

## **Rothsay Education Centre (Bedford) Ltd Annual Report 2016-17**

### **Introduction**

The principal aim of the Rothsay Education Centre is specifically:

*to advance the education mainly of persons over 50, and provide facilities for recreation and leisure with the aim of improving mental and physical wellbeing and thus the quality of their lives.*

To achieve this the Centre provides a wide range of educational and recreational courses aimed at the over 50s. In addition, the Centre also offers a number of opportunities for educational visits, holidays and free advisory sessions. With an on-site restaurant, the Centre provides activities and companionship from 9am to 4.30 pm five days a week, some weekends, and during the Summer holiday. Weekend and summer courses are open to over 18s. Alongside its core activities at 6 Rothsay Gardens, the Centre also works in partnership with others to help deliver a variety of educational programmes for the wider community in Bedford and the surrounding area.

Daytime courses continue to be aimed at over 50s, with 1,900 enrolments. Thirty-seven courses over six weekends were offered for anyone over the age of 18. The Centre also offered Short Summer Courses which attracted 256 enrolments. During 2016-17 the Centre increased the number of courses offered to 140 daytime courses covering a wide range of subjects. The majority being academic non-vocational as befitting the average age of the students (71). The range of educational backgrounds was wide with some students returning to learning for the first time since leaving formal education and others continuing a tradition of life-long learning. The Centre offered a wide range of course lengths and costs to suit all incomes and a diverse spectrum of subjects covering everything from art to science, physical activity and wellbeing as well as languages and music. The thriving Rambling Group has over 120 members.

The Centre continues to expand with new courses offered at different times and the formation of partnerships with other educational providers such as the University of Bedfordshire.

In 2013 the REC published its ten-year Business Plan with targets to be achieved over a five-year period. Much of what the Centre provides is reflected in the Business Plan Action Plan, a report of which is included here.

The Academic and Financial year for the REC runs from 1 September 2016 to 31 August 2017. However, for the purpose of this report and accounting, summer courses from July to August 2016 are included within the 2016-17 course brochure and this annual report.

### **1. Courses 2016 -17**

Continuing the success of previous years, the Centre had 2,502 course enrolments over 208 courses. Membership has remained more or less the same at 1,055, compared to 1,045 members in 2015-16.

To cover the increase in staff, tutor and administrative costs course fees were increased as follows: 33-week course from £152 to £157; 30-week course £138 to £143 and 10-week courses £48 to £50 and £58 to £60. The membership cost remained the same at £39.

### **1.1 Summer Thursday Short Courses**

Since 2014 the REC has offered a number of pre-bookable talks and short courses, which attracted in 2016 88 enrolments with a £334 surplus. Two courses were cancelled due to lack of numbers and tutor illness (*Vertebrates*, and *Writing Poems*). The remaining courses covered a diverse range of subjects such as *Lucian Freud*, *Ancient Greek*, *DNA*, *Jane Austen*, *Garden Wildlife*, and *Drawing Cats & Dogs*.

### **1.2 August Short Courses**

For the sixth year the REC offered three-day August Short Courses with 168 enrolments over 18 courses with a £1,972 surplus. *Portraits*, and *Life Drawing* were fully booked, while *Saki*, and *Shakespeare* were cancelled due to insufficient interest.

### **1.3 Weekend Courses**

Enrolments for weekend courses in 2016-17 were lower than in previous years, with 256 enrolments. Of the 37 courses offered 6 were cancelled either by the tutor or due to insufficient numbers such as *Paint your own Bag*, *Photography*, *Man & Birds*, *Art of the Diary*, and *Latin*. The remaining courses covered diverse subjects such as *How we stay alive*; *Felt-making*; *Mindfulness*; *Family History*, and *Bridges & Tunnels*. Additional courses, not advertised in the brochure included *Healthy Ageing* on 15 October 2016.

