learners encourage each other, and everyone learns from each other's experiences.

WHAT WE DO

High Life Highland Adult Learning provides a range of learning activities in communities across Highland which include help with everyday life skills such as reading, writing, using numbers, English as a second language and digital literacy.

The benefits of developing core skills as an adult and having the confidence to use them can be far reaching and life changing.

In addition to developing core skills, our learners also tell us that their confidence and health and wellbeing has improved, helping them to live fuller lives.

“After my class, I feel less anxious and more focussed.

Adult Learner, Dingwall



We can:

- Help you to read your first bedtime story to your daughter
- Help you to support your children with their homework
- Connect you with your grandson on the other side of the world
- Help you feel pride by achieving your first qualification
- Assist in you passing your driving test
- Help you feel able to attend meetings without the need for an interpreter
- Help you to understand how to plan your household budget
- Support you in connecting with people in your community and beyond

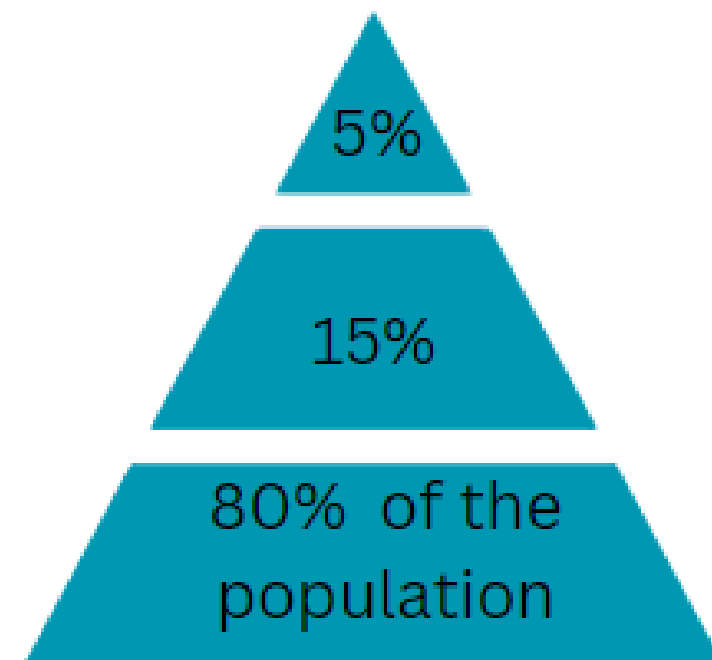
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Community Learning & Development (CLD) aims supported by

ADULT LEARNING

Work Is targeted

15% of people in our community are disadvantaged by low skills and qualifications. These individuals may have the power to change their own circumstances if they have access to learning.



CLD is a constant commitment to social justice

Access to learning helps people in our communities with the lowest level of education to access the things that improve our quality of life.

Improved life chances

Everyone in our community has access to learning that will help them to improve their quality of life, especially those with the least education.

Stronger, more resilient, influential & inclusive communities

Everyone in our community has the skills and confidence to make their own choices, influence the things that affect them, and are not excluded from or by the community they live in.

MEET *the* TEAM



Roisin Irvine
Adult Learning
Manager



Kirsty D'Ambrosio
Senior Adult Learning
Coordinator



Rachel Martin
Adult Learning Coordinator
(Literacies) Inverness &
Nairn



Jenni Christie
Adult Learning
Coordinator (ESOL)
Inverness & Nairn



Donna Hall
Adult Learning Tutor



Mairi Lamont
Adult Learning Tutor



Anna Holda
Adult Learning
Coordinator (Refugee
Resettlement)



Sara MacLeod
Adult Learning Tutor



Zoe Mackenzie
Adult Learning Tutor



Derry Bremner
Adult Learning Tutor



Joolz Christie
Adult Learning
Support Worker



Hazel Rae
Adult Learning Tutor

High Life Highland
Adult Learning

“ [It's] great to see the different strengths and skills we have across our team, and how pulling them together results in a fantastic learning experience for everyone involved. -Adult Learning Practitioner

