

Rothsay Education Centre (Bedford) Ltd Annual Report 2015-16

Introduction

The Rothsay Education Centre, Bedford (REC) is a charity whose objectives are to advance the education of those who have retired or who are about to retire from full-time employment and to provide facilities for recreation and leisure time with the object of improving conditions of life.

The REC had another successful year with its largest ever course enrolments. 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.

As part of its continuous improvement, the REC was awarded Level 1 Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO) by the Charities Evaluation Services in June 2016.

One of the most significant issues to arise in the past few years concerned the lease of 6 Rothsay Gardens, Bedford, the current home of the REC. In November 2015 the REC purchased a 125-year lease for the building from the Bedford Borough Council for £275,000.

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 2015 to 31 August 2016. However, for the purpose of this report and accounting, summer courses from July to August 2015 are included within the 2015-16 course brochure and this annual report.

1. Courses 2015 -16

Continuing the success of previous years, the Centre had a record number of bookings with 2,659 course enrolments over 191 courses, compared to 2,535 courses enrolments and 181 courses in 2014-15. Membership has remained more or less the same at 1,045, compared to 1,064 members in 2014-15, although for the past 3 years' day memberships have declined while term memberships have remained static. This consisted of 978 (981 in 2014-15) yearly or term memberships and 67 (83 in 2014-15) day members. Of 1,045 members, 21% were new members.

To cover the increase in staff, tutor and administrative costs course fees were increased as follows: 33 week course from £135 to £152; 30 week course £123 to £138 and 10 week courses £45 to £48 and £54 to £58. The membership was raised from £38 to £39 to cover increases in building, administration and staffing costs.

1.1 Summer Thursday Short Courses

Since 2014 the REC has offered a number of pre-bookable talks and short courses, which attracted in 2015 142 enrolments (70% course take-up) with a £1,010 surplus. Some courses such as *Absolute Beginners Guide to Watercolours* were fully booked while others such as *R S Thomas* and *French Reading Group* were cancelled due to lack of numbers. The remaining

courses covered a diverse range of subjects such as Latin, Einstein, The Brontës, German, DNA, Psychology and Existentialism.

1.2 August Short Courses

For the fifth year the REC offered three-day August Short Courses with 181 enrolments over 18 courses (85% course take-up) with a £1,934 surplus. The following courses were fully booked, *Drawing Plants, Portraits, Film Studies*, and *Life Drawing*, while *Philosophy of Beauty* and *Summer Poetry* were cancelled due to insufficient interest.

1.3 Weekend Courses

Enrolments for weekend courses in 2015-16 were lower than in previous years, there were 325 enrolments over 6 weekends, and of the 31 courses offered 6 were cancelled either by the tutor or due to insufficient numbers such as *Birds, Saki, Breathing, The Good Soldier, Coloured Pencils*, and the *Workhouse*. The remaining courses covered diverse subjects such as *The Gardens of Versailles, Dylan Thomas, Toxicology, Ancient Greek and Psychology*. Additional courses, not advertised in the brochure included *Healthy Ageing and Living* on 16 April 2016.

1.4 Weekday Daytime Courses

Enrolments for daytime courses increased from 1,841 to 1,996 on the previous year. The REC offered the usual full range of courses from Archaeology to Tai Chi, with the addition of lunchtime beginners' courses. Of the 121 courses offered, 3 were cancelled due to low numbers (*Lip Reading, Film Noir, and Portraits of Place*) and 42 were full with an 88% course take-up overall. Extra courses that did not appear in the 2015-16 brochure included *Beginners' Bridge, Migration, Criminology, Beginners' Latin, Journalism, Democracy*, a second *Masterpiece VI* to accommodate the waiting list, a second 5-week Printmaking course to accommodate the waiting list. The *European Union* course included a debate on the 2016 Referendum on membership of the EU, between Richard Fuller MP and REC student Charles Baily, held at the Centre on 27 May and chaired by Steve Lowe.

