

# Healthy, Wealthy and Wise:

The impact of adult learning across the UK

October 2017



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We bring together over 90 years of combined history and heritage from the 'National Institute of Adult Continuing Education' and the 'Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion'.

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# Foreword



Since 2015, as part of our work for the European Agenda for Adult Learning, L&W and its partners across the UK have been researching and discussing the impact of adult learning. We have done this through the Impact Forums established in 2014 which meet in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales every quarter. For these meetings we commissioned stimulus papers that reviewed evidence of the impact of adult learning under three broad themes: **health, work, and communities**.

These blanket terms were used to address the wide range of terminology that is used across the devolved administrations of the UK. Part way through the process, in late 2016, we were delighted to see that the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning had used the same three areas in its *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. What's more this report highlighted that the benefits to our health and well-being, our work and employment prospects, and our role in civic, social and community all overlapped.

## The overlapping benefits of adult learning and education



Source: *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UIL, 2016, p. 21)<sup>1</sup>

In some respects, this is just common sense. But we also found that these ideas have increasing relevance across the UK administrations focusing on outcomes across a range of traditionally siloed policy areas. Programmes for Government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and increasing devolution to the English city-regions and combined authorities, all indicate that policy needs to focus on outcomes: such as fair employment, social inclusion, and better health. All areas in which, we argue, adult learning has a significant role to play.

Of course the evidence can be challenged. Many of the eminent researchers cited in this document have spent much of their working lives unpicking causality and correlation. However one thing is clear, involvement in adult learning increases the *likelihood* that we are healthier, wealthier, and perhaps even wiser!

Across our three broad themes, we outline ten challenges for the UK today, ten ways in which adult learning helps address those challenges, and twelve suggestions as to what we think could be done.

## Our research process

Over the past 2 years, each of the UK Administrations has held a series of Impact Forums on our research themes, with invited researchers, policy-makers, practitioners and agencies, from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The forums provided opportunities to reflect on research papers, share local/regional research and relevant examples of practice and discuss what impact was evident and how this was identified. During this process, not only were interesting and impactful activities and developments shared but key challenges were also identified.

Over time, these development opportunities, as well as challenges, were accumulated and then distilled into key policy developmental areas and subsequently prioritised by members of the Impact Forums.

This report represents a distillation of key messages from the research papers, which were discussed at the Impact Forums, and the case studies submitted. We hope it will stimulate debate about the critical role of adult learning across the UK and Europe.

**Stephen Evans,**  
Chief Executive, Learning and Work Institute

<sup>1</sup> UIL (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning). 2016. *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

# The UK Context



## KEY FACTS

Total real terms spending on post - 16 skills approx:



**£60.6bn** in 2014/2015

Roughly equivalent to 2.81% of UK GDP.

Made up of



**£22.1bn**  
state investment,



**£23.7bn**  
from employers



**£14.7bn**  
from individuals

individual spending up

**37%** in five years

and driven by the expansion of  
loan funding.

Individual investment has grown as state  
spending has retreated.

Employer investment has held steady in  
England, but has dropped in Scotland,  
Wales and Northern Ireland.

Source: The New Economy research  
for the UK Government Foresight  
Review on the Future of Lifelong  
Learning and Skills (2017)

## ESSENTIAL SKILLS

**9.0m**

people lack essential skills  
like literacy or numeracy.

**13.5m**

people lack basic digital skills.

One  
out of  
two



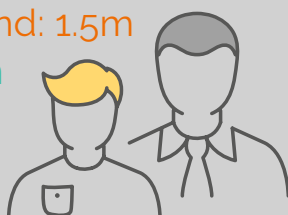
people with low literacy or numeracy are in  
work. People with essential skills are more  
likely to vote and be active citizens.

## KEY FACTS

Overall the total UK population is 65.6m, the third largest in Europe

## Adult population (16 years +)

- England: 44.4m
- Northern Ireland: 1.5m
- Scotland: 4.4m
- Wales: 2.5m



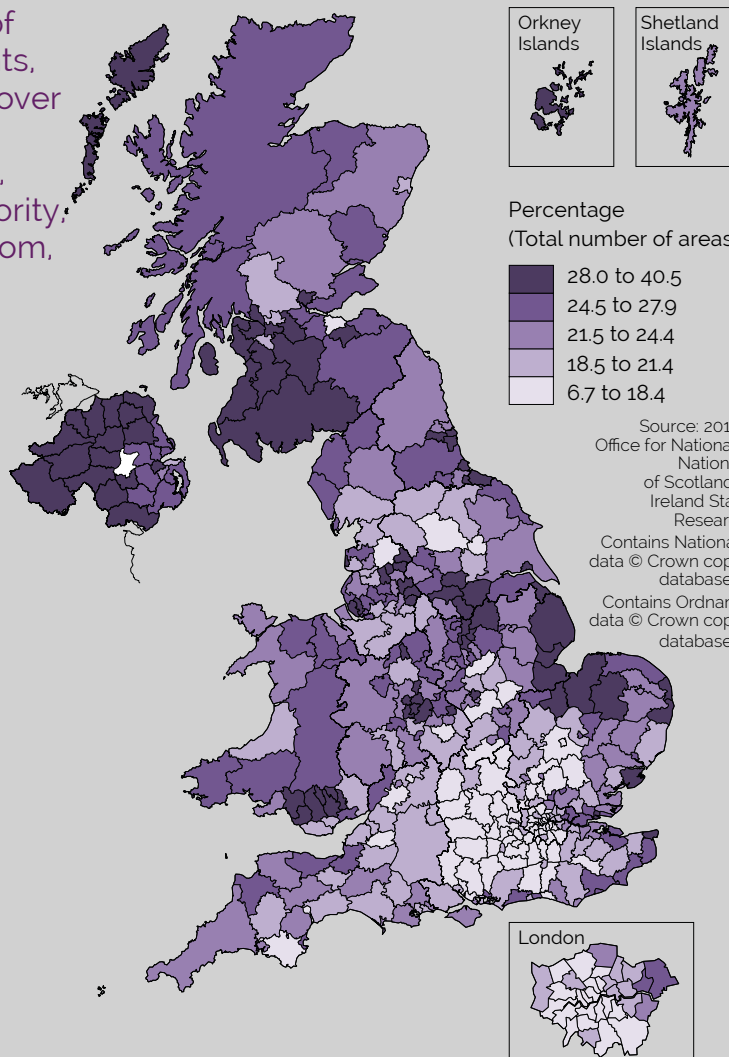
In 2016 in the UK, 18% of people were aged 65 and over, and 2.4% were aged 85 and over.

## Employment rates (16-64 years, November 2017)

- England: 75.4%
- Northern Ireland: 68.1%
- Scotland: 75.2%
- Wales: 72.5%

These are among the highest in Europe, but up to 5 m people are in temporary or insecure work

Percentage of usual residents, aged 16 and over who have no qualifications, by local authority, United Kingdom, 2011



ENGLAND



# Adult learning and impact



## We asked what could be done in each part of the UK

The UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning uses the following definition of adult learning and education:

*Formal, non-formal and informal learning and education for a broad spectrum of the adult population. It covers learning and education across the life-course and has a special focus on adults and young people who are marginalized and disadvantaged<sup>2</sup>*

The emphasis on those who are marginalised or disadvantaged is a reflection of the intention of some providers to try to address inequalities of opportunity and support those who have not been able to take full advantage of initial education. But in many European countries, including the UK, adult learning is not limited to such groups. Whilst courses, workshops and learning programmes are often designed for those returning to learning following unfulfilled schooling experiences, adult learning also includes opportunities for those who have benefited from initial education but who want to pursue further learning as an adult.

In 2011, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), adopted the following description:

*'The term adult learning covers the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities – both general and vocational – undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.'<sup>3</sup>*

These two definitions are very similar and embrace a full spectrum of learning, in all forms and all levels for a diverse range of purposes.

**Formal learning** takes place in education and training institutions, is recognised by relevant national authorities and leads to diplomas and qualifications. Formal learning is structured according to educational arrangements such as curricula, qualifications and teaching-learning requirements.

**Non-formal learning** is learning that has been acquired in addition or alternatively to formal learning. In some cases, it is also structured according to educational and training arrangements, but more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based settings, the workplace and through the activities of civil society organisations. Through the recognition, validation and accreditation process, non-formal learning can also lead to qualifications and other recognitions.

**Informal learning** is learning that occurs in daily life, in the family, in the workplace, in communities and through interests and activities of individuals. Examples include such things as learning through the media, online, reading or by participating in a club or society. Through the recognition, validation and accreditation process, competences gained in informal learning can be made visible, and can contribute to qualifications and other recognitions. In some cases, the term experiential learning is used to refer to informal learning that focuses on learning from experience.

Internationally, adult education is recognised as a core component of lifelong learning. It denotes the entire body of organised learning processes, formal and non-formal, whereby those regarded as adults, by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities and societies.<sup>4</sup>

In this report, we use this inclusive definition recognising, in reality, there is a blurring between the barriers between formal, non-formal and informal learning. Components of informal learning may be found in formal programmes leading to qualifications. However, when we are talking about impact, formal programmes are often regarded as easier to measure.<sup>5</sup> This can result in policies designed to measure outputs (such as qualifications) as opposed to the outcomes and impact of adult learning.

<sup>2</sup> UIL (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning). 2016. *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

<sup>3</sup> Web-site accessed January 2017; <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/what-epale-definition-adult-learning>

<sup>4</sup> UIL, 2014, *Working Draft for discussion: Recommendation for Adult Education (2015)*, Hamburg, UIL.

<sup>5</sup> Schuller, T. 2017. *What are the wider benefits of learning across the life course?* Foresight Review of the Future of Skills & Lifelong Learning, Government Office for Science, UK

## What do we mean by 'impact'?

Impact is an umbrella term for different orders of change that an intervention might help to bring over time. A distinction is often drawn between outcomes that are a direct result of an intervention for those immediately involved and the longer-term impact of that intervention.

Understanding impact is an area of growing importance in UK adult learning. For many years the focus of the debate has been around the impact on adult learning provision of declining public funding. Although this is important, the focus of this report is the impact of adult learning on social and economic outcomes. Fiscal austerity has led policy-makers to look beyond qualifications as a proxy for the skills adults need.

Similarly, some adult learning providers have begun to quantify their impact via a range of outcome measures related to health, well-being, progression to further learning / employment, community-involvement etc. Data are collected in a number of ways through initial and on-going professional assessment as well as surveys of learners' self-attribution of the impact of learning on their lives.

This report looks at UK and international evidence and examples of the impact of adult learning, whether that learning was designed to address a specific issue or not. Impact can sometimes be recorded as a direct result of involvement in learning as an adult; in other cases, impact is identified as a correlation between positive wider outcomes and involvement in learning.

Establishing direct cause and effect can be challenging but as John Field, reported, in exploring the impact of Lifelong Learning:

*The accumulated evidence points to positive associations between participation in learning and subjective well-being, and between participation in learning and mental health.<sup>6</sup>*

Field also found similar impact on learning and employment.

UK adult learning providers increasingly analyse outcomes and impact alongside other data required by funders and inspectors.

### THE WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (WEA)

During 2016-17, the WEA (England) recruited



**50,397**  
adults onto  
**8,082**  
courses.



**38 per cent**  
of students lived in disadvantaged areas,

**48 per cent**  
were on income-related benefits, and



**44 per cent**  
had no or very low level previous qualifications.



WEA surveyed a representative sample of 4,023 students on the wider impact of their learning and published their findings in a detailed report, *How adult learning transforms lives and communities* (2017). [add FN]

The 2017 report is the fourth annual report which also has allowed for some longitudinal analysis.

### CHANGE AT NORTHERN COLLEGE

The Northern College has developed its own set of outcomes grouped under the acronym **CHANGE**:

**C**onfidence  
**H**ealth and Happiness  
**A**spiration  
**N**ew Thinking  
**G**etting Involved  
**E**mpowerment

All schemes of work and lesson plans have CHANGE outcomes detailed alongside substantive learning achievements; student satisfaction surveys have measurement of CHANGE as a key element and staff development and quality measures supported effective integration. Posters are displayed so that students can see the college's intentions and assess their own progress.

<sup>6</sup> Field, J. 2012. 'Is lifelong learning making a difference: research-based evidence of the impact of adult learning', in the *Second International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, Springer, Dordrecht.

# Health: Challenges



## What do we mean by 'health'?

Health is 'a state of complete physical, social and mental wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'.<sup>7</sup> It is a broad concept, embracing our bodies, our minds, our feelings about ourselves and where we live, as well as our ability to help ourselves and others.

What's more, our health is largely socially determined. That is to say, **most health outcomes can be put down to socio-economic factors and our physical environment**. Just 15% of outcomes are due to biology and genetics. A further 25% of outcomes can be attributed to the healthcare system itself.<sup>8</sup> Good health is therefore a multi-disciplinary issue and not the sole preserve of healthcare professionals.

