

## **THE HERALD SOCIETY AWARDS 2009 Collaboration Award**

### **ABERDEEN COLLEGE AND GRAMPIAN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE: A TRAIL BLAZING COLLABORATION**

Aberdeen College has a long-standing commitment to widening access and participation in education, and with research showing that more people want to learn closer to home, the College, in collaboration with Grampian Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS), has developed an innovative project to offer new learning opportunities to local people in targeted prime locations.

Through a partnership between Aberdeen College and GFRS, the College delivers courses in the Training Rooms of GFRS stations in areas of high demand for community-based courses. This Partnership was formally launched in August 2008 and is continuing to expand and develop. Initially the College operated in 5 Fire Stations, however due to the success of the initiative, two additional Stations were added in August 2009.

To ensure that all learners studying in the participating Fire Stations have access to up-to-date computer-based materials and resources, the College has installed laptops and Broadband connections in participating stations. The College has also provided modest levels of ambiance enhancement in several stations, including seating and desks, increasing the capacity of these stations and securing the financial viability of the courses.

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In addition to extending the geographical coverage of the College, this Partnership is having a direct and immediate impact on local communities, including those adversely affected by the current economic downturn, by providing additional education and training opportunities for local people who may have been made redundant or who are under threat of redundancy.

In the first year of operation, participation rates in courses offered by the Aberdeen College/ GFRS Partnership have exceeded expectations. In fact, as a direct result of this initiative, 469 people have participated in education and training, who otherwise may not have done so.

Aberdeen College has delivered 32 additional courses as a result of this partnership, including Computing; Digital Photography; ECDL; Spanish and French for Beginners; Child Development; Accident and Emergency Procedures; Helping Children to Read and Preparing to Work in Community Settings.

Of the 83 candidates enrolled on the substantial SQA qualifications offered in some Fire Stations, only two had withdrawn by the end of the course, giving a retention rate of almost 100%.

The Partnership did not have a specific budget allocation, being funded from the College's recurrent grant.

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The Partnership between Aberdeen College and Grampian Fire and Rescue Service has set new standards in education and training, providing clear benefits not only to individuals, employers and local communities, but also to the local and regional economies.

This unique and sector-leading Partnership has truly “fired up” local communities and ignited interest in locally-delivered learning for all.

***Word Count = 436***