### **1.4 Weekday Daytime Courses**

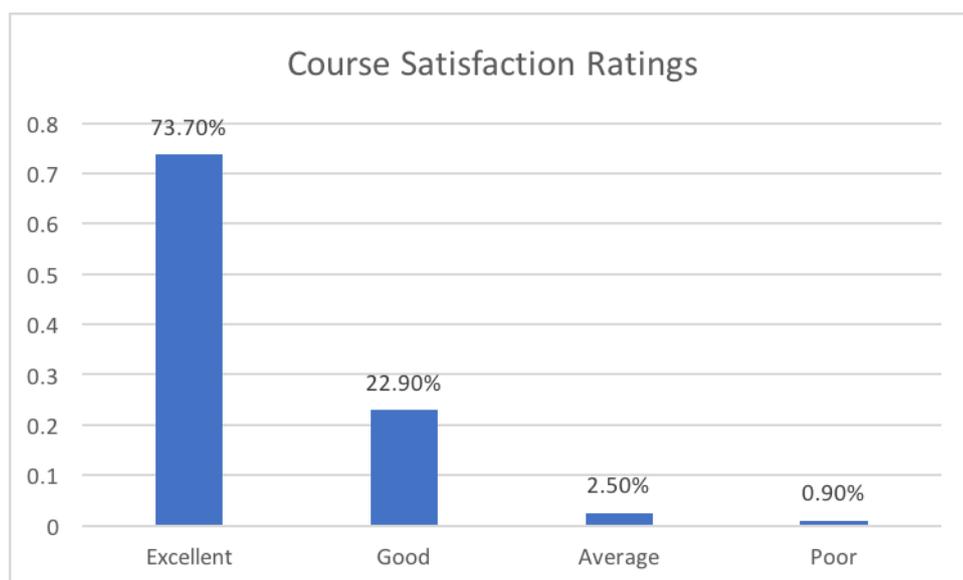
Enrolments for daytime courses remained the same with 1,996 and 1,990 on the previous year. The REC offered the usual full range of courses from Archaeology to Tai Chi. Of the 140 courses offered, 12 were cancelled due to low numbers (*Lip Reading*, *German Improvers*, *Table Tennis*, *Spanish Lower Intermediate*, *Beginners Latin*, *DH Lawrence*, *Animal Behaviour*, *Introduction to Computers*, *Iris Murdoch*, *Drugs & Literature*, *Computer Programming*, and *Romeo & Juliet*) and 42 were full. Extra courses that did not appear in the 2016-17 brochure included *iPad for Beginners*, *Creating Silver Jewellery*, *Absolute Beginners' Italian*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *Botanical Illustration*, *History of Immigration to Bedford*, *Beginners' Bridge*, *George Orwell*, *RS Thomas*, and *Introduction to Computers* courses.

### **1.5 Lunchtime Courses**

The Centre continued to offer a number of lunchtime courses such as *Beginners' Bridge*, *iPad for Beginners*, *Spanish Beginners+*, *German Beginners+*, *Absolute Beginners' Italian*, *Italian Beginners+*, *French Beginners+*, *Latin Intermediate*, *Beginners' Botanical Illustration* attracting 190 enrolments.

### **1.6 Course Feedback Analysis**

45% of students completed course feedback sheets, which include comments and course ratings as indicated below:



**Student comments:**

*The Centre not only offers stimulating and educative learning opportunities to keep the brain going, it also fulfils a social and supportive function. To meet other 'minds' and chat over coffee and lunch is so enjoyable and the trips and holidays are a real boon for me with limited mobility and low energy levels. Loneliness is a real problem amongst my age group and many of us live alone and/or bear caring commitments to parents, partners and children. To have an opportunity to 'escape' from these 'duties' and to have somewhere to go where I can be myself means so much.*

*A wonderful community asset; a lifeline for me.*

*In the past, I have suffered from clinical depression. My wellbeing has been greatly helped by stimulation of the wide and varied courses and the interaction with many like-minded people at the REC.*

*My main interest is the social contact.*

*It has been a godsend to me in last 6 years. Suddenly alone after 50 years, had my friend not told me about REC I'm not sure what I would have become!*

*Superb in every way.*

**1.7 Courses in Partnership with Others**

In continuation of the partnership with the **University of Bedfordshire** the REC hosted an 8-week course on Criminology.

**Bedford Language Centre (BLC)** is run by Elena Ramos who is a tutor at the REC. The REC hired the Centre to BLC at a concessionary rate to provide evening language classes.

**David Lewry Art Classes** are run by David Lewry who is a tutor at the REC. The REC hired the Centre to David at a concessionary rate to provide evening art classes.

The REC organised a number of courses for **BCHA (Charterhouse)** for its residents. These included a Reminiscence course and a series of general studies talks.

### **1.8 Lunchtime Talks**

As part of the extra-curricular activities provided for its members, the REC staged a number of lunchtime talks, which included Fall & Fractures, Sight Concern, and Age UK Warmer Homes.

## **2. Social Activities**

While the REC's main remit is to provide educational opportunities for over 50s, it also offers recreational activities, most of which have an educational component or support courses.

### **2.1 Visits**

In 2016-17 the Centre organised 13 outings for its members to the Hockney exhibition x 3; Greenwich; Hampstead & Christmas Lights; Caravaggio exhibition; Russia exhibition; Dickens Walking Tour; Street Art Tour; Hampton Court Flower Show; Flag Fen & Nene Valley Railway, Hidcote & Kiftsgate Gardens; and Diana & Balenciaga exhibitions, all of which made a surplus of £2,828.48.

