

## **West Lothian Council and West Lothian College**

### **Knowledge transfer helps wider community**

A strategic partnership between West Lothian Council and one of Scotland's leading colleges has helped the local authority to achieve Charter Mark accolades across every service area.

The council joined forces with West Lothian College in 2005 to provide staff with training, development and business solutions to meet its key strategic and operational objectives.

Since then, the venture has delivered a number of innovative programmes – enabling the council to address some of the main challenges in the region.

With a population of around 168,000, which is expected to rise by 20 per cent by 2020, West Lothian is home to the largest percentage of youths in Scotland.

The council serves a diverse range of communities, including towns and rural areas, in the area, which has a growing elderly population.

Its key challenges include meeting a diverse range of social housing needs, providing services to meet the needs of an ageing population and fulfilling the needs of population growth.

It's also required to promote inward investors and adhere to legislative requirements and Government strategies, such as The Joint Futures Agenda, Skills for Scotland, Learning for Work, Lifelong Learning and the Changing Lives Agenda.

In addition, it strives to meet the diverse learning needs of residents and employees and achieve the 12 challenges set out in the Single Outcome Agreement, which include ensuring that all young people make a successful transition from school into further or higher education or employment.

By synergising the skills, experience and resources of both organisations, the joint initiative has developed over the last four years to provide the council with strategic support in meeting its primary goals in housing and building services, customer services, social services and education.

A college account manager began working closely with council staff to gain an in-depth understanding of the particular challenges faced in the region.

This approach supported the development of programmes to provide enhanced levels of understanding, bespoke training courses, accessible learning opportunities and staff with the appropriate skills and allowed the council to continue its high quality service provision.

A number of initiatives have since been rolled out, including a bespoke accredited housing course, which has resulted in 350 highly qualified staff.

Others include the Personal Care Worker programme which, so far, has produced 250 qualified care workers and a new Regional Care Learning Centre within the college campus.

The unique Management Development Programme has delivered 83 qualified managers to support organisational change and apprenticeship training has been delivered to more than 100 staff to aid the build of 700 new Council houses.

The partnership has also supported the college's own operational and strategic objectives by increasing the number of learners, developing its portfolio, developing innovative approaches to learning and teaching and providing a source of industry knowledge and work placements for mainstream students.

Brian Wilson, West Lothian College, said: "Close working partnerships are a key element in the development of effective customer focused organisations and are at the heart of this venture.

"Our shared vision of a highly skilled, local workforce, trained to provide exceptional services, continues to grow and evolve between the college and council departments."

Alex Linkston, West Lothian Council, added: "The ethos of innovative learning, personal and organisational development has been embedded in the partnership, providing opportunities to integrate the latest technological advances and best practice into the service areas to continually improve the West Lothian community.

"One in five council employees and college staff have directly benefited from the learning partnership and, as this knowledge transfer continues as the partnership brings people and resources together to share knowledge and expertise, this has resulted in a thriving and sustainable learning culture in both organisations."

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