



Fircroft College
Of Adult Education

1909-2009

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF LEARNING

Fircroft College of Adult Education The Centenary Appeal



100 years of changing lives



Fircroft College of Adult Education was founded by George Cadbury Jr in 1909. It was created to provide educational opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged and excluded members of society.

Adults of all ages come to Fircroft, from very diverse backgrounds. Some overcome great personal difficulties and barriers to be here, and many arrive with few or no formal qualifications. We provide an environment where students are able to escape from pressures or problems, so they can focus on benefiting from a positive learning experience, achieving personal goals and fulfilling their potential.



Unfortunately, the College recently suffered a serious fire, causing extensive damage to the historic main building. The many messages of support we received from former students, colleagues, members of the local community and even from overseas brought home how much good work the College has done over the years, and how many lives it has touched. Funds are in hand to deal with the immediate restoration work. **This Centenary Appeal is for funds to help guarantee the College's continuing success.**

The Centenary Appeal

One hundred years on from the birth of Fircroft College, its mission of 'social justice' is more relevant than ever and the College has every reason to be optimistic about its future. However, as government funding continues to reduce, additional funds are needed to improve and develop new and existing facilities, providing a better experience for our students, whilst continuing to offer opportunities and an education that would otherwise be closed to them.

This brochure outlines the projects which we hope to fund through the Centenary Appeal. We would be grateful if you could take a few moments to have a look through and consider if you could make a gift to support Fircroft College. **With your help, we can continue to enrich and change people's lives for years to come.**

Thank you.

Fiona Larden
Principal
Fircroft College of Adult Education

What we do



Fircroft runs over 150 courses throughout the year, in everything from literacy, numeracy and IT skills, to personal, social and professional development. There is also a full-time Access to HE programme aimed at students without qualifications who would otherwise struggle to progress to University, as well as the ten-week Ransackers programme for the over 55s.

Fircroft College recruits around 1,500 adult students each year, including:

- > **Seriously disadvantaged adults returning to learning, needing a 'second or last chance' to turn their lives around.** They have often faced chronic exclusion from education through mental health and behavioural issues, being abused, drug or alcohol dependency issues, offending and homelessness
- > **Volunteers, staff and management committee members from a diverse range of voluntary and community organisations** seeking training and development, who themselves support disadvantaged communities or individuals
- > **Older adult learners aged 55 plus**, studying on the Ransackers programme, who wish to explore an area of educational interest as an in-depth project.

Historically, around 65% of the Access to HE students come from a seriously disadvantaged background and around 90% are unemployed. Thanks to the hard work of staff and the quality of teaching and support, most of these students achieve their aims – in June 2008 every Access student successfully passed the course, with 85% gaining entry to University. All of these students had few or no previous educational qualifications.

An outstanding College

The College's most recent OFSTED report was Grade One (outstanding). It highlighted some of our key strengths, making particular mention of our 'effective support for learners', the 'outstanding range of courses' on offer, the 'very effective approach to widen participation and to promote social justice' and the 'energetic and highly effective partnership working'.

The College was also awarded highly coveted QIA Learning and Skills Beacon Status in 2008, in recognition of its excellence as a learning provider.

"A safe haven"



Rob Everitt came to Fircroft after putting himself through rehab, following years of drug and alcohol dependency as well as spells of homelessness. In his own words, **"I'd had enough of the life I was living – I knew if I didn't do something I was going to die."** Rob arrived with no qualifications but, after taking and enjoying several short courses at Fircroft, he enrolled on the Access course, which he successfully completed in 2008.



"Fircroft gave me a chance to change my life for the better and opened my eyes to the value of education. Initially I found it tough going and I never thought I could see it through. My tutors were absolutely brilliant – they were so helpful in personal matters and in helping me on the course."

Rob is now studying for a degree in Psychology, at Newman University College, Birmingham and hopes to realise his goal of becoming a clinical psychologist.

