

Community Newsletter

2025

Southern Regional College
Community Development Department



Welcome to our Community Newsletter

Southern Regional College (SRC) places Communities at the heart of everything we do, serving the needs of the wider community across the Southern Region. We are committed to ensuring that citizens in our region have access to the relevant skills and qualifications required to support our local economy. We work in partnership with many community groups to identify the needs of citizens, families and community organisations and provide relevant support to them. We also work closely with employers to ensure the provision is meaningful and relevant to match their needs. The Southern region has some of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and the College has developed a wide range of provision

to enable everyone to access skills to improve their lives. With the current cost of living crisis, the team are committed to supporting those who are unemployed to reskill and find a pathway to employment and a better outcome for all families. The Community Development Officers work in partnership with the Community groups and other agencies such as Jobs and Benefits and Youth Services to provide skills solutions and create pathways to employment. SRC appreciates the funding received from the Department of Communities (DfC), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and Department for the Economy (DfE) that enables us to deliver this tailored response to the community's needs. SRC continues to work in partnership with the Clanrye Group, Women's Aid Armagh Down and Community Advice Newry and Armagh, to deliver the successful Employ Me programme, working with those furthest from the labour market to provide them with support and access to new skills. SRC has also supported learners through the Step Up programme, helping them to embark on a journey of lifelong learning. This edition of our Community Newsletter showcases some of the individuals who have been supported by the College over

the last year. You can see the wide range of learning opportunities that have been provided as well as some of the stories from local people who have benefited from these experiences. If you are involved with a Community Group in our area or if you are an individual seeking to improve your skills, please do not hesitate to get in contact with the SRC Community Team. A member of the team will be happy to contact you to determine how we can support your needs.



Tracy Rice
Head of Business Engagement

Community Projects



Supported by the Department for Communities funding Southern Regional College (SRC) is up-skilling residents from local communities in the energy and maritime industries.

SRC has been working over many years with specialised funding from the DfC to target residents from Armagh, Craigavon and Newry Neighbourhood renewal areas in working in the energy and maritime interests. This funding goes beyond the college's mainstream provision and allows a unique opportunity to take place. The initiative runs through the college's Oceans project. The project mentors and assesses residents from NRAs to work as a group to undergo training in the Global Wind Organisation (GWO) wind turbines offshore course and the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) 95 sea safety course. The aim is to enhance resident's life and employment skills plus provide them with specialised qualifications to improve their employment opportunities in these exclusive industries.

The GWO Wind Turbine training is a mandatory requirement for anyone who works onshore and offshore in the wind and renewables industry.

This course works on the safety procedures one must be aware of when working on the technology at sea or at land that extracts power from the wind and converts to electricity. The STCW95 course provides the basic knowledge

you need to work at sea and manage an emergency in a sea vessel. Both courses involve training that entails Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities, Personal Survival Techniques, First Aid & CPR and Basic Shipboard Firefighting.

The specialised sea and wind turbine training courses offered by the Oceans project provides residents with a skills profile that the college hope will set them apart from other candidates applying for jobs in the energy and maritime industries. Each resident will have the necessary skills and qualification to shortlist into employment.

The Oceans project also supports the residents with a mentor who keeps them focused, free transport to training, accommodation, and catering.



This year 24 residents participated on the Oceans project. All the residents gave positive feedback on the training.



One resident said, "Yes, I thoroughly enjoyed the training. The sessions were engaging and informative, and I felt well-supported throughout the entire process. The instructors were knowledgeable, making complex topics easy to understand, and they were always open to questions. The hands-on experience was particularly valuable, as it allowed me to apply what we learned in real-life scenarios, which helped build my confidence. I also appreciated the collaborative environment; working with others in the industry provided great networking opportunities and made the training experience more enjoyable. I don't feel that anything additional is needed. The training was well-organised, and the combination of the overview and the practical, hands-on approach was perfect. It fully prepared me and exceeded my expectations. I'd be interested in additional training, including Sea Survival, STC License, Diesel Course, and Oil Rig Training. The training has been incredibly helpful. It boosted my confidence and equipped me with the practical skills and safety knowledge needed."