MEET *the* TEAM



John Riach
Adult Learning
Coordinator Caithness



Pascal Mian
Adult Learning Tutor



Trish Matthews
Learning Centre
Coordinator



Kirsty Maciver
Adult Learning
Coordinator, Mid-Ross



Catriona Canning
Adult Learning
Coordinator, Skye &
Lochalsh



Linda Robichaud
Adult Learning Tutor



Jane Ivetic
Adult Learning
Coordinator Lochaber



Magda Kruk
Adult Learning Support
Worker



Kshama Willington
Adult Learning Tutor

High Life Highland
Adult Learning



**Jane Marie
MacGillivray**
Adult Learning
Coordinator, Easter Ross



Roni Simpson
Adult Learning Tutor



Ken Simpson
Adult Learning Tutor

We also work with a small team of skilled sessional staff – Liz Coull, Marian Burrows-Smith, Cathy Coussens, Chris Forbes, Sally Purdy and Kes Rose – and a dedicated team of Adult Learning Volunteers who contribute greatly to the capacity and scope of our service.

2023: WHAT'S GOING WELL

- ✱ HLH Adult Learning helps hundreds of people each year learn new skills, gain confidence, progress to further learning, achieve qualifications and improve their prospects for life and work – achieving better outcomes for the people of the Highlands.
- ✱ **HLH Adult Learning is committed to continuous improvement and staff feel confident to try new approaches that benefit learners.**
- ✱ HLH Adult Learning practitioners demonstrate a genuine commitment to provide a quality learner-centred service to people in friendly and welcoming environments.
- ✱ **HLH Adult Learning co-produced and are piloting Education Scotland's new community needs analysis training, leading the sector nationally in this development.**
- ✱ Feedback from learners, is overwhelmingly positive with 98% of learners saying they gained confidence and improved their core skills.

2023 at a glance

We delivered

33,144

hours of learning
this year

We offer

24

different
SQA awards

We work with
learners of

34

different
nationalities

98% of
learners report
improved
confidence

“

Coming along to my
group has meant I have
made good friends.

Adult Learner, Inverness

LEARNING makes life better



Evidence suggests that adult learning has clear, identifiable positive effects for both well-being and health which is proof of the transformations learning can produce in people's lives.

(Field, J. in the *Adult Learner Journal*, 2011)

Research by the NHS shows that learning new things can improve mental wellbeing by:

- Boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem
- Providing a sense of purpose
- Connecting with others

Research by the NHS also shows that lifelong learners are likely to be more optimistic, better satisfied and will have better ability to get the most out of their lives.

Changing lives through learning: learner stories

Imad and Samar were relocated from Syria to Scotland a few years ago but quickly became socially isolated and tended to spend a lot of time at home, inactive and disconnected from the community. They told us they felt constantly fatigued and lacking motivation.



The couple had primary school level education from Syria and did not read and write confidently in any language. They started working with their tutor a few times a week at their local High Life Highland community centre. Social interactions with the centre's staff were an important part of their language learning, cultural understanding and social wellbeing.