Participants' feedback rated the visits as Good Value (75%) with a Good Choice (83%) and a Good Quantity (80%).

In addition to REC organised visits, many tutors also provided visits as part of their courses, for instance to museums or gardens.

### **2.2 Holiday**

The REC organises an annual holiday to a British destination every year. In 2016-17 the REC went to Kent with 32 students in April 2017. The feedback showed 100% thought the REC staff very helpful, 76% the holiday was good value, and 100% would recommend it to others. The REC made a surplus of £1,773.

### **2.3 Events and Fundraising**

The REC Social Events are designed for our members to provide recreational opportunities and provide extra funds for the REC development fund. Events organised in 2016-17 included Quiz Nights (£748), Christmas Hamper (£632), 200 Club (£978), and Rotary Swimathon (£476).

## **3. Harpur Trust Bursary Scheme**

The REC introduced a Bursary Scheme supported by the Harpur Trust from September 2014. The scheme, available for three years, offered up to 10 bursaries per year, per person, for either a year-long course, or three one-term courses, up to the value of £174. Applicants had to be Bedford Borough residents, able to provide evidence of being in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee and pay the REC annual membership. In 2016-17, the last year of the Bursary Awards, the REC offered 3 bursaries. A number of Bursary students had withdrawn owing to ill health, or had their Pension Credit Guarantee withdrawn.

## **4. Donations and Bequests**

The REC received £545 in bequests from former students in 2016-17, £715 in various covenants, and £1,078 in donations.

## 5. **Publicity**

The REC publishes the annual course brochure every spring, which is the main form of paid publicity. The brochures are distributed to a number of organisations, shops and cafes around Bedford and the surrounding villages.

In addition, the REC appeared in the following publications both as editorial and paid advertising such as *Trust News* – the Bedford Hospital’s magazine for staff & patients Summer 2017, *Renhold Village Magazine*, and *Bedford Bulletin*. It appeared on a number of websites such as Harpur Trust; Bedford Today; Access Bedford, and Get into Bedford. The REC has its own Facebook page and Twitter account with 160 followers including Castle Quarter; Age UK Bedfordshire; Bedford Network; Carepal UK; 50plusinfobus; Heart Four Counties radio; Shefford and Local; Kempston tweets; Volunteer Centre; Health Watch Central Beds; Manners PR; Community Life Magazine; Harpur Trust; Dave the Mayor; Creative Bedfordshire; Bedford Clanger, Love Bedford, and We are Bedford.

There was also considerable media coverage of the Planning application in December 2016, although most of the reporting was incorrect.

## 6. **Staff and Tutors**

In 2016-17 the REC had five administrative staff: Centre Manager, Office Manager, Administrative Assistant (Technical), Administrative Assistant (Trips), and Assistant to Centre Manager/Publicity & Marketing. All staff are part-time, which equated to 2.4 full-time equivalent.

In 2016-17 the REC employed 10 tutors and 57 self-employed contracted tutors. All staff are part-time, which equated to 4,400 teaching hours.

In 2016-17 the REC staff received a 1-2.5% pay increase in line with local authority pay awards. The standard rate tutors were awarded 2% increase and the higher rate tutors, 1%.

### 6.1 **Training**

The following training courses were undertaken by Directors’ and staff: Business Planning; Fire Marshalling; Emergency Aider; Counselling Introduction, and Vulnerable Adults Awareness.