Anne Barrett enrolled on her first weekend short course in 2002, following the advice and encouragement of her community psychiatric nurse. For Anne, coming to Fircroft became a way of fighting her crippling depression and mental illness.



"When I first came to Fircroft I was so introverted I couldn't speak to anyone and had to carry a cuddly toy around with me for security. A lot of the other students have experienced similar problems and are very supportive of each other. The tutors build your confidence and get the best out of you. No-one judges or labels you at Fircroft."

Anne eventually progressed onto the Access course before being accepted onto the African Studies degree course at the University of Birmingham. Despite leaving Fircroft three years ago, Anne still visits the College to chat with staff and students. **"It's a wonderful place – a safe haven. My time there helped me to find something in myself that I never knew I had – the 'old Anne' would never recognise me now!"**

The Centenary Appeal

Building a better Fircroft

Fircroft College is the smallest government funded college in England. The £1m it receives each year is focused on core teaching and learning activities. It can also access a bursary scheme contributing towards students' tuition fees and residential living costs.

The College has developed ambitious plans costing over £1.1m to enable it to meet the challenges of the coming years.

£465,000 of this total has already been secured, which leaves an additional **£640,000** of funding and donations required to complete these ambitious but vital projects.

We need your help to build a better Fircroft. Please turn to the back page if you would like to make a gift to support the Centenary Appeal and the projects outlined below.

Student Support £200,000 needed

Government policy requires students to pay more each year for their education. This can prove very difficult for some of the students whose needs we meet. The College has access to a bursary scheme for student support and has also set aside over £210,000 from existing one-off donations.

However, these funds are not sufficient to meet everyone's needs and we are aiming to secure a further £200,000 so that very disadvantaged students can benefit from coming to Fircroft.

A new earth sheltered 'eco classroom' £270,000 needed

The College is planning to construct a new 'eco' earth sheltered low-carbon learning resource, built into the College garden embankments. So far £305,000 of funding has been secured, with another £145,000 required to help make the vision a reality. This innovative classroom would include systems to minimise energy requirements.

An additional £125,000 is needed for a 3 year project to deliver exciting new gardening and ecology courses based in the eco classroom, meeting the learning and training needs of adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, ex-offenders and mental health service users. These developments will further strengthen Fircroft's ongoing commitment to social justice.

Redevelopment of kitchens and dining area £50,000 needed

The dining room is the heart and soul of the College, where staff and students gather to sit, eat and talk together. However, the kitchen and dining facilities are badly outdated and inefficient. Proposed redevelopment, costing £95,000 of which £45,000 has already been raised, will improve and enlarge these facilities, allowing Fircroft to welcome in more community groups and organisations, generating additional future income.

Ensuite facilities for all bedrooms £65,000 needed

Although many bedrooms at Fircroft have already been made ensuite, we would like all of our students to have access to modern bedroom facilities. We are currently halfway toward raising the £130,000 required to provide a comfortable, quality residential experience for everyone who comes to Fircroft.

Double/secondary glazing of main building £55,000 needed

To save the College money on fuel and heating costs and help the environment, we have already replaced all old boilers and installed energy efficient lighting. However, we now need to replace old windows and install double/secondary glazing at a cost of £105,000, of which £50,000 has been raised so far.



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How you can help

If you would like to help Fircroft College by making a donation, please call us on 0121 472 0116 or visit our website at www.fircroft.ac.uk. It is possible to donate by cheque, bank/credit card or by standing order.

Gifts of any size are welcome and greatly appreciated.

Those donating £500 or more will have their names acknowledged on a donor board in either the new earth sheltered classroom or in the College's main reception, unless they prefer to remain anonymous.

Gift Aid

If you are a UK tax payer then you can increase the value of your gift to the College at no extra cost to you. Thanks to the government's Gift Aid regulations, charities can reclaim the basic rate of tax on donations, so for every £1 that you give, the College will receive an extra 28p. All you need to do is sign the gift aid declaration when you make your donation.

Thank you for your generosity.

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Registered Charity No. 510033