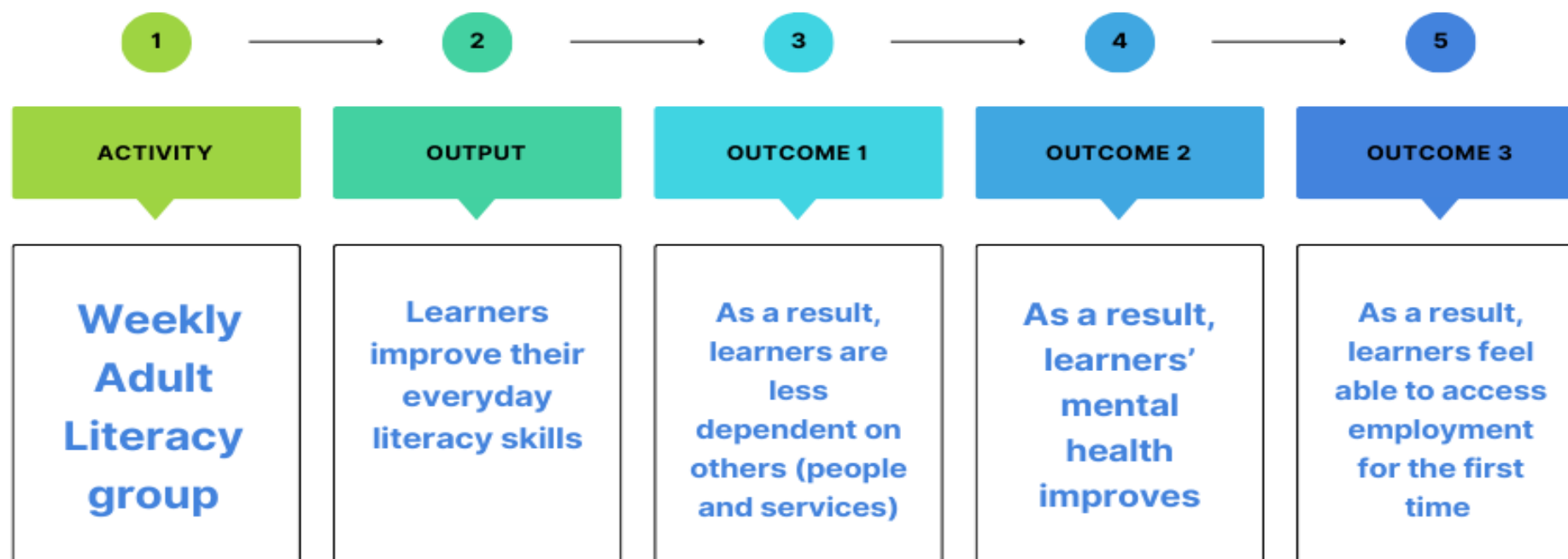
This summer, instead of learning in a classroom, Imad and Samar started to meet their tutor at High Life Highland's Botanic Gardens. The learners gained confidence placing orders at Café Botanics and interacting with the staff and other customers, using their newly acquired language skills in an authentic way. It's also a place for meaningful social connections to take place; Samar made friends with another Syrian customer. They exchanged phone numbers so they could stay in touch!

Learning English in a green space has been good for the couple's physical and mental health. Learning has helped Imad and Samar to progress from supported community interactions to independent social integration. Now they visit the gardens together for picnics and recreation and no longer feel house-bound.

LITERACY makes life better

Low literacy has a profound impact on the individual, society and Scotland's prosperity in the world.

Measuring the impact of adult literacy



“ I feel more confident talking to new people.

Adult Learner, Inverness

Research highlights the link between literacy and economic instability. [...] poor literacy has an impact on a range of health inequalities, employment outcomes and criminal offending. (National Literacy Trust)

Changing lives through learning: learner story

JR began attending Adult Learning classes in 2022 having been referred by Criminal Justice Social Work for help with his literacy and numeracy skills. He found reading and writing extremely difficult, and was unable to make sense of simple, everyday written words.

JR meets with his tutor every week, exploring the aspects of life that are made harder by a lack of confidence in reading and writing. He started working on his numeracy skills, too – understanding bus timetables and money, things which he avoided using in day-to-day life.

As part of his attendance, JR was able to deduct hours from his Unpaid Work court order. But even when this order expired, encouraged by an increased level of independence, JR was very keen to continue learning.

JR tells us he feels more confident – not just in learning but personally and socially, too.

JR now needs less input from social, justice and health services; he has committed no further offences, and he has now begun to think about further training and work.

He feels a sense of achievement and is looking to the future.

“

I now try to read my mail whereas before I would give it to my wife to read.



FAMILY LEARNING makes life better



CLD Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience and challenge educational disadvantage.

(Scottish Family Learning Network)

Children in Scotland spend approximately 15% of their waking hours in school (OECD, 2014). The remaining 85% of children's time is spent at home or in their communities and this presents a potentially significant opportunity for learning. Equipping, supporting and building the capacity of Scotland's parents to maximise children's opportunities for learning is key to raising attainment.

(Education Scotland)

FAMILY LEARNING makes life better

CLD Family learning focuses on children and adults learning a new skill together.

Family learning has significant impacts for children, adults and the wider community. It can help families to tackle disadvantage and improve their life chances. Taking part in active learning as a family develops confident, lifelong learners who are likely to be happier, healthier, longer-living and wealthier.