As Michael Marmot has pointed out, 'commonly, health is equated with healthcare and public health with disease control programmes'.<sup>9</sup> Like many experts in this field, Marmot argues for other approaches to complement these and address the causality of poor health.

*Evidence suggests that addressing the 'causes of the causes' is the right way to proceed... ensuring that people have the skills and control over their lives to be able to change behaviour.*<sup>10</sup>

## The Marmot Review

The Marmot Review and the subsequent work of the University College London Institute for Health Equity has provided a comprehensive, robust and widely accepted framework for understanding the causes and consequences of health inequality in England. In short, the report identifies a broad range of social determinants of health and its findings lead to the conclusion that clinical interventions play a lesser role than previously assumed in driving positive health outcomes, particularly for people living in deprived communities.

Professor Marmot <sup>11</sup> published his seminal report *Fair Society Healthy Lives* in 2010.

It was a comprehensive review of the causes of health outcomes and contained a damning indictment of the health inequalities prevalent in

many of our most deprived communities in the UK. One of the key contentions of the Marmot Review, and one that has not been seriously challenged, is that positive health outcomes are significantly more influenced by social determinants than by clinical determinants. Indeed, the conclusion of the report and the subsequent work of Professor Marmot's team at the Institute of Health Equity broadly suggests that our health and wellbeing is 70% driven by social determinants and only 30% by clinical factors.

One of the central planks of Marmot's thesis is the importance of empowerment<sup>12</sup> for those at the bottom of the health gradient. As he writes in his bestselling book, *The Health Gap*, 'education is not a bad proxy for empowerment.'

In 2016, Marmot gave L&W's annual Raymond Williams lecture. He argued that creating the conditions for people to lead flourishing lives and thus empowering individuals is the key to reduction of health inequalities. One of the established routes to greater empowerment for adults is learning.

## What are the challenges we face?

The major challenges the UK health system faces are systemic. Medical and technological advances address the incidence of specific diseases, epidemics, and chronic conditions. However, these advances fail to keep pace with changes in our society that have an adverse effect on our health. The most important of these are:

**An ageing population:** as we live longer, the likelihood of having long-term complex conditions such as Type 2 diabetes, heart and kidney disease is greater. The health cost of treating adults increases across the life course. For the average person, the amount of healthcare needed begins rising significantly around the age of 50 and rises particularly sharply beyond 70. Average hospital spending for an 89-year-old man is roughly three times the average for a 70-year-old and nine times the average for a 50-year-old, with costs typically escalating more rapidly for men than women.<sup>13</sup>

7 UIL. 2016. *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

8 UIL. 2016. *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

9 Review of Social Determinants and the Health Divide in the WHO European Region, (2014) p.vi

10 *ibid*, p.4

11 Marmot, M. *The Marmot Review final report: Fair society, healthy lives*, 2010, London, UCL

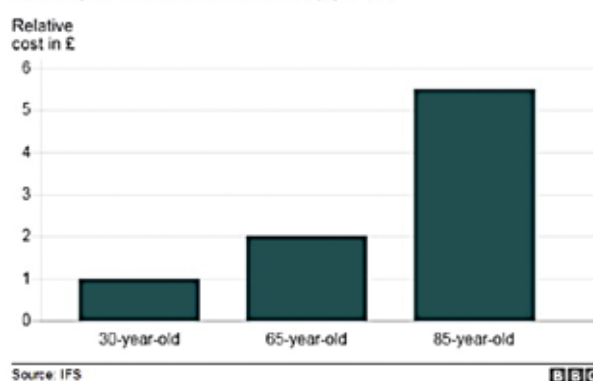
12 Marmot, M. 2015. *The Health Gap: the challenge of an unequal world*. Bloomsbury, London, p. 153.

13 Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2015, Working Paper W15/21, *Public Hospital Spending in England*.





**Comparing NHS spending on people by age**  
Spending for patients increases as they get older



**Lifestyle factors:** the way we live has detrimental effects on our health. Although smoking and alcohol usage are declining, consumption of alcohol amongst

people in mid-life is a rising concern. Additionally, recent Office for National Statistics data indicate high increases (64%) in hospitalisation due to alcohol-related illness, over the past decade, including heart, liver and cancer diseases.<sup>14</sup> Lack of exercise and poor dietary intake causes longer term health issues. The incidence of childhood obesity predicts that this problem is set to continue. The Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention, Intervention and Care looks at nine potentially modifiable lifestyle factors that, if addressed, might prevent dementia.<sup>15</sup>

**Mental health and well-being:** In England alone, in the past year 1.4 million people were referred to talking therapies for anxiety and depression.<sup>16</sup> Mental health conditions can be caused by a variety of interacting factors: psychological, social and environment factors: social isolation, unemployment, poor housing, low income, low educational level, distressing events in our adult life or childhood. Mental health is often linked with the concept of

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/03/rise-teetotalism-almost-half-brits-shun-regular-drinking/> accessed September 2017

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/research/olderpeople/lancet-dementia-commission>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2017/12/1-4-million-people-referred-to-nhs-mental-health-therapy-in-the-past-year/> Accessed: December 2017

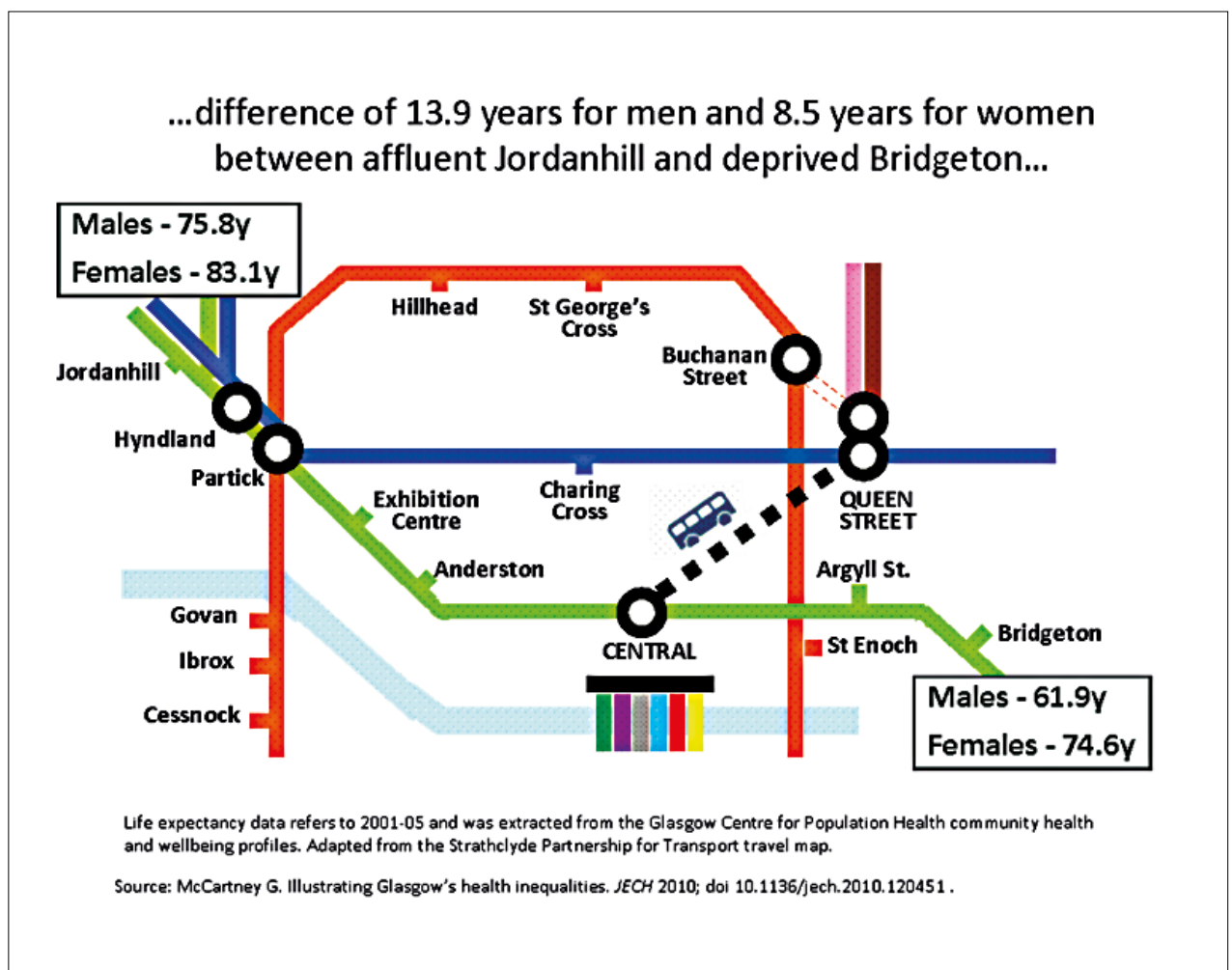
wellbeing: confidence, optimism about the future, a sense of control over our lives and supportive relationships rather than merely an absence of illness and symptoms.

In addition, there are **health inequalities** between European countries and within them, even in the same city. It is estimated that health inequalities cost the healthcare system around £5 billion per annum.<sup>17</sup> The gap between life expectancy between one part of Glasgow and another is almost fourteen years on the same bus route!<sup>18</sup> (See figure below.)

However, the issue is not just the difference between the richest and the poorest; there is a 'health gradient' that affects everyone in between. The major cause of these *inequalities*, as Marmot and others argue, are the *inequities* in the distribution of resources that cause them.

Internationally, one of the most important predictors of life expectancy is education level; the more education you have accrued by the age of 30, the longer you will live. Even in the most equitable countries, this is the case. It is just that the gap is narrower. Health and education are linked: those who gained least from initial education are less likely to participate in learning later in life—or indeed have access to it at work; those with poor health may find their education interrupted or inaccessible (due to, for example, physical, financial or mental health barriers, the timing of courses, or the relevance of provision to their needs).

All of which begs the question: *what is the role of adult learning in redressing inequalities accrued earlier in life?*



17 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/the-cost-of-inequality.pdf>

18 Information presented to the Scotland Impact Forum by NHS Health Scotland 23.05.16

# Health: Role of Adult Learning



## How does adult learning help?

UNESCO (2016) argues that adult learning and education benefits us in a number of ways:

### Improving health behaviours and attitudes

Feinstein et al (2002) reviewed the impact that education has on health. The review supports the international evidence that education is strongly linked to health such as health behaviours and preventative service use.<sup>19</sup>

There are many targeted initiatives specifically designed to improve health behaviours. Public health programmes and campaigns (such as Eat 5-a-Day) depend on a mixture of public information and informal learning. The *impact* of such initiatives is dependent on the education level of the target groups. As UNSECO states 'people with more education are more likely to have a greater understanding of health conditions, better knowledge of the available treatments and more skills to manage their health.'<sup>20</sup> In other words, targeted initiatives are more likely to succeed when supported or integrated into general adult education programmes. It is not the subject that matters, just that learning is taking place. Learning leads to greater confidence and self-efficacy, which translates to a greater ability to manage our own lives and health.

### Inspiring Minds, England

A partnership initiative, developed in South Abingdon, an area within the lowest 1% of skills in England and where the the local Job Centre reported significant claimants with mental health difficulties. Using a co-designed, participatory approach to community learning, short courses were offered, following 'tasters', where people began to get to know each other. One course, 'Knowing Me' offered opportunity to break free of negative and low self-esteem and begin to develop confidence. In turn, young mothers progressed on to become Community Learning Champions (peer volunteers to support learning) and set up their own learning hub.

The hub named 'Inspiring Minds' by participants was launched, supported by local schools, the college, the police, local housing associations,

the district council, community groups and initiatives. It offered a wide range of courses including opportunities to progress in digital skills, English and Maths. One of the learners; reported how she was in debt, in danger of eviction, with her six children being taken into care, due to her inability to cope resulting from anxiety and depression. She joined the 'Knowing Me' course and, with support, her attitudes and relationships have been transformed. She is vice-chair of the Management Committee of the 'Inspiring Minds' learning hub and is a Community Learning Champion. She reports: 'I feel so much better and my children feel so much better! I would tell anyone else they should give it a go.'

