

About the Joseph Cowen Lifelong Learning Centre

Mission

The Joseph Cowen Lifelong Learning Centre (JCLLC) enriches lives by providing outstanding opportunities for lifelong learning for people in the North-East.

History

The Joseph Cowen Centre was born in 2013 following the closure of the North East Centre for Lifelong Learning at Sunderland University. The strength of feeling about this loss led members to establish JCLLC as a community interest company, with the aim of preserving the award-winning model of the Explore programme within a new, member-led, structure. We registered as a community interest company in August 2013 and opened our doors to our first members on 15th October the same year.

Aims

We aim to:

- Provide the Explore lifelong learning programme which enables members to pursue existing interests and explore new areas of study.
- Support a community of learners where members can contribute their own knowledge and experience.
- Foster an environment where social interaction is a valuable part of learning.
- Promote the culture, history and natural and urban environment of the North East.
- Offer a financially and practically accessible programme.

Governance

JCLLC is registered at Companies House and with the Community Interest Regulator and fulfils its statutory requirements. There are eight elected Directors who may co-opt up to 4 others, and are responsible for strategic direction and management. All members of the 'Explore' programme can participate in governance by becoming Company Members.

Our members

JCLLC was established and is governed by its members and it is their passion and dedication that drives us. Our members play an active part in running the Explore programme: contributing their time, skills and experience. Most are retired, with many living in rural areas, for whom the opportunity to learn, meet people and be part of an exciting project is invaluable.

Partnerships

We seek to enhance the learning culture of the region through partnerships with other cultural and educational bodies, with the aim of sharing knowledge and expertise. We have strong links with the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Centre for Ageing and Vitality, the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art.

Equal opportunities

We are committed to equal opportunities and access for all, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or income. Our Newcastle city centre venue is accessible to people with mobility issues, including wheelchair users. We are currently developing our website to make it more user-friendly.

Funding

We are funded through subscriptions to the Explore programme, donations and sponsorship in kind. All funding is used to deliver and develop Explore. We are pleased to have a link with the SY Killingley Trust which enables us to offer Explore membership to people with limited financial resources. We also benefit from the ongoing support of Ampersand Inventions.

About the Explore programme

Patron: Lee Hall

Explore is a lively, ambitious programme of talks, workshops and visits open to anyone with an appetite for learning. Our purpose is to stimulate curiosity, expand minds and enrich lives.

- We run over 450 classes a year, led by highly regarded senior lecturers, writers and practising artists.
- Our diverse programme includes art history, practical art, archaeology, astronomy, classics, politics, literature, history, mathematics, music, philosophy, science and more.
- Our 2015 curriculum has so far covered topics as diverse as Breaking Bad, Thomas Bewick, Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics, Ireland's independence movement, history walks around Durham, North Shields, Low Fell and Ashbrooke, and the story of lead mining in the North East.
- We are open throughout the day and early evening, Monday to Saturday.

Membership

Explore is open to all. No previous knowledge or qualifications are needed – just enthusiasm and an interest in learning new things. Our Newcastle city centre base provides a lively environment where students can exchange views and socialise.

Image: Kona McPhee



"Lifelong learning is fundamental to our endless curiosity to know and share knowledge. The Explore programme is unique, enriching, life-giving."

Max Adams, Writer, Royal Literary Fund Consultant Fellow, Explore Tutor

"We must look after our minds as well as our bodies. Explore encourages me to accept new information and gently pushes my brain back into thinking mode."

Harry Rose, Explore member



"Explore is the backbone of my week – it amuses, intrigues, challenges and inspires - a thoroughly sociable way to broaden my horizons."

Angela Young, Explore member

"I need structure, stimulation and social contact during the week. Explore provides all three in a distinctive and attractive setting."

Maria Goulding, Explore tutor and member



Contact us

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