1.5 Twilight Courses

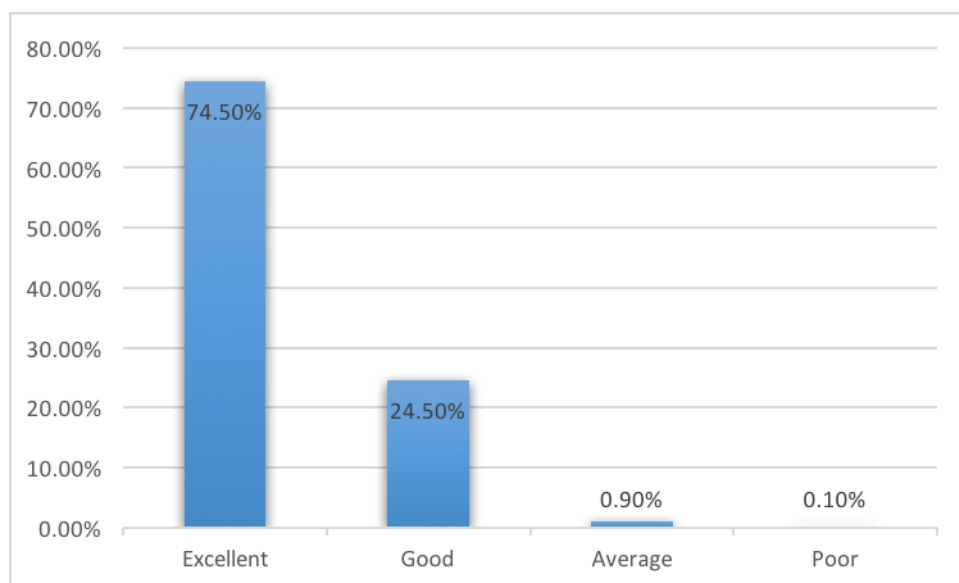
An Ancient Greek Twilight course was offered in the Spring term, which attracted 12 enrolments.

1.6 Lunchtime Courses

Another new venture in 2015-16 was the introduction of one-hour lunchtime courses. These included beginners' courses in subjects such as *Bridge, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish*. The courses attracted a total of 171 enrolments with *Bridge, Italian, Latin and Spanish* fully booked all year.

1.7 Course Feedback Analysis

60% of students completed course feedback sheets, which include comments and course ratings as indicated below. This is an improvement of last year's student feedback, which evaluated Excellent courses as 73.3%, Good at 25.3%, Average 0.90% and Poor 0.50%



Student comments:

- *Another interesting and stimulating term. Very friendly class as usual, tutor takes great care to include all opinions, and chooses a good variety of subjects.*
- *An absolutely delightful course. Very enjoyable and instructive.*
- *Can't believe how much I've learnt in a year!*
- *Very mind stretching and inspired one to find out more.*
- *The Tutor provided a very good reason for getting out of bed! I shall miss his class immensely over the summer break. Roll on September!*
- *All round brilliant – and fun!*
- *A lovely experience – knowledgeable, witty – a joy to attend.*
- *Very interesting and friendly course.*
- *This was one of the very best Saturday Study Days at the REC I have ever attended!*
- *Inspiring – encouraging and enabling further personal research – enlightening, humorous and engaging.*

1.8 Courses in Partnership with Others

In continuation of the partnership with the University of Bedfordshire the REC hosted a 9-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.

From January 2016 the REC has been organising courses for **BCHA (Charterhouse)** for its residents. These included a Reminiscence course and a series of General Studies talks.

1.9 Lunchtime Talks

As part of the extra-curricula activities provided for its members, the REC staged a number of lunchtime talks, which included Beanstalk: Reading in Schools; Financial Planning; How to Reduce Energy Costs; Fall & Fractures and Wills & Power of Attorney.

2. Student News

In June 2016 REC Latin students sat G.C.S.E. Latin Literature at Bedford Modern School. 100% achieved A*-C grades. It is a remarkable achievement by all the students and their tutor, Jenny Morris.

3. 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.

3.1 Visits

In 2015-16 the Centre organised 15 outings for its members to the Bedford Observatory; *Egypt: Faith after the Pharaohs* exhibition at the British Museum; *Goya* at the National Gallery; Lincoln Christmas Market; Shoes exhibition at the V&A, Suffolk Coast Tour, Arts & Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds; *Illegal London* Tour; *Monet to Matisse* exhibition at the Royal Academy; *Botticelli* and *Undressed* exhibitions at the V&A; a Street Art Tour of Shoreditch; a Boat Trip with talk on the Great Ouse; a tour of Kent; a visit to Kew Gardens and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Participants' feedback rated the visits as Good Value (90%) with a Good Choice (93%) and a Good Quantity (89%). The total surplus provided by visits was £2,761.

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

3.2 Holiday

The REC organises an annual holiday to a British destination every year. In 2015-16 the REC went to Harrogate and Yorkshire with 30 students in April 2016. The feedback showed 96% thought the REC staff very helpful and 83% the holiday was good value. The REC made a surplus of £1,671.

3.3 Events

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 2015-16 included the following events and made the stated surplus for the Centre:

Plant week £521.30; Hamper Raffle £696.00; Quiz night £383.40; 200 Club £972. Total surplus for year: £2,572.