Source: Abingdon and Witney College, 2017

### Increasing life-expectancy and disability-free life expectancy

As we have seen, education level is linked to life expectancy. Increasingly, the length of 'disability and illness-free life' is seen as a useful measure of the impact of better health. This works in terms of our quality of life as well as the frequency of our demands on the health care system. Higher levels of education increase the probability of recovery from illness and reduce the likelihood of disability worsening. As adults' demands on the healthcare system increase with age, limiting the impact of illness and disability is a critical measure. As Marmot argues, 'a seventy-five-year-old in the highest education group had the same likelihood of good health as a sixty-year-old in the lowest.'<sup>21</sup> As a number of recent reports in the media have highlighted, adult learning has a key role to play in prolonging independence for older people.<sup>22</sup>

### Reducing the incidence of lifestyle diseases

Globally, lifestyle diseases are responsible for 63% of deaths. 'More educated people are less likely to die from the most common acute and chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, cholesterol, emphysema, diabetes, asthma and ulcers.'<sup>23</sup> According to an evidence review carried out for the UK Government's Foresight Team, diabetes costs the health service an estimated £14 billion per year.<sup>24</sup>

19 Feinstein, L 2006 4. *What are the effects of education on health?* OECD <https://www1.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/37425753.pdf>

20 UIL (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning). 2016. *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

21 Marmot, M. 2015. *The Health Gap: the challenge of an unequal world*. Bloomsbury, London, p. 210

22 See for example: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-27634990> <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/learning-new-skill-can-slow-cognitive-aging-201604279502>

23 UIL. 2016. *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

24 Schuller, T. 2017 *What are the wider benefits of learning across the life course?* Government Office for Science / Foresight, London, UK.

## Health: Role of Adult Learning

The World Health Organisation reports that 25% of deaths are connected to living in an unhealthy environment.

However, adult learning also provides the tools for people to influence their environment and, in the words of UNESCO, 'make them healthier'.<sup>25</sup>

### Enabling better mental health and well-being

There are a significant number of UK studies that show the benefits of adult learning to mental health and general well-being<sup>26</sup>. They are sophisticated in that they present findings on which types of learning have the most impact on which age group or gender. The results were so encouraging that, in 2015, the UK government commissioned a project looking at the mental health outcomes of participation in adult learning for people with mild to moderate mental health conditions. Involving 62 pilot projects across England, learners participating in a range of community learning opportunities complete standardised, clinical questionnaires. Results are expected in March 2018. See Community Learning Mental Health infographic on page 13

The benefits outlined above have an impact on the healthcare system as a whole. Participation in adult learning results in less visits to GPs; better decision-making about our own healthcare, and following instructions from clinicians.<sup>27</sup> Although higher levels

of education lead to longer life expectancy, the extra years are also more likely to be disability free.

The What Works Well-being Centre's detailed review of adult learning concludes: "existing evidence shows us that learning is good for well-being". However, it concludes that the benefits may be greater if targeted at certain marginalised groups.<sup>28</sup>

In Wales, half of the primary care workforce report that 20% of their practice time is spent on social issues and on mental health-related work. An estimated £21 million is believed to have been spent on the prescription of anti-depressants last year

**The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** sets goals to maximise people's physical and mental well-being and helps people to understand how choices and behaviours benefit their future health. Adult Learning has an important role to play to help the Welsh Government achieve these goals. Many learners consider that taking part in adult learning has a beneficial impact on their **health and wellbeing**. Older learners in particular talked about how participation in learning improved social contact and improved mental and emotional health. *Source: Wales Impact Forum.*



### EMPLOYMENT GAPS

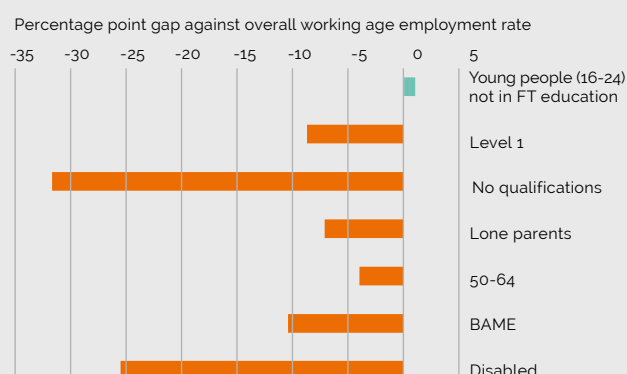
The employment rate of people with health problems and disabilities is

**33 percentage points**

lower than for those without. The disability employment rate gap has barely changed in recent decades.

**More than 1 million**

more disabled people would need to be in employment to halve this gap.



<sup>25</sup> UIL. 2016. Third Global Report on *Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

<sup>26</sup> Schuller et al., 2002, 2004; Feinstein et al., 2003, Sabates and Feinstein, 2004; Field, 2005; Hammond and Feinstein, 2006; Feinstein et al, 2008., Duckworth and Cara, 2012

<sup>27</sup> UIL. 2016. Third Global Report on *Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

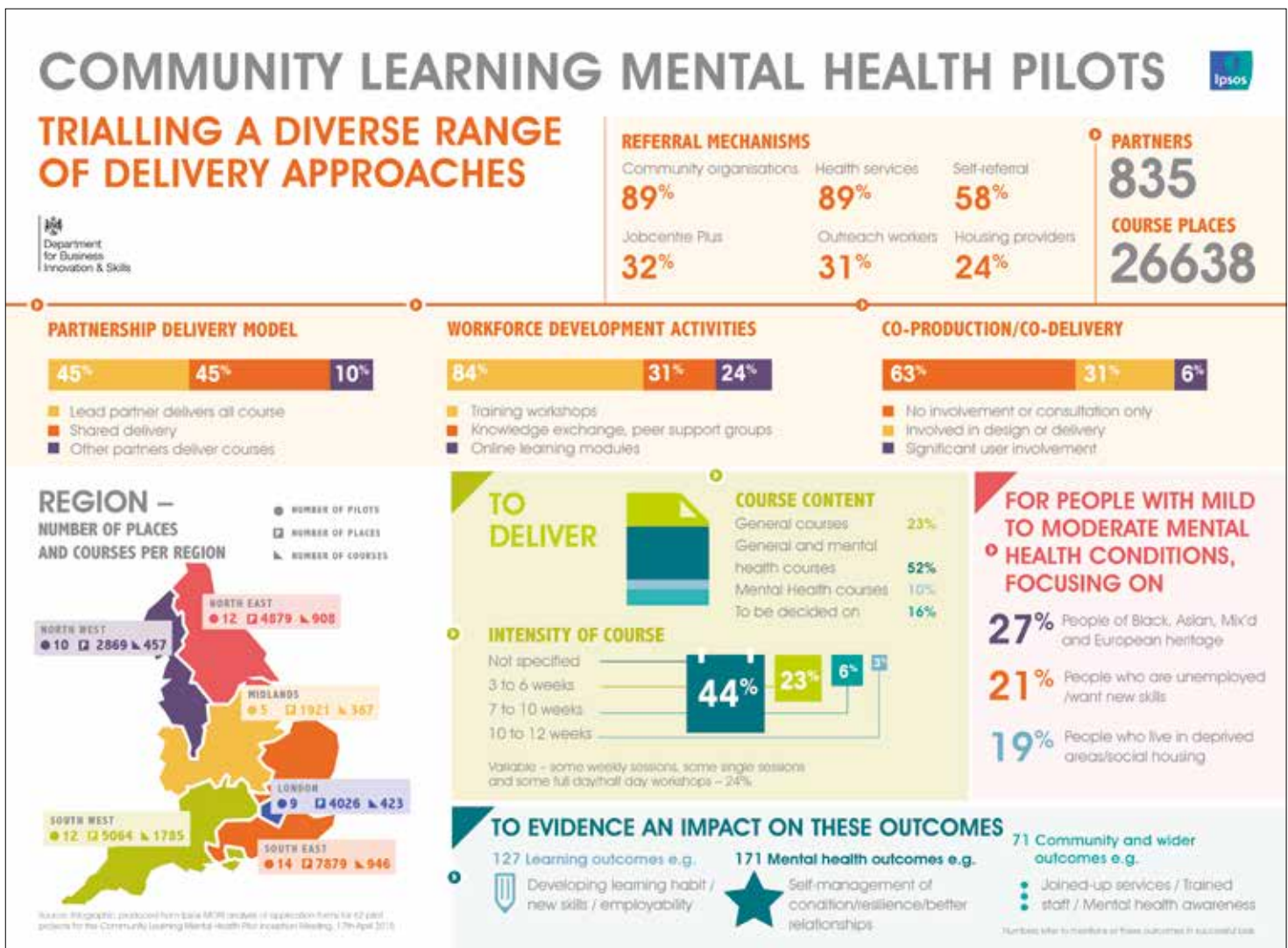
<sup>28</sup> Adult Learning and Well-being, briefing, November 2017, Available at: <https://www.whatworkswellbeing.org/product/adult-learning-briefing/> Accessed December 2017



### A more sustainable approach to health for the future

Many health issues are intergenerational. Our parents' place on the health gradient remains a solid predictor of our own. But learning can have intergenerational benefits in parents passing on their learning to their children. Marmot and others suggest that addressing health inequalities is about giving children the best possible start in life; adult and family learning supports parents and carers at the same time as their children.

A relatively small number of adults make the most demands on the UK's health service; generally speaking, these are people who face other (or 'multiple') disadvantages. To address the broader needs of these groups - for example, people living in poverty or older people, makes the system fairer, reduces health inequalities, but it also reduces costs to the healthcare system.





# Work: Challenges



## What do we mean by 'work'?

Work is a term that encompasses employment, self-employment, volunteering, employability programmes, and local labour markets. The European Union's definition of *workplace learning* includes all types of learning that help individuals obtain and progress at work. But it is not just employment-focused learning that has an impact on the labour market; learning for leisure and personal fulfilment also can have labour market outcomes. In some cases, employers sponsor this type of learning as they believe it impacts positively on business performance.

The concept of work is dynamic. Workplaces are changing through: automation, artificial intelligence, demographics, and organisational structures. Employment patterns are changing: economic inactivity is at an historical low, self-employment and the 'gig' economy are growing rapidly, and insecure work is increasingly common. Work in the UK is dependent on supra-national forces: an estimated 15% of employees work for foreign-owned companies<sup>29</sup> and labour mobility is based on an evolving relationship with the European Union.

## What are the challenges we face?

There are differing perspectives on the challenges faced. Employers, governments, trades unions, and employees all have slightly differing views on relative priorities. The challenges are much the same across Europe, where an estimated 70 million people lack basic skills; there are 12 million long-term unemployed, and '40% of European employers have difficulty finding the people with the skills they need to grow and innovate.'<sup>30</sup> However, the key challenges can be organised under three main themes:

**Fair work:** Compared to most parts of Europe, the UK (as a whole) has a high employment rate (just under 75%). However, this may be partly explained by the growth in self-employment in the UK and the high number of employed people working part-time or on zero-hour contracts<sup>31</sup>. The raw data may hide

significant factors such as job insecurity and a decline in real wages. There may be more people in work, less people economically inactive, but how much are they earning, how much job security and access to other aspects of employment (such as holiday and sickness pay) can individuals expect?<sup>32</sup> We estimate that 3.1 million Britons are in insecure work, a rise of half a million in the last five years.

**Skills mismatches:** A recent evidence review for the Government Office for Science Foresight Review of the Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning highlighted a number of key issues<sup>33</sup>. The review recognises the variability within the UK figures in different regions and devolved administrations. However, overall 23% of UK vacancies are hard to fill because of skills shortages, particularly in so-called STEM industries, skilled trades and professional services (all between 30-43%). Skills gaps (i.e. in the current workforce) are experienced by 14% of employers and cover 1.4m employees (5% of workforce). There is a correlation between overall levels of qualification and the likelihood of being employed with graduates being more likely to be employed (2.7% unemployment rate). However, graduates are also more likely to be over-qualified for the work they do. About 30% of employers report under-use of staff. Two million UK employees fit this category; 7% of the employed workforce.

**Productivity:** some of the factors outlined above - not having the right number of staff with the right skills - means UK productivity is relatively low. Output per hour in the UK was 18 percentage points below the average for the rest of the G7 advanced economies in 2015<sup>34</sup>. Lack of improvement in the UK's productivity since the 2008 financial crisis is often quoted as a 'skills issue'. This is despite the fact that qualification levels have increased in this period. The intensity of work has also increased, meaning people are working harder. But this comes at a cost: for example, work-related stress increased by 24% between 2009 and 2013, and the number of days lost to serious mental illness had doubled.<sup>35</sup>

29 <http://www.personneltoday.com/pr/2015/01/research-shows-15-of-uk-employees-work-for-companies-owned-by-foreign-nationalsnew-lending-service-for-these-companies/>

30 European Commission 2016, *A New Skills Agenda for Europe: working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness*

31 The latest estimate shows that 905,000 people reported that they were on a "zero-hours contract" in the period October to December 2016, representing 2.8% of people in employment. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/contractsthatdonotguaranteeaminimumnumberofhours/may2017#how-many-no-guaranteed-hours-contracts-are-there>

32 <https://www2.learningandwork.org.uk/statistics/labour/july-2017> (accessed 8.8.17)

33 Campbell, M. May 2016 *The UK Skills Mix: Current Trends and Future Needs*. Government Office for Science, Foresight, London.