Children whose parents support their learning through the home learning environment do better at school and in later life. (NCFE)

For many adults, a family learning programme can be the first step to taking up further adult learning and training opportunities, gaining a job or developing new skills. For children, this can have a positive impact on their individual attainment (Harding *et al*, 2013).

“
It's helped me loads to
come up with things to
do at home.

Parent, Invergordon



Changing lives through learning: learner story



Engaging parents in their child's learning can improve the child's reading age by 6 months. (NIACE)

We welcomed a newly arrived family from Sudan to our summer Family Numeracy sessions in Inverness. This was a first encounter for three generations (grandmother, mother and son) with Scottish education and approaches to numeracy. The grandmother had no experience of formal education in Sudan, her daughter was due to begin a college course and 6-year-old grandson would start school after the holidays. We were delighted to have the family at our sessions, during which both Grandmother and Grandson learned to count 1-20 together for the first time. We used interactive games, crafts and baking to practise using numbers in everyday life. The sessions also allowed time to make some friends before beginning school. A real highlight was a fun game of *What's the Time Mr Wolf* enjoyed by all ages!

NUMERACY makes life better

Good numeracy is the best protection against unemployment, low wages and poor health.
(National Numeracy)

We use maths in every aspect of our lives: at work and in practical everyday activities at home and beyond. Good numeracy is essential to us as parents helping our children learn, as patients understanding health information, as citizens making sense of statistics and economic news. Decisions in life are so often based on numerical information; to make the best choices, we need to be numerate.

Poor numeracy can affect people's confidence and self-esteem. Testimonials from our learners show that improving numeracy directly contributes to growth in personal and social confidence.

70

learners attended our numeracy event in Dingwall this October



Some examples of the ways we use maths every day include:

- Working out how many minutes until our train
- Checking and paying bills
- Checking we've received the right change
- Working out value for money
- Setting and keeping to a budget
- Managing our diet and nutrition
- Measuring medicine doses
- Making sense of statistics and graphs in the news

Changing lives through learning: learner story

WJ initially approached Adult Learning because, in his words, he felt he “couldn’t do numbers”. His numeracy journey started with exploring the basics of adding and subtraction and, just two years on, has led him to new career prospects!

WJ, who was 19 when we first met him, had been working as a fencer in his father’s small business but was finding his numeracy skills were holding him back. His tutor helped him to feel more confident writing customer receipts and working with measurements and distances.

As the rapport with his tutor grew, so too did his confidence to reach out for help when he needed it. WJ started working on personal finance skills, something that had caused WJ a lot of difficulty and stress. It was taking a toll on his mental health but, until then, he felt unable to confide in anyone. Adult Learning were able to signpost WJ for welfare support and he slowly began to get his finances back on track with the right help and by learning skills. Adult Learning also referred him to High Life Highland Youth Work for support with skills for emotional wellbeing.

WJ’s personal confidence grew over time, his health improved, and Adult Learning supported him to plan his forward learning journey. WJ applied for a Forestry course at Inverness College and was supported by both organisations to make the transition from community-based learning to further education.

National Numeracy have found that 18 to 24-year-olds are the most maths anxious adult age group, often worsened when learners leave education feeling lacking in practical life skills such as budgeting and understanding payslips.

Maths Anxiety is defined as a negative emotional reaction to mathematics, leading to varying degrees of helplessness, panic and mental disorganisation that arises among some people when faced with a mathematical problem, either in ordinary life or in an academic situation. (Maths Anxiety Trust)

56%

of adults in Scotland have
low numeracy skills

ESOL makes life better



English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) refers to learning English as a new resident in an English-speaking country. ESOL can include areas such as survival English, functional language, specific speaking and listening skills, and sociocultural information.

Our ESOL Language Café in Caithness brings learners together from across a large rural area. Learners tell us that this group provides them with much needed social contact with their community.

Changing lives through learning: learner stories

Driving Theory is a popular learning goal among migrant and refugee communities. The opportunity to learn dedicated driving theory and English language skills through our *ESOL for Driving* courses is particularly meaningful for Afghan women because, in Afghanistan, driving licenses for women are largely prohibited. This year, seven Afghan women attended ESOL for Driving classes. One learner has already passed her theory test and is ready to embrace the practical stage of the challenge!