To be eligible to apply for the Oceans project you must live in a Neighbourhood Renewal Area and a household with a threshold income.



For further information about the Oceans project please contact:

Jim Cunningham

☎ 077 1198 1732 ✉ cunninghamj@src.ac.uk

TOPs and STEPS Programmes Continue to Support Thriving Communities

The Training and Employment Opportunities Programme (TOPs) in Craigavon & Newry and the Supporting Training and Employment (STEPS) in Armagh are funded by the Department for Communities as part of its Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

These programmes have proven to be invaluable year after year, providing essential support to residents who are unemployed or on low incomes by offering access to accredited

training. Many participants have successfully secured employment as a result of completing these courses.

Some of the courses offered include IAB Payroll and Bookkeeping, Cat C lorry driving, ICDL computer course, Counterbalance forklift driving, City & Guilds Level 2 Award in Nail Technologies, CSR card for construction, Children's Behavioural/Special Needs, SIA, and PSA Door Supervision. A key feature of these programmes is the provision of funding to help residents overcome personal barriers to employment, such as covering the cost of training courses and travel expenses.

This year alone, over 200 residents from Neighbourhood Renewal Areas across the southern region have been upskilled through these projects, empowering those who were previously unemployed or on low incomes.

In addition to the training, the project also offers mentoring support to young people involved in SRC's Schools' Partnership Programme (SPP), as well as additional targeted mentoring for those who progress from the SPP onto SRC Further Education.

For more information, please contact the community representative for your area:

Armagh & Newry:

Heather Kavanagh

☎ 077 3633 6152 ✉ kavanaghh@src.ac.uk

Lurgan, Brownlow, Portadown:

Jim Cunningham

☎ 077 1198 1732 ✉ cunninghamj@src.ac.uk



Finding Employment

Below are just a few of the people who secured employment or who are Job ready through the College's projects.

Caolan Cullen



As a resident from a Neighbourhood Renewal Caolan was a student on the OCEANs project during 2024/25. With the help of local Jobs and Benefits office Caolan contacted SRC. He was then recruited on to the project. At the time he was very keen to work in the energy sector and wanted to build up skills and qualifications that would secure him employment. Working alongside the Oceans project mentor a training plan was drawn out for him. He also received employability skills. Caolan then took part in the GWO wind turbine training and worked very hard through fire fighting, working and heights, manual handling and other areas to achieve his Global Wind Organisation (GWO) Basic Safety certificate. Soon after achieving his certificate Caolan gained employment in the sector and his travelled overseas to several locations to work. He says:

"I was unemployed and signing on to universal credit when I first heard about SRC projects. I enrolled with the program and signed up and completed a few of the courses that are on offer. All of the courses that I attended were well organised and the training suited for all levels of experience. It helped me further my skill set, and I am currently in full-time employment working in the renewables sector as a result of the program and the courses I completed."

Sara Brown

The primary objective of the Training Opportunities Programmes (TOPs) and STEPS is to better equip economically inactive and low-paid workers in the Armagh, Craigavon, and Newry NRAs with the skills needed to find and secure employment or improve

their current job situation. This is achieved by participating in a tailored employability programme that leads to nationally recognized qualifications or licenses required by local industries. In addition, the programmes help individuals build confidence and become job ready.

Sara Brown, who had taken a break from the workforce to raise her four children, made the decision to re-enter the job market and develop new skills. She took the first step by visiting the Chrysalis Women's Centre, a community learning partner of SRC. The centre provided her with invaluable support and assisted her in creating a clear learning pathway. Sara successfully completed a bookkeeping course and the ICDL computer course and is now actively seeking further skills to enhance her employability. She remarked:

"It was great to get back out after having a baby. It gave me the skills and confidence to gain employment. I loved the community setting - it made me feel safe, helped me make friends, and put me at ease."



Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) Projects



Grow Project

A horticultural specific project providing training in areas such as OCN's Understanding the Role of Carbon in Climate Change, PA1 & PA6 City and Guilds Spraying safely and hand applicator course, and accredited healthy living course.