34 Mansour, J. 2017. The Impact of Adult Learning on Participation in Work, Progression and Productivity. Stimulus Paper presented to the England Impact Forum, European Agenda for Adult Learning, National Union of Students, London.

35 Felstead, A. and Green, F. 'Working longer and harder? A critical assessment of work effort in Britain in comparison to Europe.' in Grimshaw, D et al (Eds) *Making work more equal*, Manchester University Press, 2017



### PRODUCTIVITY CRISIS

UK productivity, the amount workers produce, is

**20-25% lower**

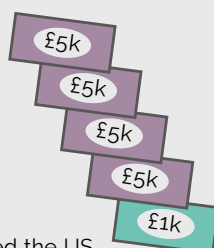
than in France, Germany and the US. It has flatlined in recent years and is

**15% lower**

than if pre-2007 trends had continued. Households would be

**£21k per year**

better off if UK productivity matched the US. Raising skills is a key way to increase productivity: people with Level 3 qualifications earn



### LOW PAY

**5m** people are low paid.

**1m more** than the OECD average.

**3 out of 4**

people who were low paid ten years ago are still low paid today.

Improving skills can help people increase pay: the evidence shows the more you learn, the more you earn. A Level 3 apprentice can earn £77-117,000 more over their lifetime.



'Job quality' is another important concept that encompasses wages, contractual status, and measures such as job satisfaction. Poor job quality affects our health and impacts on productivity.<sup>36</sup> In the case of adult basic skills, OECD argues, the issue of productivity is linked with other aspects: "Weak basic skills reduce productivity and employability, damage citizenship, and are therefore profoundly implicated in challenges of equity and social exclusion."<sup>37</sup>

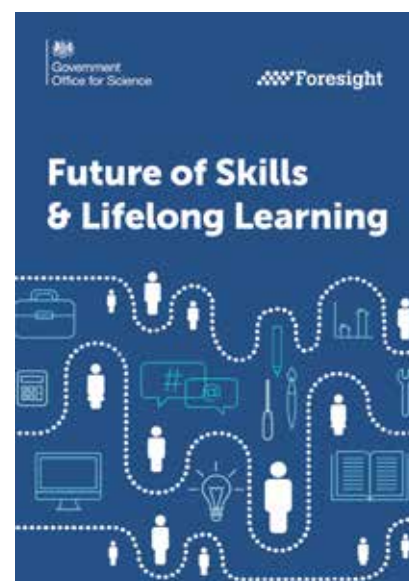
### Regional disparities

The recent final report of the Government's Foresight study into the future of lifelong and skills showed wide variations in UK economic performance<sup>38</sup>. One of the reasons for this is the 'asymmetric distribution of skills across the country' (page 6) Furthermore:

- Skill needs are influenced by regional and sectoral dynamics including the emergence of new occupations and the decline of old ones. (page 10)
- Skills and education are highlighted as the most important determinant of variations in regional productivity (page 12)
- Regional disparities in economic performance in the UK have persisted for many years, with London contributing disproportionately more to the UK

economy, and considerable regional variation in wages. (page 15)

- Uneven skills distribution is to some degree both a cause and consequence of regional disparities. (page 16)
- Low skills is associated with certain industries and their spatial distribution, for example in seaside towns (page 77).



<sup>36</sup> Sissons, P. et al. *Improving Job Quality in Growth Sectors*, IPPR Wales, (2017)

<sup>37</sup> Kuczera, M. et al. *Building Skills for All: policy insights from the survey of adult skills*. OECD, (2016)

<sup>38</sup> UK Government Office for Science. 2017. *Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning*. HMSO, London.



# Work: Role of Adult Learning



## How does adult learning help?

### Enabling access and advancement

Many studies show a clear link between labour market activity and level of qualification. Those with higher level qualifications are more likely to have higher earnings and access further learning at work<sup>39</sup>. This last point is important as there are higher wage premiums for work-based learning driven by employers.<sup>40</sup> The impact of qualifications and further learning on access (gaining a job) and advancement (progressing at work) are often quite distinct. Basic and intermediate skill levels enable access, but higher-level skills are needed to progress. Gaining higher-level skills while at work is often dependent on employer investment and support, which favours higher-skilled (or full-time) workers.<sup>41</sup>

Progression at work remains a major motive for participation in learning for adults; it is less clear whether the learning has to be job-related. Over three-quarters of adults surveyed in the 2015 *NIACE Participation in Learning Survey* identified work as the reason for taking up learning. Just over a quarter (26%) of learners in the 2012 survey saw 'to help in my current job' as a reason to learn. Slightly more (28%) thought it would lead to progression. This was described as: higher earnings, change of type of job, promotion, and movement to a different employer.

Workers' Educational Association (WEA) collects detailed data from its students on the impact of non-formal learning provision on 'employability', differentiating the self-attributed impact on employed and unemployed students. In 2016, this was further analysed in terms of different categories of student (for example by race, disability, and qualification level). For all these categories, 67-75% of employed students 'gained new skills or knowledge they could use in a job', and between 69 and 80% 'became more confident in progressing in their career in the future.' For the category 'unemployed students (looking for work)', 70-82% of students 'felt confident about finding a job in future.'

Crucially, 65% of students tried to improve their knowledge or skills independently as a result of the course. This impact was greater among English as a second language students of whom 76% participated in independent learning. Seventy-three percent of

students claimed they would know where to go if they needed to improve English, maths, digital or vocational skills as a result of their courses. This proportion was greater among students completing basic skills (80 per cent) and work preparation (98 per cent) courses. In the WEA's 2016 report there are also several references to how the impact for disadvantaged adults (whether in terms of income, ethnicity, education or health) are much greater.<sup>42</sup>



### Belfast enterprise economy, Northern Ireland

This award-winning initiative opens up opportunities and advancement to young people in Belfast. The one-year programme, funded by Belfast City Council, is open to all post-16 students who are living in the city. It is designed to open access to enterprise and business skills for a wide range of learners. Students are offered workshops, 1:1 mentoring, and business support, tailored to individual aspirations and ambitions. This includes financial, social media, branding and marketing information and advice as well as experience of businesses in action. Business locations have included: City Hall, George Best City Airport, the Game of Thrones set; Titanic Quarter Developments and Northern Ireland Science Park. At the end of the programme, learners present their business ideas to panels who help them with IAG to make ideas a reality. Achievements are recognised through Open College Network Awards at level 3 and contribute to the Edge Award (Ulster University), Degree Plus (Queen's University, Belfast) and Certificate in Processing Creativity (Belfast Metropolitan College). Since its inception, eight years ago, around 150 graduates have completed awards and 70 new businesses have been established. The programme received an international award from the European Training Foundation.<sup>43</sup> Source: *Northern Ireland Impact Forum*

39 NIACE Participation Surveys and the Taylor Review (p. 86).

40 Bibby, D. et al 2014. *Estimation of the labour market returns to qualifications gained in English Further Education*, BIS, (2014)

41 D'Arcy, C. and Hurrell, A. *Escape Plan: Understanding who progresses from low pay and who gets stuck*. Resolution Foundation, (2014)

42 WEA, 2016. *Improving Lives and Communities Through Learning: WEA Adult Education Impact Report*. Additional data provided by Iram Naz, Research Manager, WEA. (August, 2017).

43 <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/business/businessprogrammes/BusinessProgramme-53836.aspx>

### Increasing productivity

Studies have found that skills improvements, or changes in labour composition have tended to directly account for around a fifth of the growth in average labour productivity in the UK over recent decades.<sup>44</sup> The most recent Employer Skills Survey notes that an inability to recruit appropriately skilled labour may prove a brake on business growth and thereby hinder productivity. Management, leadership and complex analytical skills are identified by employers as key to increasing the productivity and agility of the workforce through innovation and the introduction of new technologies and working practices. The survey shows that employers report an inability among many existing staff to juggle multiple tasks, and this is identified as a factor which could hamper productivity.<sup>45</sup>

OECD's 2016 skills study on England highlighted the difference between the perceived impact of qualifications, as opposed to skills, on productivity.<sup>46</sup>



#### Aerfin Limited, Wales

A Caerphilly based engineering company, AerFin is committed to supporting staff with training, in diverse ways. It ensures that all employees with no aviation experience are appropriately trained and qualified, through a partnership with Cardiff and Vale College, and supervisory staff are offered flexible learning opportunities to train to support and assess colleagues. Up-skilling and re-training are seen as key to exceeding customer expectations, meeting compliance and fostering employee professionalism; the company encourages progression. However, it recognises that training is only one element of achieving its Quality Management System; coaching, mentoring and developing staff help them to achieve their fullest potential for themselves and the company. *Source: Wales Impact Forum.*

### Encouraging adaptation and resilience

The nature of work is dynamic-markets come and go, multi-national employers can make business decisions that make whole communities redundant, new technologies are changing workplaces forever. In periods of rapid innovation and change, qualifications will always lag behind the skills required to do a job.<sup>47</sup> Many successful companies embed learning into their business processes. This approach moves away from 'learning as acquisition' to 'learning as participation' in more expansive workplaces. For those out of work, adult learning is reported to increase 'resilience' and reduce the effects of loss of confidence associated with unemployment of over three months.



#### Lochside learners, Scotland

People who are unemployed in South Ayrshire have an opportunity to join an innovative group, formed through partnerships between Job Centre Plus, Access to Employment, South Ayrshire Adult Literacy Team and the Drug and Alcohol Partnership. Local employment data informed the need for a Front of Office Skills at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 and people were referred via the partnership to address personal challenges including drug and alcohol abuse, anxiety and negative experiences of learning.

The programme included modules on: understanding customer relations; communication skills; telephone techniques; dealing with difficult people; conflict resolution; handling complaints; time management. Through learning theory about some of their personal challenges, they discovered how to build confidence in themselves and each other. 50% of participants found sustainable employment; 20% moved into volunteering to build experience and 30% progressed to full time training. *Source: Scotland Impact Forum.*

44 NIESR, *Skills and Productivity in an International Context* 2015, BIS

45 UKCES, *UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey 2015: UK Results*, UKCES 2016 and Kuczera, M et al. 2016.

46 Kuczera, M. et al. *Building Skills for All: policy insights from the survey of adult skills*. OECD, 2016 see p. 60

47 An example is the development of the Leaf electric car at Nissan's Sunderland factory.



# Communities: Challenges



## What do we mean by 'communities'?

'Communities' is a broad and inclusive term that encompass: place, interest, identity and need. Increasingly communities are virtual or involve a combination of physical engagement and online interaction. In this way, communities often transcend national borders. Despite the complexity of the term, most government policies that talk about 'communities' focus on physical, placed-based ones. Within this location-based definition, however, it is recognised that policy-makers need to address the concerns of communities of interest, identity and need.

UNESCO's *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* looks at the impact of adult learning on "social, civic and community life". The report recognises that adult learning and education (ALE) exists in a symbiotic relationship with the communities it serves; it is both a condition of community development and a consequence: *'While ALE can lead to social change, civic and social structures also affect the availability and quality of ALE.'*<sup>48</sup>

## What are the challenges we face?

**Poverty of place:** many communities face multiple disadvantage: intergenerational worklessness, limited access to educational opportunities, low levels of aspiration, relatively poor health and well-being. A number of large-scale initiatives across the UK have tried to address place-based poverty. 'Troubled Families' in England; 'Communities First' in Wales; 'Active Ageing' in Northern Ireland and 'Aspiring Communities' in Scotland, have all endorsed the value of cross-cutting approaches. Learning is a common thread within each of these.

Deprived communities face multiple challenges. The term 'multiple deprivation' covers a number of interlinked factors of which 'education' or 'education and training' is one. Data is collected in different ways (and at different times) across the four nations of the UK, but there is one common finding: deprivation is concentrated in a small number of places all of which face multiple challenges including poor housing, higher levels of crime, high unemployment and poor access to public services.