Community-based ESOL contextualises learning in its social context. Learners don't only develop language skills but learn about cultural customs of their subject to help them navigate life in a new place.

Learners' long-term goals include the ability to make journeys independently – something that was prohibited for women in Afghanistan – and to access services, employment, medical appointments, leisure and recreation, and family time in local green spaces. Driving provides learners with freedom, flexibility and independence but, for ESOL learners, this all starts in the ESOL classroom.





The digital divide

The digital divide includes internet connectivity, digital literacy, and access to technology.

The digital divide disproportionately affects some groups such as those on low incomes, older adults and people living in rural areas.

Digital literacy is needed increasingly in every aspect of our lives including applying for jobs, accessing healthcare, and pursuing financial assistance.

About one third of adults in Scotland do not have a level of digital literacy skills that are appropriate for the modern world. These individuals are at a higher risk of being left behind in society in ways that compromise their quality of life, and even their basic health and safety.

The digital divide perpetuates inequality and makes disparities in areas like employment, health, finance and education even more pronounced.

Promoting digital inclusion through learning

Digital inclusion means ensuring that everyone can develop their skills and confidence and can access an appropriate device and connectivity to do the things they want to do online. Digital skills learning opportunities for adults is an essential part of an inclusive society.

Changing lives through learning: learner story



32% of people in Scotland do not access the internet at all.

“

I initially came along to learn about smart phones. People take for granted that you know how to use them, and sometimes you get left out on a limb. Other people in the group were using computers. I never thought I could be good on the computer, but I'm starting to learn how to use mine. My tutor has introduced me to things I'd never done before. I had taken some photos on my holiday which my tutor helped me to save onto my computer and learned about creating an email account – now I've got two emails I can use! Coming along to these sessions has taught me a lot and provided me with social time I otherwise don't get due to living alone.

Adult Learner, Dingwall

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO

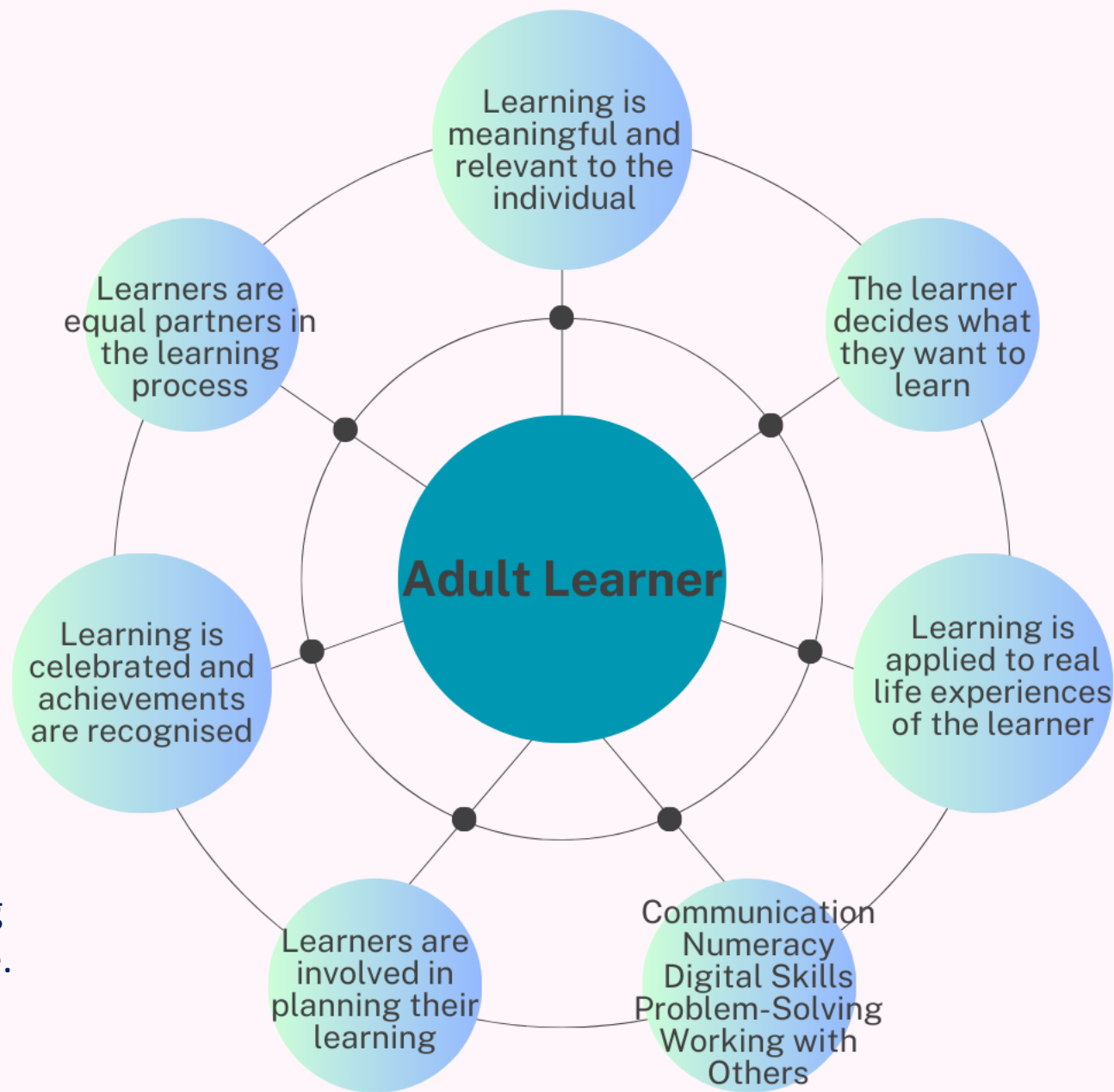
Learning is lifelong: we never stop learning new things, whatever our age.

