

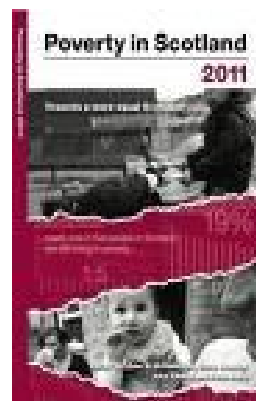
# ADULT EDUCATION TO COMBAT POVERTY - LEARNING FOR ACTION -

## AN UPSKILLING RESOURCE PACK

APRIL 2011

In October 2011, the Edinburgh Adult Education Group (EAEG) was awarded an 'Upskilling' grant by Edinburgh Community Learning and Development Partnership to run a learning for action programme for adult education workers, tutors and volunteers in the public and voluntary sectors in Edinburgh on the theme of Adult Education to Combat Poverty (see page 4). We have produced this pack from the course to share the ideas and resources we used in our programme —we hope you will find them useful!

The aim of the programme was to explore how the Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector should respond to rising poverty and financial insecurity in Edinburgh. Adult education is increasingly directed towards the aim of reducing poverty by building individuals' skills and knowledge for the labour market but the history of adult education is steeped in a much broader definition of learning that develops critical consciousness, social justice and active citizenship. Academics and practitioners from the fields of social policy and adult education were invited to present and participate in discussion to explore the potential of adult education that leads to action to combat poverty.



A new report published in March 2011 by Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland

Jane Thompson (2007)  
More Words in Edgeways

*Taking action makes you think.  
It makes you challenge what is usually taken for granted.  
Acquiring insight leads to more questions. Finding answers is the stuff of reason, investigation, communication, inspiration and social change.*

## CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP (CPAG) CALLS FOR POVERTY TO BE AN ELECTION ISSUE

CPAG in Scotland has published *Poverty in Scotland 2011* in association with the Poverty Alliance, the Open University in Scotland and Glasgow Caledonian University. The book gives up to date statistics and evidence of poverty in Scotland and examines the impact of policies and strategies. John Dickie, head of CPAG in Scotland said, 'It's vital that Scotland's politicians at every level make eradicating poverty a key election issue.' John urges political leaders to protect Scotland's families from vicious spending cuts and calls for fairer taxes, a living wage, adequate benefit levels, childcare, education, health and housing services that are genuinely accessible to all, if poverty is not to continue to shame the nation. <http://www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/>

The Scottish Government launched its Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland on 15th March 2011 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/344949/0114783>.

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## PERCEPTIONS AND DECEPTIONS ...

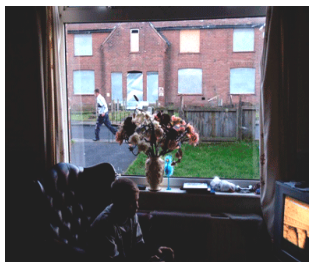


Image: Save the Children

Our programme began with an excellent, informative lecture by Adrian Sinfield, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy and Political Science University of Edinburgh. We filmed this lecture to produce a learning resource (see DVD in pack). In a learning setting, you could view the film in its entirety but you may want to consider breaking the film up into four or five chunks to allow participants to think about and discuss the content. Professor Sinfield's lecture will help you to think and learn about:

- How poverty is defined and measured
- The causes of poverty
- Poverty in the UK compared with other EU countries
- The effectiveness of various approaches in reducing poverty.

CPAG's report, *Poverty in Scotland 2011* concludes that we must challenge the practice of stigmatising people in poverty as 'a problem' or lacking in some way. Adrian's lecture refers to:

- The language politicians and policy makers use to talk about poverty
- How the language of poverty changes and shapes social policy and public services.

## THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION

'What thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty, thoughtful poor people call, with equal justice, the problem of riches.'

Richard Tawney  
(1913)

We designed a book group / seminar style session to explore:

- the impact of political agendas and policies on adult education practice and
- to discuss the relevance and potential of adult education to combat poverty.

We mailed the readings to all the participants and asked three people in the organising group to present a summary of the arguments in each paper to start discussion.

From 'Community Empowerment: critical perspectives from Scotland' edited by Akwugo Emejulu and Mae Shaw:

Kelly, Peter (2010) 'Poverty in Scotland: Three challenges for community development'.

McCabe, Lynn (2010) 'Capacity building for activism: learning from the past for the future'.

And:

Preece, Julia (2010) 'Response to Learning through Life: thematic area of poverty reduction', *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 29: 4, 475 — 485.

## WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Ian Martin, Emeritus Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh, gave a lecture that challenged us to think clearly about the kind of adult education we envisage based on our understanding of the nature of poverty and its solutions. Ian argued that education is used as the 'waste paper basket' of social policy where solutions to social problems are uncertain or where there is a 'disinclination to wrestle with them seriously'. In contrast, popular education is based on a clear analysis of the nature of inequality, exploitation and oppression, is informed by a clear political purpose and is committed to a struggle for a more just and egalitarian social order.