### Social integration and community cohesion:

A number of recent reports have raised the issue of social integration and cohesive communities, particularly in the aftermath of the 'Brexit vote'. The 2016 Casey Review into opportunity and integration in the UK stressed that 'English language is a common denominator.' Based on the attitude surveys undertaken as part of its evidence gathering, the review concluded that 'lack of English skills presents a clear barrier to social and economic mobility' and therefore has:

*'an impact on community cohesion and integration: 95% of people living in this country think that to be considered "truly British" you must be able to speak English (up from 86% in 2003) and 87% of people with English as their main language felt they belonged strongly to Britain compared to 79% of people without.'*<sup>49</sup>

Some adult educators have raised the question 'whose integration' is it?'<sup>50</sup> They argue the role of educators is to empower learners to challenge the views of others such as those cited in the Casey Review. Similarly, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration<sup>51</sup> has stressed that integration is a two-way street, with rights and responsibilities for both new arrivals and settled communities. Both reports stress the importance of learning English and the challenges learners face in accessing it, whether from cultural, financial, or availability reasons:

*'According to the Office for National Statistics, approximately 800,000 people living in the UK at the time of the 2011 census could not speak English well or at all. A good grasp of the English language is necessary in order to understand one's rights in the workplace, to access employment opportunities and to build a diverse social and professional network. Speaking English is... crucial to social mobility in modern Britain.'*<sup>52</sup>

In recent years the policy narrative has moved to empowering communities to support themselves. In Scotland, the 2015 Community Empowerment Act aims 'to help communities to do more for themselves and have more say in decisions that affect them'.<sup>53</sup> Central to this is the idea of public services listening to, in the words of one Scottish city council, those 'people at risk of seldom being heard'.<sup>54</sup> A number of these groups are those disadvantaged by lack of access to educational services such as: unpaid carers, people with basic skills needs, and those living in poverty. The challenge is to assist people in shaping the public services that are designed to help them. It is argued that such an approach has both an 'instrumental' and a 'normative' purpose: it is a means to the end of delivering more efficient public services and better policy-making; and it is important in its own right, as part of a well-functioning democracy.<sup>55</sup>

### Community safety and security

UK communities face a number of challenges arising from global terrorism, enforced migration, and cyber-attacks that threaten our everyday life: public utilities, banking and personal data. Increasingly the concept of community safety has moved from a model of 'policing' to community involvement in public scrutiny of police forces, online safety, and preventing extremism.

People must be able to define *what* security is, *who* it is for and *how* it is delivered in their communities.<sup>56</sup> Much of the UK policy narrative is about protecting the British way-of-life, the rule of law, tolerance of diversity, integration and citizenship. Between July and September 2016, 33 of the 44 police forces in England and Wales saw their highest levels of hate crimes since comparable records began in 2012.<sup>57</sup>

Housing and public services are increasingly offered digitally by default, requiring a range of digital and financial literacy skills. In a connected 'Port-Truth' world it is important we are able to critically assess the vast amount of information we receive.

49 Casey, L. 2016 The Casey Review A review into opportunity and integration, London, Department for Communities and Local Government

50 Cooke, M., Winstanley, B. and Bryers, D. 2015 'Whose Integration? A participatory ESOL project in the UK', in J. Simpson and A. Whiteside (eds.) *Adult Language Education and Migration: Challenging Agendas in Policy and Practice*.

51 APPG on Social Integration (2017), *Integration not Demonisation*, final report, London.

52 Ibid, p.17

53 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/CommEmpowerBill>

54 <http://acvo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/engagement-participation-and-empowerment-strategy.pdf>

55 Devaney, C. and Shafique, A. 2016 *Citizens and Inclusive Growth*, RSA / JRF, London.

56 <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/peoples-security-and-justice/community-security>

57 See: BBC News 2017, 'Record hate crimes' after EU referendum, *BBC News*, 15 February 2017: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38976087> accessed 31 August 2017

### Sustainable development

Changes to our global climate affects localities. In recent years, we have seen threats to achieving a healthy, clean and safe environment. Global environmental threats, such as climate change and poor air quality have become key issues in all parts of the UK in the area of environmental health.

As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, world leaders have promised to provide 'lifelong learning opportunities for all', improve adult literacy and foster other essential skills and knowledge.<sup>58</sup>

By adopting the Agenda, the UK Government is committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in the UK as well as overseas. However, as the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee has reported:

*'the Government's doughnut-shaped approach - which is to see the Goals as something for the UK to help other countries do, rather than drawing on other countries' experiences in implementing the goals here at home- suggests that it has little interest in, or enthusiasm for, maximising the opportunities and benefits presented by the Goals.'*<sup>59</sup>

There are also concerns—from the same source and others— that there is a lack of public awareness and debate in the UK on the subject. Learning and education for sustainable development must play a key role in changing local behaviours that influence—particularly for the hardest to convince groups. However, the response of learning and skills policy makers has been on estates management and workforce development. There has been very little curriculum-based activity on sustainable development in adult learning.



<sup>58</sup> UIL. 2016. *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg, UIL.

<sup>59</sup> House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee. 2017. *Sustainable Development Goals in the UK*. London. UK Parliament



# Communities: Role of Adult Learning



## How does adult learning help?

### Developing individual skills so adults can help themselves and their families

Learning to develop individual skills has a social impact. Such a view emphasises the link between people who come together to learn in and as a group, and the building of social capital. This is particularly true where learning is focused on issues of common interest or concern, such as environmental initiatives or community development activities. However, research indicates that even where learning focuses on individual skills and knowledge, such as the development of essential or basic skills, social capacity has an opportunity to grow:

*'There is clear, convincing and statistically significant evidence that participation in basic skills provision, and having higher levels of basic skills, have a positive personal and social impact on individuals and communities. The personal and social impact of literacy and numeracy learning often takes time to emerge, and emerges in forms and context that are removed from formal learning environments.'*<sup>60</sup>

However, learning works differently with different groups. For example, UNESCO argues that non-formal and informal learning is more effective with older people, whereas more formal, qualification-bearing qualifications may motivate younger people to succeed.

The Citizens' Curriculum adopts an approach based on the three capitals model and the 'capabilities' defined in *Learning Through Life* (2009). This is a model based on co-creating a curriculum relevant to participants' everyday lives. In doing so it starts from the basis that participants have capital to invest in (and add value to) the process and its outcomes. The Phase 2 evaluation of the programme's pilot found the Citizens' Curriculum resulted in "statistically significant outcomes for learners". Using the New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database and Fujiwara's monetary value of adult learning,<sup>61</sup> it can be "calculated that the pilots created a public value of at least £1,443,390."<sup>62</sup>

### Building social capital and enabling social networks to develop

Whilst adults usually participate in learning as individuals, the social capital, built in the process of learning with others, seems to be, not only a positive outcome of participation, but an aspect which helps adults to successfully complete their learning activities and supports transition to further learning.

### Monkton Primary School, Wales



Launch Learning evolved around a school where 56% of children are entitled to free school meals; 40% of children have additional learning needs; 30% of children are Gypsy/Travellers. The school wanted to reach out to parents and the wider community to develop their skills and aspirations and offer progression. Local people were consulted along with local employers and a positive partnership was formed with the University of Wales, Trinity St David. The learning programme includes 'hook' or 'taster' courses such as hair and beauty, sewing and card-making. Short courses include: paediatric first aid; family learning; basic skills; food hygiene; GCSEs; CCNSG Refinery Site Safety passport; CSCS construction site safety card; computer courses and foundation and Bachelor of Arts degrees.

The impact of the initiative reveals that 70% of participants found employment on gaining the CCNSG passport. Over 200 students are studying in the evenings for a Foundation Degree and over 60 students have successfully gained a BA in the past five years. Following a 'hook' course, eight Gypsy/Traveller women requested literacy learning. One learner, a mother of eight and grandmother to three children described her learning journey over the past two years which included IT skills; a Foundation degree, several volunteer roles and she has now applied to be a parent governor at the school: 'My life has changed for the better, and I would like to thank Launch and the university for having confidence in me and the belief that I can reach my full potential and literally change my life.'

Source: *Wales Impact Forum*.

<sup>60</sup> Vorhaus, J et al, 2011, Review of Research and Evaluation on Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills, Research Paper 61, London, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills

<sup>61</sup> Fujiwara, D. 2012 Valuing the Impact of Adult Learning: An analysis of the effect of adult learning on different domains in life. Leicester: NIACE.

<sup>62</sup> Learning and Work Institute 2016, Citizens' Curriculum, Phase 2 project report (October 2016) Stevenson, A., Robey, C., Downes, S., Leicester, Learning and Work Institute

Parents too, have reported that learning how to help their children in the, has increased their confidence in their parenting role and as improved relationships within families. In the 2016 WEA Impact study, 54% of grandparents reported positive familial outcomes from joining in learning activities.<sup>63</sup>

A study in 2004 attempted to identify the nature of confidence and its importance as an outcome of learning. It also set out to capture and record changes in confidence during a learning period. The resulting action research report and tool kit was called 'Catching Confidence'.<sup>64</sup> One of the conclusions of the study was that individuals and groups could identify changes in confidence as a result of learning, which led to them engaging with issues of importance for their community, well-being and regeneration. Learners recorded how building confidence was important to help deal with any kind of change in work and broad life situations.

These multiple dimensions resonate with the work of Schuller et al, which suggests that the benefits of learning can be identified as building human, social and identity capital.<sup>65</sup>

Social capital is formed from networks in which people are active and where they are enabled to have access to other individuals and groups. This benefit of learning was endorsed by Fujiwara's work on valuing the impact of adult learning, which revealed how taking part in learning improves social life and helps to build relationships.<sup>66</sup> Preston and Hammond,<sup>67</sup> had previously found that further education, which includes learning for and with adults, was effective in developing social networks and helping people to feel included. Similarly, the 2016 review of Adult Community Learning (ACL) in Wales<sup>68</sup> reported that ACL helped to reduce social isolation and encouraged social inclusion and cohesion.

The WEA 2016 Impact Study<sup>69</sup> revealed that 84% of learners who had taken part in a WEA course reported that they had made new friends as a result of joining in learning activities. An earlier study, of the impact

of the Adult Community Learning Fund,<sup>69</sup> which was designed to widen participation, through community-based opportunities, found similar outcomes. It indicated how self-confidence, social skills, social integration and higher social capital were developed through learning.<sup>70</sup>

### Empowering communities to be more tolerant and sustainable

There are a number of studies and projects that look at impact in this arena. For example, Preston and Hammond,<sup>71</sup> argue that further education for adults appears to be effective in bridging differences between ethnic groups and different ages. They suggested that this leads to greater tolerance, cultural development and fosters 'community esteem'. Another large scale research review showed how greater community cohesion, tolerance and trust is created as a result of learning with people from different backgrounds, ethnic origins or religious faiths.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, the 2016 WEA report<sup>73</sup> indicated that 81% of participants said that, as a result of joining in learning, they mixed with people of different backgrounds and cultures. This indicates how learning, **not necessarily primarily designed for such purposes**, helped to contribute to social cohesion.

The WEA Impact study 2016 reported a 31% increase in learners' interest in local and national affairs; 20% had taken part in a campaign for the first time; 15% had contacted local or national authorities; 21% of participants began voluntary activities; 55% reported gains in skills to help with volunteering.<sup>74</sup>

In 2013 European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) published a summary leaflet<sup>75</sup>, which included an analysis of the impact of learning on voting in political elections. The European Social Survey found a strong and consistent positive relationship between years of education and an interest in politics. Every additional year of education, in general, raises the likelihood of voting in national elections by 3%. It is difficult to demonstrate a direct

63 WEA, 2016, Adult Education Impact Report, 2016, Improving Lives and Communities through Learning, WEA

64 [http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/sites/niaee\\_en/files/resources/Catching-Confidence-Final-Report.pdf](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/sites/niaee_en/files/resources/Catching-Confidence-Final-Report.pdf) accessed March 2017

65 Schuller, T, Preston, J, Hammond, C, Brasset-Grundy, A, Bynner, J, 2004, The benefits of learning; the impact of education on health, family and social capital, London, Routledge

66 Fujiwara, D, 2012, Valuing the impact of adult learning; an analysis of the effect of adult learning on different domains in life, Leicester, NIACE

67 Preston, J and Hammond, C, 2002, The wider benefits of further education; practitioner views, London, Institute of Education

68 ARAD Research, 2016, A Review of Adult Community Learning in Wales, Cardiff, Welsh Government

69 WEA, Adult Education Impact Report, 2016, Improving Lives and Communities through Learning, WEA

70 The Institute for Employment Studies, 2002, Impact of the Adult and Community Learning Fund, Brighton, the Institute for Employment Studies

71 Field, J et al, 2001, Evaluation of the Adult and Community Learning Fund, London, Department for Education and Skills.

72 Preston, J and Hammond, C, 2002, The Wider benefits of Further Education; practitioner views, London, Institute of Education

73 Centre for Research on Wider Benefits of Learning, *The Wider Benefits of Learning: learning and community vitality*, 2011, Germany, Bertelsmann Stiftung, for European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLI)

74 WEA Adult Education Impact Report, 2016, *Improving Lives and Communities through Learning*, London

75 On-line leaflet EAEA, Why is adult learning important? <http://www.eaea.org/media/policy-advocacy/adult-education-in-times-of-crisis/2013-why-is-ae-important-leaflet.pdf>



causal link between continuing learning and political engagement, however, EAEA indicated that those adults who participate in one or two courses are 13% more likely to vote. Adult learning certainly does appear to foster an increase in active citizenship.

Similarly, the 2013 OECD *Survey of Adult Skills*<sup>76</sup> found that those with higher levels of literacy are more likely to have higher levels of political efficacy and are more likely to participate in volunteering activities.