Learning is life-wide: learning new skills has a positive impact on our whole lives by increasing knowledge and building self-confidence.

Learning is learner-centred: learners decide what they want to learn and how they want to participate.

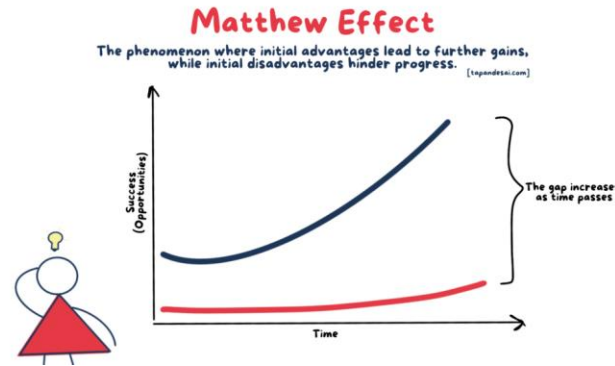
Adult Learning recognises that adults may have had negative previous experiences of learning and, therefore, the approach and the environment needs to be positive, flexible and responsive to what each individual needs.

Adult Learning acknowledges that everyone learns differently and that adults return to learning with existing experiences and skills that have value.



WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

In education as in health, we are safe when everybody is safe; we flourish when everybody flourishes. (UNESCO)



For every
£1
invested in adult
learning at SCQF level 4,
£21.60
is returned to the
economy.



The Matthew Effect:
the tendency of individuals to accrue social or economic success in proportion to their initial level of status, education, and wealth. Adult Learning represents a significant opportunity to interrupt the cycle of cumulative advantage and close the attainment and income gap.

Adult learning can have indirect **health benefits** by improving social capital and connectedness, health behaviours, skills and employment outcomes, each of which enable a healthy society. There is also some evidence that adult learning has direct positive effects for mental health.

The **right opportunity at the right time of life** can have significantly better outcomes than a one-size-fits-all approach to education. E.G. informal learning for older people can decrease social isolation, whereas family learning for parents and children can help to tackle the intergenerational transfer of disadvantage.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

You can support High Life Highland Adult Learning to continue to help adults and families to ***make life better*** by:

- ✱ telling others about what we do and why it's important for everyone, and by sharing your story of Lifelong Learning
- ✱ following us on social media and sharing our content
- ✱ donating to High Life Highland here:  
- ✱ becoming a ***highlife*** member; a part of your subscription will help to fund our work
- ✱ volunteering with us or becoming an ambassador for our work

To learn more about what HLH Adult Learning are doing in your local area, contact us:
adultlearning@highlifehighland.com



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