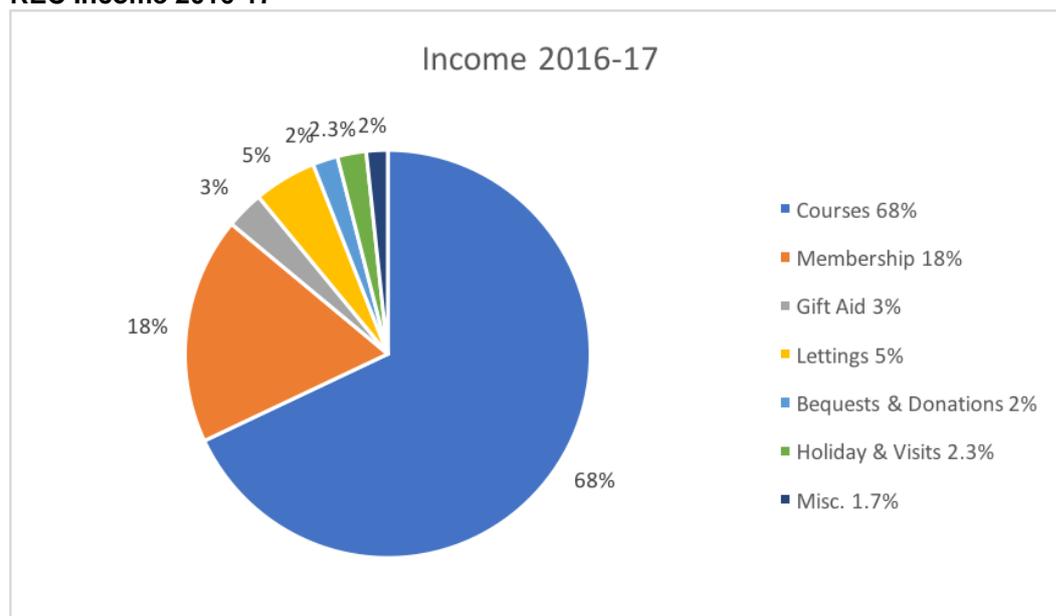
## 7. **Catering**

The REC contracts out catering to Cater for Occasions who provide refreshments and cooked lunches when the Centre is open for courses. The concession is charged at £6,000 p.a.

## 8. **Centre Hire**

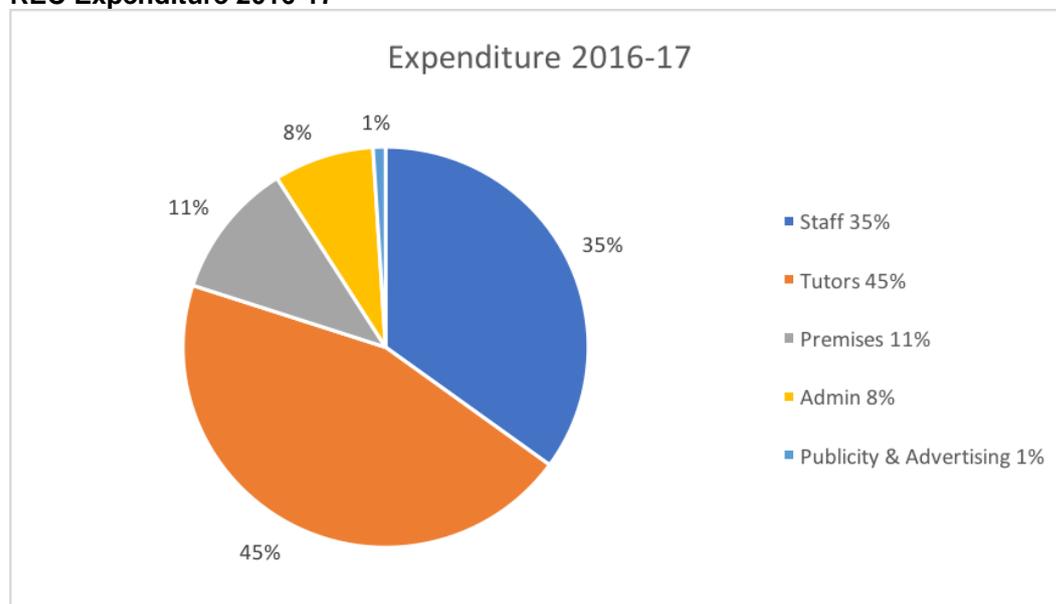
In 2016-17 the REC let the premises to various community groups on a regular basis and private lettings to students for parties. This raised £5,305.

**REC Income 2016-17**



<b>Income</b>	
Course fees	150,977
Membership	40,962
Gift Aid	7,179
Catering Letting	6,000
Other Lettings	5,305
Bequests, Donations, & Fundraising	5,239
Holiday & Visits - net	5,104
Misc.	1,382
<b>Total</b>	<b>222,148</b>

**REC Expenditure 2016-17**



<b>Expenditure</b>	
Tutors (incl. educational materials)	86,800
Staff (pay, NI, pension, training, payroll)	68,353
Premises (incl. hall hire)	22,499
Administration	15,142
Publicity & Advertising	2,022
<b>Total</b>	<b>194,816</b>

Surplus transferred to holding account for Development Fund.

### Results against Business Action Plan 2013-18

	Date	Costs	Staff lead	Comments
<b>2016</b>  To provide IT area within Centre to enable IT access for all students for e-learning and course bookings.	From January 2016	Staff time, IT expertise, additional computer cost c. £300	Centre Manager/ Office Manager	Computer provided January 2013. Removed 2017 owing to lack of use as more students have hand-held devices.
<b>2017</b>  Review Centre Hire to increase income from £3,000 to £4,000 p.a.	By August 2017	Staff & energy costs	Centre Manager/ Office Manager	Increased from £2,180 in 2014-15 to £5,305 in 2016-17. However, the Bedford Language Centre, one of the most frequent hirers moved to new premises in Sept 2017 due to lack of parking at REC.