### Encouraging participation in culture and the arts

The WEA longitudinal impact study (undertaken in 2013) looked at the impact that WEA courses have on increasing cultural participation and sustaining behavioural change. It found there was a long-term impact of learning on cultural participation.<sup>77</sup> The 2016 WEA Impact Survey found that 77% of learners were encouraged to take part in more cultural activities as a result of learning.<sup>78</sup>

Fegan (2003)<sup>79</sup> cites many examples of arts learning activities, which involve people from diverse ethnic community backgrounds and in different community locations. He argues that people are more likely to take part in their local community if they are involved in activities they enjoy and that have demonstrable results. Fegan lists how people learn with and from each other; build new knowledge and skills; get involved in participatory, interactive and creative activities which involve problem-solving and critical thinking. Arts activities are not only effective in attracting more and diverse people into learning but also develop skills which are useful in work and in community engagement and cohesion.

### Ashley Community Housing, England

Ashley Community Housing specialises in the economic, social and civic integration of refugees through accommodation and community-based training support. Over nine years, 2000 individuals have been successfully settled. The five-stage approach starts with accommodation and support. The integration stages deal with work skills, enterprise skills and moving on.

Ashley Community Housing believes that early labour market integration aids refugees through culturally sensitive support, training and sector-focused employment skills. Tenants contribute to decision-making processes and are involved in co-designing services which include social activities, day trips and group cycle rides. Impact is measured through data collection related to the support given; successful moving on; family reunions; tenants entering full time work; % of tenants reporting improved mental health and % of tenants reporting improved physical health. This small, specialist housing association invests in adult learning because it believes that tenants' 'moving on' is key to the success of the individual as well as the initiative.

Source: *England Impact Forum*

### INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

People with higher levels of skills are more likely to actively participate in society, including voting. Learning can also improve financial capability: in a survey,

**16% couldn't**  +  +  = 

identify the available balance on a simple bank statement. Higher levels of financial capability are associated with improved life satisfaction, higher rates of saving, and a

**£120pm higher income.**



Learning is also linked to better health: education is associated with better take-up of preventative services, such as screening.

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Country%20note%20-%20United%20Kingdom.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> Workers' Educational Association 2014 *Long term Impact of WEA Adult Education*. London: The Workers' Educational Association

<sup>78</sup> Website accessed February 2017 <https://www.wea.org.uk/about-us/our-impact/2016-impact-report>

<sup>79</sup> Fegan, T, 2003, *Learning and Community Arts*, Leicester, NIACE

## LIFE CHANCES

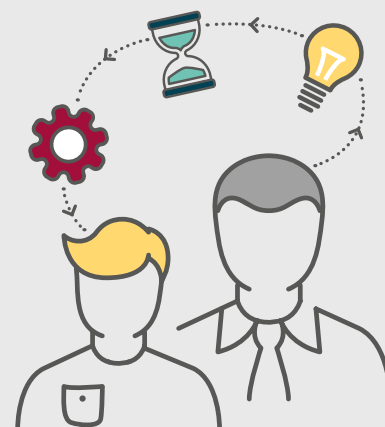
In the UK, there is a stronger link between people's income and their parents' income than in other countries. Around

one half

of this is due to the strong links between your parents' educational attainment and yours.

Supporting parents to improve their skills and earnings can help to improve outcomes for their children. Family learning can increase children's academic achievement by as much as

15 percentage points.



## A Woman's Guide to Controversial Conversations, Northern Ireland



This project aimed to enable women to engage meaningfully in peace-building within and beyond their communities. Interactive workshops facilitated the knowledge and understanding of what sectarianism and racism. They explored how to challenge and combat these deeply ingrained societal problems to build a peaceful and stable future.

Women were recruited through established organizational relationships, social media and newsletter publications disseminated regionally. The self-selection of the groups is key to success.

The main challenges were that peace-building and intercommunity work are not static events. Relationships ebb and flow and are regularly impacted upon by the bigger political picture. However, community relations need to be nurtured with alternative narratives and work to

continue to build peace in a post-conflict society. The outcomes were confident knowledgeable women actively involved in peace-building and good relations within their communities and society as a whole.

By 2017, 150 women had taken part. The programme led to women taking part in various activities within their communities such as organizing events (summer schemes, education classes, study visits) and/or local decision-making processes (residents' associations, community groups, women's groups). Formative and summative oral and written feedback were used to assess impact.

The critical success factors were exploring sensitive issues in a challenging but supportive environment from a gender perspective - creating space for women to learn and speak openly of their experiences.

*Source: Women's Resource and Development Agency, Northern Ireland.*

# Implications for Policy and Practice

## Summary of challenges and the role of adult learning

On 4-5 October 2017, we shared the draft findings of this report with an audience of 120 UK and international policy-makers, researchers, influencers, practitioners, adult learners, and other stakeholders. We asked people to tell us, on the basis of the evidence and case studies, the implications for policy and practice.

### CHALLENGES

#### Ten Strategic Challenges

There are many current challenges, relating to employment and the economy, lifestyles, health, wellbeing and communities.

**1 An ageing-population:** as we live longer, the likelihood of having long-term complex conditions is greater. Costs of health and care increase as we age.

**2 Lifestyles:** the way we live in relation to diet, exercise and the use of alcohol have detrimental effects on our health.

**3 Mental health and well-being:** 25% of adults in Britain will experience a diagnosable mental health problem in any one year and figures are rising, with suicide amongst young men in particular, being the biggest killer in those under 30 years of age.

**4 Fair work:** the UK has a high employment rate (75%), but 3.1 million Britons are in insecure work, a rise of 0.5 million since 2012. This includes zero hours contracts, part-time work and under-employment of people with skills and qualifications which are not being used.

**5 Skills mismatches and skills gaps:** linked to fair work, people are employed but operating at the 'wrong' level, or employers are unable to fill vacant posts due to a lack of the 'right' skills and experience.

**6 Productivity:** UK output per hour was 18% below average for the rest of the G7 advanced economies in 2015, meaning that we don't have the 'right' people with the 'right' skills, delivering goods and services at the 'right' time.

### WHAT COULD BE DONE

#### How does adult learning help?

The evidence in preceding chapters points to some of the key ways in which adult learning contributes to major strategy areas and challenges, as well as help to achieve shared outcomes.

**1 Improving health behaviours and attitudes:** involvement in learning helps develop a greater ability to understand and manage our own health.

**2 Extending life-expectancy and disability-free life expectancy** is linked to the levels of education achieved. There are strong links between health, longevity and the time spent in initial and continuing education.

**3 Reducing in lifestyle diseases.** Adult learning provides the tools for people to influence their environment and helps to 'make them healthier' as cited in UNSECO. They develop greater confidence through their learning which helps them to access and understand information, systems and support as well as participate in groups and networks, which facilitate healthier lifestyles.

**4 Enabling a more efficient healthcare system.** By drawing on the full range of services from public, private and third sector organisations, individuals can be supported to use opportunities to access learning for health-related issues for interest and employability as well as build social capital. This diverts individuals away from dependency on health providers and enables the health service to focus on clinical needs and consequently increase efficiency and effectiveness.

**5 Enabling access and advancement:** many studies show a clear link between jobs and qualification levels, identifying how learning for and in work contributes to the growth of individuals to access employment, progress in their current jobs and enable them to increase their income, building greater control over their lives.

**6 Enabling productivity:** skills improvements directly account for 20% of the growth in average labour productivity in the UK over recent decades, pointing to the need for employers to open up learning routes

We began by summarising the ten challenges the UK faces, and ten ways adult learning helps address them. Then participants told us what more could be done to enhance the role of adult learning in the UK.

**7 Poverty of place:** multiple disadvantages in communities with 'troubled families' and neighbourhoods, place-based poverty, resulting in health inequalities; housing and schooling issues; increased unemployment and unrest as well as increases in crime.

**8 Engagement, involvement and empowerment:** 'community cohesion' and 'integration', identity and belonging are challenged in localities where suspicion and alienation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is common; traditional industries and employment have disappeared and where people feel they have no 'voice' or influence.

**9 Community safety and security:** online safety, cyber security, preventing extremism are 'glocal' (global / local) issues which cause uncertainty and fear.

The digital divide, where some people are unable to access information, support and entitlements such as welfare benefits, contributes to vulnerability. Additionally, those who are vulnerable due to debt, poverty and unemployment are susceptible to exploitation via on-line interventions.

**10 Sustainable development:** Changes to our global climate affects localities. In recent years, we have seen threats to the achieving a healthy, clean and safe environment. Global environmental threats, such as climate change and poor air quality have become key issues in all parts of the UK in the area of environmental health. However, the response of learning and skills has been limited.

within the workplace and address frequently reported skills gaps. Additionally, this helps with adaptation and flexibility where employees are able to respond to change and new developments. Successful companies embed learning into their business processes.

**7 Developing individual skills** and capabilities are a key part of employability and productivity but also help adults to help themselves in daily life, including accessing information, developing digital skills, engaging with new and different organisations and problem-solving.

**8 Building social capital** and enabling networks to develop through involvement in any form of learning is widely reported, whether the learning is formal or informal. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence of the significance of social capital in times of individuality and isolation, which impact negatively on our health and wellbeing. Involvement in learning for health, interest or work leads to social links and new relationships, which reduce isolation and loneliness.

**9 Empowering communities** to be more tolerant and sustainable. Learning in and for community purposes helps to increase a sense of belonging, builds relationships through shared experiences and issues, fosters understanding of others, sharing of customs and traditions and can empower individuals and groups to work together for common/community purposes. This includes supporting people from diverse backgrounds as well as people who have disabilities of all kinds, helping to address equality of opportunities and involvement. Adult learning has the potential to enable people to think globally and act locally in fast-changing world.

**10 Encouraging participation** in society, culture and the arts. Through volunteering, learning how to take on responsibilities in neighbourhoods and in local voluntary and charity organisations, many individuals contribute to the richness of the quality of life for everyone. building social capital, skills, knowledge and individual and community identity.

## What needs to be done?

In looking at the challenges and how learning helps, we identified twelve things that need to be done to maximise the impact of adult learning in the UK. .

Health	Work	Communities
<p><b>1 Social Prescribing</b>, supporting learning linked to health, work and communities should be strategically extended across the UK.</p>	<p><b>2 Investment in adult learning</b> should be increased, by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the state: giving greater flexibility;</li> <li>b) employers: embedding learning in their organisations and</li> <li>c) individuals: personal learning accounts &amp; learner loans.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3 Offer lifelong and life-wide opportunities</b>, to break inter-generational cycles of difficulties and redress disadvantage and inequity for everyone, including those who have come to live and work in the UK.</p>
<p><b>4 An integrated approach</b> to health and associated services, including adult learning, at local levels, integrating multi-disciplinary teams to avoid unnecessary duplication, should be adopted.</p>	<p><b>5 A Careers Advancement Service</b> should be established, which helps people to progress in work, building on lessons learned from initiatives from across the UK.</p>	<p><b>6</b> Government departments must embrace the <b>demonstrable value of adult learning</b> &amp; education, in addressing key strategies and policies, acknowledging that it is the responsibility of more than the education and skills departments.</p>
<p><b>7 Person-centred curricula</b>, using an asset-based approach, to enhance capabilities and existing knowledge, should be adopted.</p>	<p><b>8 Inclusive learning pathways</b>, offering diverse access points and routes to development, to help address skills shortages and fill empty posts, should be created and promoted. Routes should embrace basic skills to HE and include STEM fields.</p>	<p><b>9 A universal entitlement</b> to essential/basic skills, adopting an asset-based approach and using a range of capabilities must be established to help everyone learn, develop and contribute.</p>
Infrastructure recommendations		
<p><b>10 Dual professionalism</b> must be developed and supported enabling training for professionals in health, community and employment in relation to adult learning. Professionals in adult learning must have an opportunity to work with colleagues in health, community and employment services using partnerships, peer and mentoring approaches.</p>	<p><b>11</b> Adult learning providers of all kinds should be supported to <b>assess outcomes and impact</b> in a systematic and comparable way. This should build upon the good practice that already exists in UK and European adult learning.</p>	<p><b>12 Promote sustainable development education for adults</b>, by supporting the development of new curricula and staff development. Devolved administrations should adopt and work within UK guidelines.</p>





# England

## Context

Adult learning in England is primarily the responsibility of the Department for Education, with the Department for Work and Pensions responsible for some employability programmes for welfare claimants. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for funding most adult learning outside Higher Education. In line with broader government policy, ESFA aims to enable the social mobility of students from all walks of life: 'Education and skills lie at the heart of the government's drive to extend opportunity, deliver real social justice and raise economic productivity.' The devolution of adult education budgets (AEB) to local areas is one of five policy priorities in the ESFA's Business Plan 2017–2018.

