

ADULT EDUCATION – REPRESENTATIONS FROM SERVICE USERS

Emails sent directly to scrutiny

From: Jane Booth
Sent: 01 March 2011 23:10
To: Timbrell, Julie
Subject: Submission to scrutiny committee

Dear Julie

I have attended various art classes at Thomas Calton for the past 5 years. This term when I went to enrol I was told that because I was not a unique learner I was required to pay double - a jump from £70 a term to £165. I couldn't afford it and so have had to stop. That art class was the one little bit of time I had in the week when I could learn something new and socialise with a wide range of people, all coming together for the simple purpose of expressing themselves through making something. I feel that something very important has gone in my life. I could enrol in Lambeth or Lewisham or City Lit or Morley - they all provide cheaper comparable courses with far better facilities and, more importantly, with a far more welcoming atmosphere. But I want to study near where I live, where I meet people who live near me in a centre that wants me to use it, not tries every way it can to keep me from enrolling - which other establishment refuses to enrol online, only accepts cheques or cash and requires a passport or driver's licence before you can enrol?

I have two friends who are concessionary rated who were devastated to find that when they too came to enrol this term their fee had gone up from £37 to £167. They have been unable to return, their classes have closed and one is suffering from depression. In times of recession and increasing unemployment, local authorities should be providing opportunities for people to increase their skills, employability and confidence, not taking these vital services away. This fee increases make no sense. My class has closed because no-one could afford to go back and the class was not adequately advertised to get new members to join. The fewer classes there are taking place in the building, the less money is generated and the running costs are spread amongst the few remaining classes, making them more expensive to run.

Southwark needs adult education now more than ever. What happened to Life Long Learning? Or was it just another slogan? You can't learn a meaningful skill in just one term. It doesn't work. You need time to develop a skill. It just indicates that the service is run for the benefit the funders targets, not for the people it is supposed to serve.

Please save our service so we can get back to learning.

Jane Booth

From: Joan Byrne
Sent: 02 March 2011 17:30
To: Timbrell, Julie
Subject: adult classes

Dear Ms Timbrell:

My art class is an absolute highlight. Every single pupil enjoys it. All are growing in abilities, confidence, etc. Please do not put unnecessary hurdles in the way of this happening. If a person qualifies for a reduced-fee for one term, that person cannot be expected to pay triple the fee for the next term. A course is for one academic year, usually. Southwark needs its artists and healthy citizens. Do not make it so difficult and ridiculously bureaucratic, with the result that courses will close.

Thank you,

Joan

www.joanbyrnesnaps.blogspot.com

A selection of email representations sent to Veronica Ward and Peter John from adult learners

Kali Oliver to peter.john
details Feb 10

Dear Peter

Please could you let me know what action you have taken further to your promise made in the council chamber to act urgently to reduce fees back to a sensible level and save classes from closing? I am very disappointed that this issue is still ongoing and not yet resolved. FYI - I did a course last term at the centre but could not afford the fee hike this term.

Kali Oliver

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

clare chester to Veronica
Jan 30

Dear Veronica

I attended the drawing and painting evening classes last year with Rebecca Allen as teacher.

I was very sad to see this course finish and was told this was because there was a lack of funding.

I heard last week that Councilors are considering re-introducing some of the courses and am hoping one of these will be the evening art course. In fact there are a number of us who previously attended this course who are hoping it will be re-introduced.

If you have any influence at all I am asking for this course to be funded due to the interest of individuals who are keen to attend again and further their skills.

Yours Sincerely
Clare Chester

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

Thu, Feb 3, 2011 at 1:07 PM, Jan Dryden wrote:

Dear Veronica,

Further to my previous letter where I expressed my outrage at the changes in the criteria for adult education classes at the Thomas Carlton Centre I would like to let you know the effect these are already making for Southwark residents. A number of people at the art class I attended at Dulwich have been unable to register for the class this term because of the ludicrous 8 new learner rule and/or because the full price is now payable £165 instead of the concessionary fee of £45. This has directly affected older members of the community for whom this class was a highlight of their week.

I understand the council gave a sympathetic response to the deputation at the council meeting last week and I urge you to take this forward and support the demands to change these discriminatory and damaging rules before Adult Education is dessimated.

Yours sincerely,
Jan Dryden

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

Tue, Feb 1, 2011 at 1:20 PM, Cynthia Balfour wrote:

I currently attend a knitting class on Mondays at the Thomas Calton centre which is under threat of closure. There are 6 people in this class, 4 of which have never attended the centre before. With the threats of closure looming, I feel that this would be a harsh decision to make when all of us are thoroughly enjoying this craft class.