**We concluded that adult education to combat poverty was about:**

- **A critical citizenship education**
- **A public education about poverty**
- **The poor becoming the educators**
- **The agency of the educator to respond to the issue of poverty differently.**



Image: Inclusion Scotland

## EXPLORING POVERTY THROUGH FILM

2010 was European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The Anti Poverty Alliance made a film to raise awareness of poverty in Scotland from the perspective of three communities, students at Kirkcaldy High School, adults at Clydebank Independent Resource Centre and *Damned Rebel Bitches* at Tollcross Community Centre, Edinburgh. View the films here: <http://documentfilmfestival.org/makingadifference/>



Image: Document Film Festival

Each film runs for about twenty minutes. The young people from Kirkcaldy High School interviewed lots of people including Gordon Brown. You might like to ask your group the same questions to open up discussion:

- Do you think there is much poverty in your community?
- What is poverty?
- What causes poverty?

## REAL JOBS OR DEAD ENDS?

An inspiring Social Action Research project on Employment in North Edinburgh showed that local employment services were more interested in meeting their targets than helping their clients achieve their goals! Alison Millar, Development Worker, North Edinburgh Trust and community activists Billy Anderson and Mhairi Curran told us:

*We rarely hear about the people who are casualties of low-paid, poor quality jobs. Instead we see a steady stream of reports, newspaper articles and publicity material produced by council departments and employment services citing statistical evidence of the apparent effectiveness of their approach. In contrast, the people these services are directed at are rarely asked about their experiences of looking for work and for their opinions of the employment services that are supposed to help them.*

Their local research revealed a practice of matching people with low-paid, poor quality jobs, presented as 'stepping stones' to better jobs. Joseph Rowntree Trust research found that:

*Low-paid jobs often do not act as stepping-stones to better-paid ones; they are more likely to constitute dead ends from which there is relatively little prospect of escape.*

The project confirmed to Alison that people learn much more investigating and taking action on issues that concern them than they do attending a capacity building training programme. This research project was carried out in 2006 and is not necessarily a comment on current services.

Above all, the rich feel much less need than their predecessors to account for their wealth, whether to society, to governments or to God. Their attitudes and values are not seriously challenged by anyone. The respect now shown for wealth and money-making has been the most fundamental change in Britain over four decades.

ANTHONY SAMPSON,  
*Who Runs this Place?*

## PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH ...

This hard-hitting North Edinburgh project demonstrates that participatory action research

- Is not research about people but research for people to improve their lives
- Corrects the invisibility and distortion of the realities of poverty
- Gives people the space to question and critically assess their experiences
- Helps people to see connections between personal experiences and political issues
- Increases the number of people involved
- Works in a cycle of LOOK—THINK—ACT.

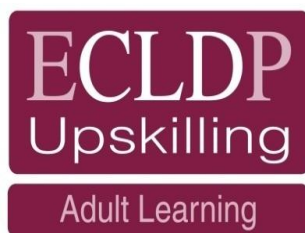


Image: BBC



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**EDINBURGH ADULT EDUCATION GROUP (EAEG)** is a Voluntary Sector and City of Edinburgh Council partnership of learners and adult educators working together to improve the quality, range and status of learner-centred adult education in the City of Edinburgh. Its purpose is:

- To be a focus for knowledge and expertise
- To be a vehicle for consultation, monitoring and research
- To raise the profile of adult education
- To influence, initiate and develop adult education policy locally and nationally
- To undertake joint initiatives including training and conferences.

#### **Membership is open to -**

- Adult learners/representatives from learner-led organisations
- Community based voluntary organisations delivering adult education in Edinburgh
- City-wide and national voluntary organisations delivering adult education in Edinburgh
- City-wide umbrella organisations concerned with adult education developments and delivery in Edinburgh
- Community Learning and Development staff from the City of Edinburgh Council Children and Families Department.
- Other Council and Voluntary Sector services engaged in the development and delivery of adult education provision in the City.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME**

The Scottish Government committed funding for the Upskilling of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) workforce across Scotland for the period 2009-12. In 2010, Edinburgh Community Learning and Development Partnership asked EAEG to assist the Partnership to engage the CLD adult education sector in Edinburgh to develop and deliver staff development and training programmes during 2010 /12.

EAEG used its annual staff gathering in June 2010 to identify training priorities for the adult education sector and to develop programme proposals. The idea for this programme came from that debate and EAEG agreed to develop a proposal for funding from the Upskilling budget administered by Edinburgh Community Learning and Development Partnership. An organising group of EAEG members worked with freelance adult educator / community development worker Iyaah Warren to organise, publicise, administer and deliver the programme.

The programme ran over five twilight session and one Saturday morning session between November 2010 and January 2011. A combination of adult education practitioners and students from the statutory, voluntary and higher education sector attended these sessions.

#### **A participant said ...**

*It's important that practitioners have the opportunity to meet, discuss and share ideas at events like these. It strengthens our shared sense of purpose and our knowledge about how we can respond to poverty and inequality.*