Although England has experimented with regionalisation, it is only recently that steps have been taken to devolved adult learning policy and funding. Successive governments in England have designed (and tweaked) a social market system characterised by high levels of institutional autonomy regulated by centralised funding systems, robust quality frameworks, and inspection. This is in the process of changing with better links planned between policy siloes.



## Policy Drivers

Much of current adult learning policy discourse in England is shaped by the changing needs of the economy and how government perceives its role in enabling economic growth, and social mobility. To its credit, many aspects of government's thinking in this area is based on a wider concept of 'the economy' than blunt analyses of GDP. Greater sophistication in policy-making includes concepts that adult learning has a well-evidenced role to play, such as:

- **Inclusive growth:** not leaving communities behind, enabling those who did not succeed at school or who have been made redundant to re-enter the labour market
- **Inward investment:** creating places that attract investors and talent through stimulating the arts, culture, green spaces, civic engagement, and addressing homelessness, crime and anti-social behaviour
- **Increased productivity:** by skilling up the workforce to engage with customers, communicate in English and other languages, innovate, utilise and interact with new and emerging technologies so that they enhance jobs rather than replace them
- **Specialisation:** England's economy is changing fast, the jobs of the future are not the same as those of today, developed economies are likely to specialise in high-value goods and services in specialist sectors; specialist industry requires specialist training
- **Employment and fair work:** England as a whole has a high employment rate. But increasingly work is insecure and insufficient to meet the employment demands of individuals—underemployment is high—and some regions are doing better than others. Such inequities benefit no one, and stimulate ever-increasing demands on other public services
- **Decreasing dependency on public services:** our ageing society means people have longer working lives; it also means age-dependency will increase. Learning has a key role to play in maintaining health, wellbeing and independence. Of course, greater empowerment may also lead to more demanding citizens, but the evidence shows that it also makes people more discerning consumers of public services—as well as contributors through volunteering and political engagement
- **Collaborative public services:** many of our public services are disconnected from each other so that they do not harness each other's resources for the common good; where they work together, they are more effective and create savings; learning is the golden thread that runs through all public services
- **Right-level planning:** England as the most populous and diverse country of the UK is probably too large to plan effectively on a centralised basis; devolution will lead to outcomes based funding within which learning has a key role to play—in the transition phase

## Key Challenges

- **Lack of social mobility puts a brake of productivity and inclusive growth**

Across England, educational achievement and earnings are closely related to family background. To enable everyone to reach their full potential we need to break this link. Family and community learning approaches can support this agenda but need to be integrated with other family support services and strategies.

- **Employment and skills systems run on a twin-track approach**

Policy fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and a tardiness in addressing need. For example, government is committed to halving the gap employment for people with health problems and disabilities by 2020, but on current rates of progress this will take 200 years. We need more effort, joined up support, and sustained investment. Approximately half of benefit claimants in this category have no qualifications. Many have been out of the labour market for 5-10 years so need work experience and employability support.

- **Lack of integration of learning and health services**

As learning benefits health and wellbeing more generally so it should be integrated into wider health support. Some progress is being made on this at local levels but it needs an overarching national commitment, more resource and support.

- **Skills shortages, gaps, and mismatches**

In common with the rest of the UK, England faces challenge as to how the learning system can provide the type of skills that will be needed in growth sectors such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industries. The challenge here is to move from the sophisticated analysis of local labour markets to action that enables growth in an inclusive way.

- **Basic skills in English and maths**

Across the UK, 9 million adults have low literacy, numeracy or both. This holds back life chances, prosperity and social inclusion. It is welcome that Government has committed to free digital training, making that the third basic skills alongside literacy and numeracy. More resources are needed given the scale of the challenge (in England, £200m per year for 15 years to double current rates of investment).

- **Digital inclusion**

Approximately 12.6m adults lack basic digital skills. The most marginalised groups make up largest proportion of the digitally excluded. Lack of digital skills limits the ability of citizens to participate in society, support their families, communicate or retrieve information. By 2020, 90% of all jobs will require digital skills at some level.

- **Short-termism and reduced real terms funding**

Since 2010 there has been a year-on-year decline in recurrent funding and infrastructure that has traditionally supported adult learning as other parts of the public sector have been cut. Direct funding to adult learning providers has declined dramatically leading to a significant fall in part-

time provision. At the same time, the willingness of employers and individuals to fund their own learning has not filled the gap. Co-investment, therefore, despite recent progress, remains a challenge.

- **Learning and progression at work**

Around 10m UK employees still do not access any training at work. The Government is committed to expanding apprenticeships funded in part by the Apprenticeship Levy on larger employers. The commitment to expansion is welcome. Apprenticeships can be a great way to combine learning and earning. But this will only work if Apprenticeships are high quality and accessible to all with clear progression routes. Evidence shows people from some backgrounds are significantly under-represented.

## Action Required

1. **Invest in skills for growth**

Economic growth is a long-term project which is not helped by constant policy change. Basic, intermediate and higher-level skills are all part of the same progression journey. Policy should integrate all levels of provision to provide upskilling learning pathways from basic to higher levels skills linked to good LMI about future skill demand. Within this policy, apprenticeships should continue to develop in terms of their quality and accessibility.

2. **Integrate and reform the employment and skills systems**

Devolution of budgets provides greater opportunities to link learning with employment support, through shared services, data sharing, as well as joint planning and delivery. The employment and skills workforces need support to adapt their practice. Benefit sanctions should be reformed to allow greater access to learning for those most in need of support.

3. **Address low-pay and insecure work**

Given the significant structural increase in self-employment and insecure work, we need to target this part of the workforce. A new advancement service should be established to advise on and oversee progression at work.

4. **Revitalise lifelong learning**

Lifelong learning is the golden thread that runs through wider public policy for people of all ages. We need a lifelong strategy that places a requirement on all government departments to consider the lifelong learning implications and impact of policies. The initial focus will be on those departments of state covered in this report: Health, Work, Communities, and Education.

5. **Make migration work**

Learning English is critical to our economy and social integration. Speakers of other languages should have rights and responsibilities regarding provision. An national ESOL strategy should be drawn up across government departments to oversee implementation that places realistic expectations on public investment.

# Northern Ireland

## Context

The Northern Ireland Assembly has the authority to legislate in a field of competences known as "transferred matters" - in effect this covers all governmental areas, including all aspects of learning, with certain exceptions (e.g defence, telecommunications, taxation). The Northern Ireland Executive collapsed in January 2017 and, at the time of writing, talks between the political parties aimed at restoration of the Assembly and Executive have failed to produce agreement. The interim responsibility for day-to-day decisions lies with senior departmental civil servants. Prior to this, following the Assembly election in 2016, there had been a public consultation on a draft Programme for Government. The draft Programme had proposed an outcomes-based approach in terms of delivery and an undertaking to work across departmental boundaries. The Northern Ireland Impact Forum welcomed this approach in its response.



## Policy Drivers

- **Rebalancing the economy** away from over-reliance on the public sector through the attraction of greater foreign investment and the expansion of indigenous companies
- **Improvement of skills levels**, especially at higher levels, in support of the above
- **Addressing the current unemployment rate** of 5.3% is above the UK average of 4.4%. The current economic inactivity rate stands at 26.9% compared to UK average of 21.3%.
- **Tackling under-achievement among school leavers** (in 2015/16 32.3% of pupils left school with fewer than five GCSEs at grades A-C or equivalent including English and Maths )
- **Implementation of a Public Health strategy** to tackle health inequalities and major public issues
- **Implementation of a transformational plan** to reconfigure primary care and hospital services in a more patient-focussed manner with earlier interventions
- **Building a shared society** and peaceful future by addressing the divisions arising from recent years of conflict
- **Implementing community planning responsibilities** which have been devolved to local Councils; recent plans have shown broad commitment to supporting growth in skills and learning in all its diversity.

## Key Challenges

- The lack of an Assembly and Executive since January 2017 has hampered efforts at advocacy for adult learning.
- While some Government departments and agencies recognise the role of adult learning, what is currently absent is an explicit recognition and commitment to the enabling and developmental role which adult learning can play in the delivery of key political, social and cultural objectives.
- There is no comprehensive data to measure levels of participation in adult learning across the different sectors where learning takes place ie in workplaces; communities; colleges and in voluntary organisations. This reflects the fragmented and often competitive nature of provision, with sponsoring and funding bodies not recognising any need to share data. It also demonstrates a lack of recognition for informal and non-accredited learning as pathways to improved health and wellbeing, employment or community and civil engagement.
- The rapid changes happening in technology and demography require investment in workplace learning and, in later life in particular, learning for health and independence.
- The centrality of economic policy has led to a narrowing and devaluing of non-employment related learning. The clear economic worth of adult learning to health/wellbeing, community development and good relations is not recognised.



- The prevalence of the 'silo mentality' in Government Departments has led to unnecessary evidence duplication, ineffective use of resources and narrow and inhibiting models of measurement and accountability.
- Much of the funding for adult learning, particularly in the voluntary sector, is project based and short term. This continually threatens the sustainability of good providers and good practice and is economically unsound. It also negatively impacts on community initiatives to build a more cohesive and respectful society.
- This work and many employability schemes are under threat post-Brexit as they currently rely, heavily, on European funding.

## Action Required

1. A commitment from the Executive that Northern Ireland becomes a Learning Society which promotes, funds and celebrates learning, in both formal and informal settings, throughout the lives of its citizens for the betterment of their health, economic, social and cultural wellbeing.
2. Adopt a Lifelong Learning strategy - recognising that, with current and future technological and demographic changes, learning must extend throughout and across life and is essential for individuals and communities to achieve their full potential.
3. Undertake a comprehensive survey of provision across all sectors to establish a baseline, leading to a review of current delivery and funding to develop a system that both enables the individual to progress into and throughout work and enables the development of stable, inclusive communities.
4. Enable provision across the sectors should be evaluated (and funded) in accordance with impact indicators; successful innovation should receive funding to become mainstreamed.
5. Identify alternative funding must be identified to ensure continuity of delivery in key areas of employability and peacebuilding.
6. Encourage collaboration between policymakers and professionals across education, health, work

and employment and community development should be the norm and expected by government and funders in line with the spirit of the draft Programme for Government.

7. Facilitate a Forum for Adult Learning - to promote adult and lifelong learning, advise on policy (including the creation of a Lifelong Learning Strategy), facilitate collaboration between providers and develop best practice through association with the other nations of the UK.

## Integrated Approaches - The Belfast Agenda



Following decisions in the Northern Ireland Assembly, in 2015 and the formation of 11 new local authorities, community planning is now a statutory obligation. Belfast, as with other authorities, has created a partnership with 14 other organisations, including health, housing, social care, education, sport, libraries, tourism and Invest NI, to develop a four-year plan. 'Belfast conversations' were held and a new vision, with ambitious aims, for the city to 2035 has emerged. The focus for 2017-21 will be on four key themes of: Growing the economy; Living in the city; City development and Working and learning. Each theme has a commitment and supporting workstreams. Working and learning includes, not only employment, skills, employability and HE/FE but also a commitment to addressing educational inequalities and become a Learning City.

Living in the city embraces integrated approaches to addressing health inequalities, enhancing mental wellbeing and reducing social isolation, whilst Growing the Economy includes creating employment opportunities and harnessing innovation. The proposed integrated approaches include many aspects of learning for and with adults. Consultation on this plan concluded in April 2017 and the feedback will inform the next steps of development.



The Forum for Adult Learning Northern Ireland conference, Belfast, October 2017

# Scotland

## Context

Adult learning policy in Scotland is led by the Scottish Government and administered and supported through Education Scotland's Community Learning and Development (CLD) Team. Since 1975 local education authorities have had powers to provide further education for their areas as set out in the Education Scotland Act 1980.

The system of continuing, post-school, non-tertiary education in Scotland includes three main types of provision that are available to adult learners:

- Community Learning and Development (CLD)
- Training and Apprenticeships
- Further and Higher Education

There is overlap among these types of provision. For example, colleges contribute strongly to both training and developing the young workforce. Adults who wish to access Higher Education can do so through the Scottish Wider Access Programme in colleges.

The common defining feature of CLD programmes and activities is that they are negotiated and developed with communities and participants, enabling individuals to re-engage in learning.

Training provision, underpinned by the Skills for Scotland strategy (Scottish Government, 2010), supports lifelong development and the use of skills. Government funded national training programmes are managed and delivered by Skills Development Scotland.

Further education has a wide remit, including the preparation of learners for qualifications, access to higher education and participation in any programme of learning, as well as assisting people whose first language is not English.



## Policy Drivers

In Scotland adult learning policy is largely shaped by:

- Current funding challenges at both national and local levels
- An ageing population
- Unemployment, particularly in areas of social deprivation
- Political changes
- The Community Empowerment Act
- Education Scotland Act 1980
- Public Service Reform-sharing outcomes with other services including health, justice etc.,

Adult learning in Scotland is considered to be the remit of local authorities, in line with the 1980 Education Scotland Act and the subsequent Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 which cites as one of its goals, improved life chances for people of all ages through learning, personal development and active citizenship.