The centre is currently been renovated and still with all the noise and dust each week we make a conscious effort to attend. The centre is barely occupied as a result of other courses having to close and I feel that Southwark Adult Education should do whatever they can to keep their current learners.

I am one of 3 who live outside the borough and would be extremely disappointed if this class were not able to continue. Furthermore, I would be reluctant to attend any further courses if the future of adult education is to increase prices and cut courses.

Please save our course from closing.

Regards,
Cynthia Balfour

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

Dear Veronica,
Re Thursday afternoon ceramic workshop at Thomas Carlton 1.30--3.30 has not started as 5 new learners are required to start the course. This course is designed for experienced students, there being no teacher provided, This obviously saves the council money as the fees are the same as for the courses with tutors. (the ceramic technician works in the class room at the same time for health and safety reasons.)

having signed up for this course in good faith I am very disappointed that not is running
yours Trevor Dolan.

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

Dear Veronica Ward
Thank you your support at the Council meeting. I was the one who read the statement. I am a sculptor and have studied wood carving at Thomas Carlton Centre for 18 months with Mathalie Da Silva who was also in our deputation, The 2 Friday woodcarving classes have close due to lack of numbers but the Thursday evening class is just surviving, The Friday morning class was a lively class but those on benefits have left due to the increase of fees. 2 members had children who also used the crèche. so there is double loss for them. The sculpture that I made in the class I am entering for the V@A museum competition "Inspired by the V@A.I have stated that it was made through the

Thomas Calton Centre so if I am successful the centre will get some publicity which it desperately needs.

Best wishes
Dorothy Love

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

hi veronica

thank you for looking into this matter.

i did the wednesday evening art class with rebecca allen before christmas.

i initially wanted to do the tuesday morning art class but there were not enough people. the tuesday morning course would have been ideal for me so that i could put my one year old boy in the creche at the thomas carlton centre. i had my creche place all booked and my little boy had a settling in session, so we were all ready to start. but then the course had to be cancelled due to the council's almost complete failure to advertise the course and their rule that the course tutors were not allowed to advertise either.

in addition, i was not able to get any info on what courses were due to run until approx 2 weeks before the autumn 2010 term started. this was very poorly organised, as if the council wanted the adult learning centre to fail.

this term i cannot afford the wednesday evening art class repeat fee. instead i am attending another art class at dulwich picture gallery which, as always, is fully subscribed with 14 people and they have had to turn a few people away (as is usually the case). how come dulwich picture gallery can run a success adult education programme but the council can't? i think the answer is that d.p gallery advertise and are committed to providing the courses they know people want to do. however, for people like me with young babies and children, places like d.p gallery cannot provide a creche.

i had been hoping that i would be able to do a variety of courses at the thomas carlton centre, eg the garden sculpture course and the upholstring courses look very interesting. but the repeat fees are too expensive.

Thanks
kali

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Dear Veronica

I have been an Adult Learner with Southwark for 5 years, learning Ceramics. I attended the purpose built centre at Peckham Rye School, and helped fight for its survival when the centre was demolished and the Upholstery, Woodwork and Ceramics departments were under threat of being scrapped.

As you know, they were saved at greatly reduced capacity and reinstated at Thomas Calton.

We are now in a situation where the fees have jumped so high in one go, along with the concessions being scrapped and students wishing to return being charged a higher rate, that the service will only be able to be used by the rich and well-off in Southwark.

More seriously, the new funding criteria for running courses is that each term must start with 8 new names on the register, before any others can enrol. This means that students who started a course and wish to continue their studies/learning are unable to do so unless 8 new students are found first. This raises several points:

- a) where are these 8 new recruits each term coming from?
- b) Why are keen, existing students effectively barred from continuing ?
- c) what quality of course is being offered that only requires 10 lessons to achieve?
- d) practical subjects, by their very nature, require practice of each new skill learned

[in the case of the Arts, famous artists spend their life-time striving]

- e) realistically, it is not viable to find 8 new students every time a new term starts

In reality, what this actually means is that this criteria successfully and decisively KILLS the courses.

Evidence: The recent Portrait Sculpture course, which is always very popular, with a highly qualified and inspirational tutor, has been scrapped due to this new criteria. There was a queue of students who would loved to have attended but could not. There was 1 new recruit and lesson One was inspected by an Ofsted Inspector, giving the impression that there was no interest in this class. How appalling for the Arts and for how Southwark presents its Adult Learning provision.

Please will you explain this devastating state of affairs and respond to points a-e.

Regards
Jenny Yeo