The annual Summer Barbeque was cancelled for the second consecutive year due to insufficient tickets sales.

4. Harpur Trust Bursary Scheme

The REC introduced a Bursary Scheme supported by the Harpur Trust from September 2014. The scheme, available for three years, offers 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 must be Bedford Borough residents, able to provide evidence of being in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee and pay the REC annual membership. In 2015-16, the REC offered 7 bursaries.

5. Donations and Bequests

The REC received £23,037 in bequests in 2015-16, £915 in various covenants, £542 from the Rotary Swimathon, and £1,540 in donations.

6. 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. The Brochure and Course Booking is also available at the REC website.

The REC Facebook page and Twitter account has 247 followers including Castle Quarter, Age UK Bedfordshire, Bedford Network; Access Ambassadors; CVS Bedfordshire; Bedford Samaritans; University of Bedfordshire; What's On Beds; Knuston Hall; Colworth Park; OVL Magazine; Bedford Creative Arts; The Higgins; The Geffrye Museum; The British Museum; 50plusinfobus; Heart Four Counties radio; Community Life Magazine; In and around Bedford; Harpur Trust; Dave the Mayor; Creative Bedfordshire; Bedford Clanger, Love Bedford and We are Bedford.

In addition, the REC appeared in the following publications both as editorial: *Bedford Castle Quarter*, *Voice* (Bedfordshire Age UK) and *Bedford Bulletin*. It also appeared on a number of websites such as Harpur Trust; Bedford Hospital, Access Bedford, Get into Bedford, Blunham Parish Council, Midland Road Residents Association and Castle Residents Association.

7. Staff and Tutors

In 2015-16 the REC had five administrative staff: Centre Manager, Office Manager, Administrative Assistant (Technical), Administrative Assistant (Events), and Assistant to Centre Manager/Publicity & Marketing. All staff are part-time, which equated to 2.3 full-time equivalent.

In 2015-16 the REC employed 12 tutors and 41 self-employed contracted tutors. All staff are part-time, which equated to 4,200 teaching hours.

In 2015-16 the REC staff received a 2% pay increase in line with local authority pay awards. The standard rate tutors were awarded 2% increase and the higher rate tutors, 1.5%.

8. Training

Staff Caroline Bacon, Kate Gale and Ros Spicer and Tutors Rosemary Adams, Christine Bailey, David Lewry, Elena Ramos and Maria Taverna attended a training course on *Automatic External Defibrillation* on 9 December 2015; Gerry Nolan (Finance Director) and Caroline Bacon attended a *Fit for Funding* workshop on 21 April 2016; Board members Mark Chamberlain (Chair), Jane Hamilton, Cathy Moorhouse (Company Secretary), attended *Help I'm a Charity Trustee!* on 23 April; Mark Chamberlain and

Caroline Bacon attended a *Management Advice Session* led by Cranfield University on 5 May and a *Measuring Impact Masterclass* on 26 May; Caroline Bowdler (Vice Chair) attended a *Community Network* event on social isolation on 19 July; and Kate Gale obtained her *Qualified First Aider's* certificate in June 2016.

9. 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.

10. Centre Hire

In 2015-16 the REC let the premises to various community groups on a regular basis and private lettings to students for parties. This raised £4,272.

11. PQASSO

The National Council of Voluntary Organisations have awarded the REC PQASSO Quality Mark Level 1.

The summary findings are:

Rothsay Education Centre is a small well-run organisation, providing a range of educational courses and activities for retired people in the local area. The Centre is self-funding relying on membership and course fees. As the organisation knows its market and the majority of courses are very popular, with many students returning year after year. This has meant that the organisation is working towards a healthy surplus by the end of the academic year.

The organisation has plans to build 2 further classrooms at the back of the property and the expansion will mean that more courses will be run and there will be increased accessibility.

Rothsay Education Centre has achieved the PQASSO Quality Mark indicators at Level 1 in all of the 12 Quality Mark areas. It has shown strengths in areas in particular:

Quality Area 4: User Centred Service

Quality Area 7: Managing Money

Quality Area 2: Governance

Quality Area 3: Leadership and Management

12. 2015-16 Results against 2013-23 Business Plan

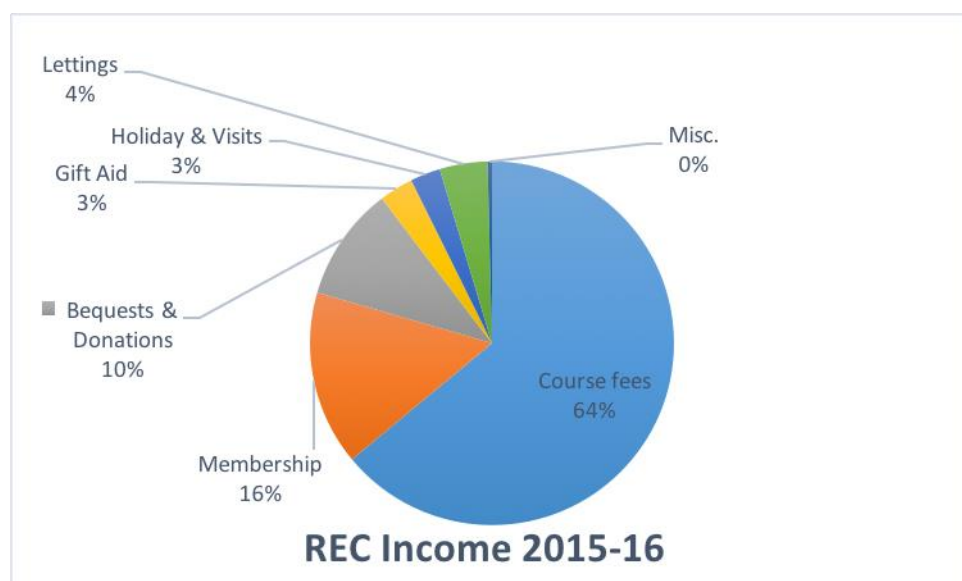
The results of these initiatives are outlined in the attached table.

13. Student and Tutor Survey 2015

The 2015 Surveys were conducted from a self-completing questionnaire undertaken between September and October 2015. In total 404 student surveys were returned, which is c.44%. The 2010 survey was completed by 50% of students.

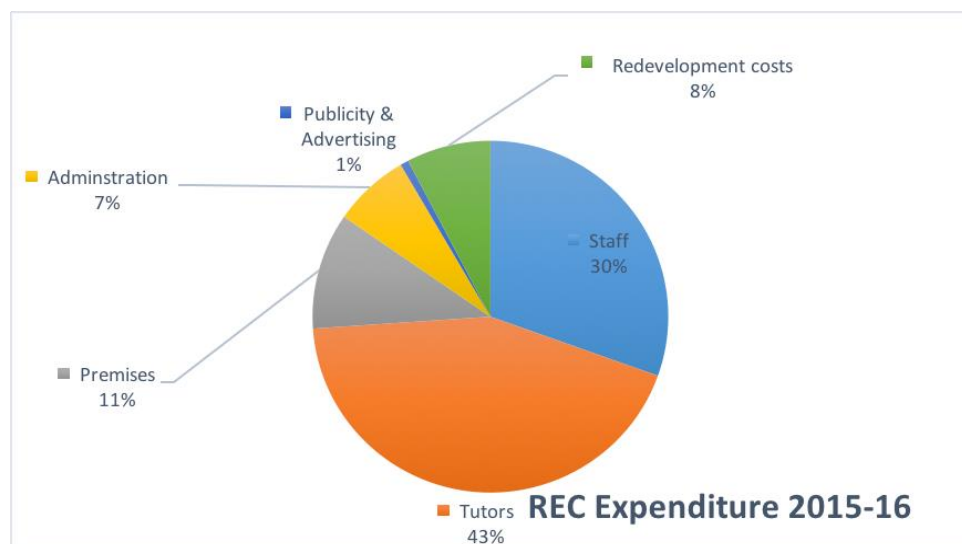
The purpose of the survey was to ascertain priorities for the forthcoming 10-year Strategic Plan and inform the Focus Groups who consisted of students and Board members.

The surveys indicated that the vast majority are clearly very satisfied with the current provision at the REC, while making suggestions for future improvements, most of which will involve a redevelopment of the existing site. This will include extra classrooms, lift, improved IT provision, noise calming and better heating and ventilation. However, all of these suggestions are tempered with the call to keep the REC a welcoming and friendly environment, while continuing to provide a wide variety of stimulating and popular courses.



Income

Course fees	154,752
Membership	37,545
Bequests & Donations	24,577
Gift Aid	7,313
Holidays & Visits – net	6,487
Catering Letting	6,000
Other Lettings	4,272
Misc.	945
Total	241,891



Expenditure

Tutors (incl. educational materials)	88,703
Staff (pay, NI, pension, payroll)	62,174
Premises	21,856
Redevelopment costs	15,634
Administration	14,205
Publicity & Advertising	1,550
Total	204,122

Surplus of £37,769 transferred to holding account for the Development Fund.