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Skill-creating project supports thousands

A major adult education project involving Portsmouth Housing Association (PHA) has helped thousands of people in the south east gain new skills and confidence.

PHA's community regeneration team (CREATE) supported the training of around 200 staff and volunteers from voluntary and community (VC) organisations across the region to increase awareness about the government-backed Skills for Life drive.

The 200 workers were then able to identify their clients' literacy and numeracy needs and provide appropriate training and support.

The £1million-plus project, funded by the European Social Fund and Learndirect, was a two-year initiative providing a range of accredited courses for staff from VC organisations. PHA worked with other agencies on the VC Skills project to help deliver courses ranging from awareness raising to literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages.

PHA's regional partners included FE Sussex, the Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership Ltd and the Fareham-based Essential Skills Support Unit. Over the project's lifetime, staff and volunteers from 50 community and voluntary organisations were supported.

PHA, Portsmouth Foyer and the Roberts Centre, Portsmouth, all benefited from training. Hampshire Autistic Society, Portsmouth Art and Community Service, the Prince's Trust and Surrey Community Action were among other agencies helped.

CREATE manager Geoff Phillpotts said: "We are proud to have been associated with a project that has helped raise awareness across so many different organisations and provide practical help and support. We hope funding will be found to enable more work to support voluntary and community organisations identify and help people with poor literacy and numeracy in the future."

One person helped by the project, Mark, from Fareham, Hampshire, said: “I gained a lot more knowledge. The person who comes in with an interest to learn may well have had horrible previous learning experiences. Maybe the person has just come from the park after a night sleeping on a bench – I should know because four years ago I was that person.”

Project highlights included a PHA event where John Bird, founder of the Big Issue, spoke about his own experiences of making the personal journey to develop his own skills and go on to help homeless people through founding the magazine.



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Notes to Editors

First Wessex Housing Group manages around 17,000 affordable homes primarily in Hampshire and with some activity in Surrey.

The group comprises Atlantic Housing Limited, First Atlantic Housing, Pavilion Housing Association, Portsmouth Housing Association, Fernhill Care Limited and Wessex Property Limited.

Portsmouth Housing Association: provides homes in Portsmouth, Fareham, Gosport and Havant. It also provides a wide range of community regeneration services across South East Hampshire.