If interested, please contact:

Jim Cunningham

📞 077 1198 1732 ✉ cunninghamj@src.ac.uk



Oceans Project

The OCEANs project providing training in areas such as STCW95 (sea safety certificate) and Global Wind Safety basic training.

If interested, please contact:

Jim Cunningham

📞 077 1198 1732 ✉ cunninghamj@src.ac.uk



Tops Craigavon and Newry / STEPs Project

The Tops Craigavon & Newry and the STEPs Armagh projects provide industry qualifications /licences in a vast range of areas, usually depending on what is needed by employers at the time. The training offered includes CAT C lorry driving, forklift licences, CSR constructions cards, SIA Security licences, Bookkeeping, Payroll, Introduction into Autism, Children's mindfulness etc.

If you are interested, contact the Community Development Officer for your area:

Armagh & Newry:

Heather Kavanagh

📞 077 3633 6152 ✉ kavanagh@src.ac.uk

Lurgan, Brownlow, Portadown:

Jim Cunningham

📞 077 1198 1732 ✉ cunninghamj@src.ac.uk

Step Up Programme



The Step Up programme (Skills, Training and Employment Programme), funded by the Department for the Economy, is targeted at those most excluded from education, training and employment opportunities, by providing flexible training, free of charge, alongside mentoring support to help participants develop the skills necessary to progress on to employment opportunities or undertake training or education at a higher level.

In Year 2 of the programme, the college has been successful in recruiting 368 participants, a 38% increase from Year 1 into a range of education and training programmes, relevant to their future hopes and aspirations:

College Connect 16-24



This pathway offered courses in a range of vocational areas including Health and Social Care and Childcare, Construction and Sport at Level 1, alongside Essential Skills Communications and Application of Number, recruiting 85 young people, a 29% increase from Year 1, who would not have been able to progress to mainstream education at Level 2. The majority of participants plan to progress to Level 2 from September 2025.

College Connect 24 +



This pathway offered a range of college-based accredited training courses such as Computerised Book-Keeping, ICDL, Cutting Men's Hair and a portfolio of external industry-accredited training such as Excavator, Counterbalance Forklift, Telescopic Lift, Tipper Dumper operator training and SIA Door Supervisor training for those aged 24+ who were unemployed or economically inactive. By the end of Year 1, 84% of participants had gained an accredited industry qualification. At 6 months post course for Year 1 participants, 81% had progressed to education or employment.

DARE

Focussing on people with additional support needs (disability or neurodivergent conditions).



This pathway sought to engage with those with neurodivergent conditions and those requiring support with significant barriers to participation in mainstream education, within the various college communities. With mentor support, our participants were able to join in with a wide range of existing college connect courses including Cutting Men's Hair, Excavator, Counterbalance Forklift, Telescopic Lift, Tipper Dumper operator training and SIA

Door Supervision. In Year 2, the college worked closely with Praxis and Verve Health Living Network/Southern Trust to develop bespoke Recreational Health workshops and Introductory Makeup workshops and in total, enabled over 100 participants to benefit from training and education opportunities through the DARE pathway.

WRAP

Women Returners Access Programme



This pathway enabled the college to develop a range of short-term courses focusing on confidence-building, self-esteem, and skill development for women who may not have engaged in education or training recently. Working with life coaches and mentors, the college developed recreational programmes such as Rediscover You and Mindfulness, alongside Level 1 Bookkeeping, Payroll and Autism Awareness, a Level 2 Classroom Assistant and Cutting Men's Hair award, with delivery taking place at community venues including Chrysalis Centre, Drumcree Centre, WALD Centre, Nautilus Centre and Newry St Unite Centre in Kilkeel, with 110 women returners supported in Year 2.

After a successful second year of operation, the college is awaiting confirmation of funding beyond March 2025 and is hopeful of launching an updated curriculum offer for 2025/26 shortly.

Scan QR Code for more information



Alternatively, email our Step-Up team:

✉ stepup@src.ac.uk

Case Study:

Alfred Rawlings Telescopic Course

I was on universal credit beforehand and money was extremely tight. The funding being provided for me, from the actual course to the travel expenses, without those, I wouldn't have been able to do it.

Was able to get a job, I now have a much more secure income and the future is looking brighter, my daughter's getting married next year so now I'm actually able to help with paying for the wedding for her, if I haven't done the course I wouldn't have been able to do that.



Minister's Visit to SRC

Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald visited SRC in May 2025 and has commended the impact of the Step Up (Skills, Training and Employment Programme), which continues to create vital opportunities for individuals facing barriers to education, training, and employment.

Minister Archibald met with current participants benefiting from programmes in areas such as literacy and numeracy, confidence building, childcare, construction, and hair and beauty.

Speaking at the event, Dr Archibald said:

"Step Up has been very successful in enabling people who were not in employment, education or training, or who were economically excluded, to access fully funded training right across the north."

Participants have gained new skills and, in doing so, have returned to the world of training and work while greatly enhancing their employment prospects.

I congratulate all participants and their mentors on their hard work and wish them the very best for their future learning and employment paths."

To date, Step Up has supported nearly 50,000 individuals across Northern Ireland, delivering training through further education colleges and higher education institutions.

Funded by the Department for the Economy, Step Up provides fully funded, flexible training and dedicated mentoring support to those most excluded from the labour market.



(L to R) Emma Carlon, Lee Campbell (CEO SRC), Kelly McCauley, Katerine Melisova, Dr. Caoimhe Archibald (DfE Minister - at front)



Employ Me: Empowering You With Skills and Support to Step Into Work

Are you aged 16+ and economically inactive?

The Employ Me programme is here to help you every step of the way, from gaining qualifications to securing long-term employment or self-employment.

Employ Me Offers:

- Qualifications from entry level through to level 2
- A 'Personal Support Plan' tailored to help you succeed

- Personalised support services to ensure you stay in employment within the first six months

Whether you want to upskill, get back into work or start your own business, Employ Me will equip you with the skills and support you need.

Support is available across the Newry, Mourne & Down Council and Armagh, Craigavon & Banbridge Borough Council areas.

Training on Offer

FREE Courses available from August in:

- **Welding**
- **Nail Technologies**
- **Pool Lifeguard**
- **Dressmaking**
- **First Aid**
- **Food Hygiene**
- **Photography**
- **Employability**

..... plus more

Eligibility

- Over 16 years of age
- Economically inactive
- Resident of Newry, Mourne & Down or Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council areas

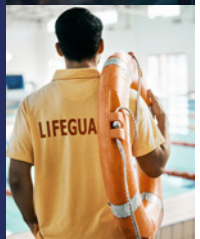
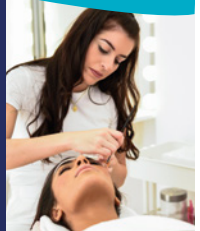
Employ Me is delivered in partnership with Clanrye Group, Community Advice Newry Mourne and Down, and Women's Aid Armagh Down.

Overcome barriers, develop essential skills, and move towards a brighter future.

Scan QR Code for more information



Alternatively, email the Employ Me team:
✉ employme@src.ac.uk



Employ Me Partnership Wins 'Team of the Year - Small Business' at Workplace and Employment Awards

This award is a testament to the tangible impact the Employ Me team has made. Surpassing their original target of 1,400, the team supported 1,700 individuals achieving 123% of their goal.

They successfully helped 773 people into employment, guided over 700 into education and training, and more than 1,000 gained a qualification or completed a course.

A crucial element of this success is the delivery of holistic 'wraparound support' that places participant wellbeing at its core, helping to unlock hidden potential and foster long-term change.



Empowerment Through Learning

Stephen's Journey

Stephen joined the Employ Me programme to enhance his employability skills.



Enrolling in the employability course and completing the counterbalance forklift training opened new opportunities. Throughout the course, Stephen gained not just technical skills but also a renewed sense of confidence. Learning alongside others, he discovered the joy of structured learning and the impact this had on his abilities.

The impact of Employ Me programme has extended far beyond personal development. Motivated by his experience and his newfound expertise led to an exciting opportunity where he has now secured a full-time position at a local garage. This role allows him to apply his newly learned skills.

Stephen's journey is a testament to how learning can empower individuals at any stage of their life, create opportunities for leadership and strengthen skills and assist on their journey back into employment.

Message from Stephen

"I attended the OCN employability course in SRC in Portadown. I found it very beneficial to create a CV, also I realised what life skills I had learnt over the years I was working; these were transferable skills for the workplace. It has boosted my confidence, and showed me I have a talent for learning, with help that was provided on this course.

The staff tutor Diane and the Employ Me Keyworker Janet, all helped me and gave me the confidence as I was nervous being an older learner. As an older man my fear was being pushed into a bad job, these people have taught me it is never too late to learn, improve yourself and gain a qualification.

After completing this course, I have realised I have the potential, and you are never too old to learn."

Stephen being presented with his portfolio on successful completion of his course

For more information on our Employability courses please contact:

Sinead McKinley - Programme Manager -
 ☎ 075 8777 0220 ✉ mckinleys@src.ac.uk

Employ Me Welding



Pictured above is Dee McMillen working on her Welding test piece

One of the Employ Me Welding participants Dee McMillen wanted to share her journey on the course and how it has benefited her.

"I am thankful that I was brave enough to step outside my comfort zone and enter what is typically a male dominated industry. I have never welded in my life; I have now obtained skills which are transferable to the workplace or home projects. Not forgetting the amazing people I have met along the way, more women should try courses that take them away from their comfort zone. It might be the challenge you didn't know you needed!"

For more information on our welding classes starting in September please contact:

Sinead McKinley - Programme Manager -
 ☎ 075 8777 0220 ✉ mckinleys@src.ac.uk

Community Enrolment Sessions 2025



Armagh, South Armagh & Rural Areas

Heather Kavanagh ☎ 0300 123 1223 ☎ 077 3633 6152 ✉ kavanaghh@src.ac.uk

VENUE	DAY	DATE	TIME
Crossmaglen Community Centre	Thursday	11 September 2025	10:30 - 11:30
Ti Chullain, Mullaghbawn	Monday	08 September 2025	10:30 - 11:30
WALD Centre Cullyhanna	Thursday	25 September 2025	11:00 - 12:00

Craigavon & Rural Area

Jim Cunningham ☎ 0300 123 1223 ☎ 077 1198 1732 ✉ cunninghamj@src.ac.uk

VENUE	DAY	DATE	TIME
BROWNLOW			
Chrysalis Women's Centre	Monday	08 September 2025	10:30 - 11:30
Drumellan Family Learning Centre	Tuesday	09 September 2025	18:00 - 19:00
LURGAN			
Aghalee Village Hall	Tuesday	02 September 2025	12:00 - 13:00
PORTADOWN			
Regenerate Centre, Rectory Park, Portadown	Monday	08 September 2025	18:30 - 19:30

Kilkeel

Heather Kavanagh ☎ 0300 123 1223 ☎ 077 3633 6152 ✉ kavanaghh@src.ac.uk

VENUE	DAY	DATE	TIME
Newry Street Unite	Tuesday	16 September 2025	18:00 - 18:30
Nautilus Centre	Tuesday	16 September 2025	18:45 - 19:15

Early Bird Offers

An early bird discount is available to any students enrolling for a 25-26 part time FE accredited and non-accredited course provided they are not availing of any College concessions or financial support. Enrolment and full payment of fees would be required by 8 August 2025 for courses starting in the first semester and by 12 December 2025 for any students starting in the second semester. The discount available will be according to the table below

Course tuition fee	Discount
£50 to £100	£10
£101 to £200	£20
Over £201	£30

The early bird discount is not applicable to any examination or material fees. The early bird discount cannot reduce the fee payable below the minimum chargeable fee of £40.

You can enrol by going online at www.src.ac.uk or calling in to any of our campuses and in certain circumstances by phoning **0300 123 1223**



SRC WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS SINCERE THANKS TO ALL THE FUNDERS THAT MADE THE PROJECTS ABOVE POSSIBLE.