To this end, the Community Planning Partnerships have responsibility to enact this goal and to ensure greater co-operation and co-ordination between the key players. Now the challenge is to extend this further and develop adult learning across sectors. Adult learning in its traditional form includes literacy, ESOL, skills for work and life; however, learning in respect of health, STEM, citizenship, resilience, business etc. is also delivered at a community level in partnership with other providers.

Scotland, like many other countries has an ageing population. Health and social conditions have contributed to people not only living longer, but also being active longer. People wish to, and often need to, work beyond the traditional retirement ages, yet, as they age, they are faced with new learning demands, such as, workplace skills (IT), managing health conditions, active volunteering opportunities and or engaging with different leisure activities.

To enable older people to effectively contribute and add to community capacity, a more cohesive and co-ordinated learning plan is required. Older people's unemployment (particularly those aged 50+) is a challenge and there is a need for a proactive policy in developing the older workforce, particularly amongst those that have not gone on to university. Vocational pathways, which begin in community settings and continue through colleges, employers and within community groups can help develop both practical and social skills.

## Key Challenges

- **Recent changes to the benefits systems** require claimants to commit to work or additional learning. CLD's remit to be all-inclusive in terms of age and health capacity provides an opportunity to address what could be a changing set of learning needs.
- **The capacity of CLD staff** to meet the varied and diverse set of learning needs requires new and diverse sets of delivery needs. Education Scotland's CLD Standard's Council's remit is through the i-develop framework to support and encourage innovative learning and development for CLD practitioners.
- **Learner engagement.** Despite the commitment to assess 'real' needs, learner engagement has always presented a challenge. Undoubtedly greater community based activity will help and through the likes of Scotland's Learning Partnership's Learner Forums, greater and more relevant learning opportunities can become reality.
- **Up-skilling and re-skilling of people in work** is being supported by a recently announced Scottish Government initiative to fund employers to better provide and support in-work training. This is intended to involve the Further Education providers with an opportunity to participate more in adult learning.



Nicola Sturgeon MSP presenting the 25th Scottish Adult Learners' Week Awards with Jordan Young.

## Action Required

1. **Develop an integrated and cross sectoral adult learning (lifelong) agenda**, which recognizes that learning has the potential to meet the needs of all, whether it is for economic, social or personal reasons
2. **Support the advancement of community-based adult learning** that incorporates
  - a. Literacies learning
  - b. Creativity
  - c. Technology and Future Skills
  - d. ESOL
  - e. Health awareness
  - f. STEM involvement
  - g. Citizenship
  - h. Resilience
  - i. Business start-up
3. **Enable the development of a learning culture** that is both aimed at and inclusive of an ageing population. We must be equipped and ready to 'teach old dogs new tricks'. Learning is not the sole remit of the young and working population. Both through necessity and for pleasure, older people have the right to develop new skills and new interests. The opportunity also exists to utilize the skills and experience of older people through intergenerational and family learning programmes, which contribute to raising attainment amongst school pupils.
4. **Create more vocational pathways** that begin in community settings and continue through colleges, employers and within community groups. This would help to develop both practical and social skills.
5. **Support a 'Year of the Adult Learner' in Scotland**, building on last year's EAEA initiative to support lasting links and bridges with our European networks post 2019. Celebration is a critical part of adult learning strategy. For over twenty-five years Scotland has run an annual Adult Learners' Week Awards programme that centres on the achievements of the adult learner, particularly those who have not benefitted from their initial education.

# Wales

## Context

Responsibility for adult learning policy, funding and commissioning is a function of the Welsh Government. In Wales, there is a mix of provision through both publicly funded providers (including Adult Community Learning, Furthermore Education Institutions, Higher Education Institutions, and in work-based learning) as well as through trade unions, cultural organisations and the voluntary sector. Further there are increasing examples of learning delivered to tenants by housing associations and to by schools to parents and families.

## Policy Drivers

In Wales, adult learning policy is being shaped through many of the same drivers as elsewhere in the UK, including:

- **the continued squeeze on public finances;**
- **an older workforce and population** (with a third of the Welsh workforce expected to be over 50 years old within the next five years);
- **high levels of economic inactivity** in many communities, with more than a quarter of a people not in education, employment or training;
- **demand from business** for a workforce with higher level qualifications, where by 2024 more than half of the workforce will be qualified at level 3 or higher;
- **uncertainty over the potential impact of Brexit** on the availability of skilled migrant labour and how the Welsh economy can meet the net requirement of 607,000 workers by 2024.

The more specific policy context is now being led by a **new adult learning policy**, which as well as a continued focus on ESOL and Essential Skills now recognises the positive impact of learning on the health and well-being of older people and those furthest from the labour market. The policy better locates adult learning policy as part of an integrated response to health and well-being. It also identifies the impact of adult learning on the attainment of school children by encouraging schools to develop services to encourage parents to engage in the learning of their children and to develop their own skills and qualifications.

Alongside the new policy is the new **all-age employability strategy** and the continued commitment to 100,000 all age apprenticeships. Together these policies open up the prospect of better links between work, health and communities and the co-location of services to reduce barriers to participation for individuals.

**Regionally based schemes**, such as City Region deals in Cardiff and Swansea, the potential for a North Wales Growth Deal, and the work of the Valleys Task Force, all present opportunities to integrate adult learning into locality based strategies to raise employment levels, improve well-being and reduce inequalities.

Alongside these policy developments is a commitment from the Welsh Government to establish a single planning and regulatory body for the post-compulsory sector in Wales. Legislation will create the Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales. One potential impact will be to create progression routes for adult learners through providing **greater coherence between sectors and providers**.





## Key Challenges

- **Widening Participation.** There remain significant barriers to widening participation in adult learning, including the continued funding restrictions across the public sector, including for adult learning and particularly for part-time, flexible provision and for the ACL sector. The cuts have led to a substantial fall in part-time provision in recent years, making accessing learning more difficult for adults and potentially restricting progression to higher levels and the improvement of skills for work. The decision of the Welsh Government to give part-time undergraduate students parity of support on a pro-rata basis to full-time undergraduates will however likely have a positive impact for adult learners in higher education.
- **Outreach and community engagement.** The ending of the Communities First programme will likely also see a knock-on impact on the outreach capacity for adult learning providers and make it a more significant challenge to engage those furthest from education and the labour market.
- **Demographic factors.** With an ageing workforce and a potential squeeze on migration in future years, the need to better support in-work progression is emerging as a key challenge for the future. A lack of support for progression to support people in work has been identified as a factor in Wales' lower productivity growth and for individuals remaining in low paid work.

- **The Welsh language.** Despite significant commitment to building a bilingual nation there are still limited progression opportunities to study at post-16 through the medium of Welsh. For example, less than 3% of learning and assessment in FE and WBL is through the medium of Welsh or bilingual, demonstrating the barriers to meet the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

## Action Required

1. **Develop and implement a lifelong learning policy** to enable access to learning for people of all ages and recognise the benefits on health, well-being, work and communities.
2. **Develop coherent pathways** to better enable in-work progression to address low productivity and improve access out of low paid work.
3. **Rebalance funding** to offer greater support for adult learning opportunities and address the decline in part-time provision across sectors.
4. **Establish links between the NHS and adult learning providers** to maximise the impact of learning on health and well-being, including through formal social prescribing routes.
5. **Extend opportunities for adult learning in school settings**, building on the work of the schools such as Monkton Priory Primary School.



Julie James, AM, Minister for Skills and Science speaking during Adult Learners' Week.

# A Lifelong Learning Approach

As we have seen, education and skills are devolved matters. But it is not just policy and funding in these areas that affects the life chances of adults. Employment policy, health services, and community development all need to be considered in combination with adult learning. The benefits of adult learning accrue across all these policy areas, funding should be allocated accordingly—at devolved and UK levels. Furthermore, learning crosses borders: we live in a globalised economy, a global climate, an age of enforced migration, and the borderless realm of media and new technologies.

In the preceding pages, we have seen what the four UK impact forums think should be done in each devolved area. But we argue that there should be an agreed set of design principles for the development and implementation of a UK-wide lifelong learning approach that should be agreed across Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England (and its devolved areas).

The following principles are intended to be used as part of a single approach. They are all linked, but we don't believe policy-makers can 'pick and choose' which principles accord with their own background and experience. These principles should be considered as part of a coherent whole.

## Design principles of a lifelong learning approach

### ● it is cross-governmental

Whether it is at the devolved or UK level, government departments need to work more closely together on outcome-based approaches. As we have seen, adult and family learning have a significant contribution to make to better outcomes in health, work and community life. Therefore, adult learning should be seen as part of the solution in these areas and funded as such. Adult learning also has a massive contribution to make to the arts, sport, media, and *their* impact on our cultural life, well-being, and inward investment. This means looking at all aspects of government funding such as that for the BBC and other publicly-supported organisations.

### ● it is collaborative

Generally speaking, the post-16 education and skills UK operates within a social market model. This means there is a mixture of government direction and a belief that the market will create efficiencies. However, an overly marketised approach can lead to ineffectiveness in allocating scarce resources; despite financial austerity, underspends are common and potential learners miss out. In order to address

this, there needs to be greater collaboration, not just at the governmental level, but between providers. Institutional leaders should take a collaborative leadership approach in their local areas. Support agencies—such as the Education and Training Foundation in England—should prioritise this.

### ● it joins up different types of learning in one system

Formal, non-formal, and informal learning are part of the same whole. We learn in all these ways, often on the same course or workplace setting. Policy should therefore allow for greater flexibility in how providers and employers design learning. For too long we have focussed on formal learning through regulated qualifications. These still have a massive role to play, but output-based approaches should not dominate the whole system in the way they have. We should focus instead on the outcomes that other types of learning enable as well. This will lead to learner-centred approaches based on where they are, the assets they bring, as well as what they want from learning. As above, there should be greater integration with the world-class, publicly-funded informal adult learning provided by the BBC.

### ● it is long-term

We need to think long-term in planning our education and skills systems. This starts with school and the way young people become lifelong learners. Their schooling has managed to demotivate many adults from further learning. We need to ask ourselves why this is so. Is it a centralised curriculum, an over-reliance on tests and qualifications (which many do not achieve), or lack of parental involvement? Whatever the cause of relative low-achievement in UK's schools—compared with other OECD countries—adult learning can provide part of the solution. Family learning impacts on school attainment, and yet is not an integrated part of school pedagogy. A lifelong learning approach needs to work with the strength and weaknesses of the statutory education system and plan for the long-term.

- **it enables progression**

Even as we improve our school system, most people are already in the workforce so they must be our priority too. Once people have left school with low qualifications, for many there is not a clear line of sight to the high-skilled jobs. This is, in part, due to the lack of impartial careers advice in schools which is often designed to favour the institution that gives the advice. For many adults once they achieve employment, particularly below level 2, they do not receive workplace learning and face barriers (attitudinal, time and financial) in accessing their own learning. This means people remain in low-paid, low-productivity jobs, on in-work benefits, more likely to be unhealthy, and less likely to participate in their community. Local progression protocols need to be established in local areas to address this issue. At a national level, credit transfer schemes and the role of recognition of prior learning and experience needs to be embedded into learning systems.

- **it is all-age and applies across the life-course**

Currently the majority of funding provided for adult learning is targeted at younger people. This partly due to the duration of courses and their costs. But the UK has an ageing population and one that, during our working lives, will have to retrain and adapt to a fast-changing and uncertain world. Some rebalancing of the funding across the life-course is required so that learning is made available to support us when we most need it. As we have seen, this will reduce the burden on other parts of the public finances. But the principle of an all-age approach also reminds us that how we treat our most vulnerable citizens is the moral barometer of a society. As the UK becomes more 'age dependent', adult learning has a key role in promoting independence.

- **it ensures costs are shared equitably**

UK adult learning is co-funded by the state, employers, individuals, and charities. As it should be this is linked to the type of learning that those stakeholders wish to fund. But the state also has a role to play in managing that market. This is applied differentially across the UK—an example is the differing views on income-contingent loans in England and Scotland. The same applies to the differential costs incurred by employers and individual fee-payers in local areas. There needs to be a national debate on funding and 'who pays' including beneficiaries such as the NHS, job centres and local councils.

- **it is inclusive**

Adult learning is at the heart of the inclusive growth agenda. There is little point in economic development in a local area if whole communities are left behind. Costs will accrue for the health, social care and other statutory services. There are huge disparities of income, employment and achievement across UK regions. But more importantly, disparity exists with regions and even towns, boroughs and cities. A lifelong learning approach must focus on this most in need, those that have missed out, and often least motivated to learn. In order to achieve this adult learning practice needs to change: less marketing of pre-designed 'products' based on qualifications; and more co-design with learners.

- **it is future focused**

Adult learning doesn't just respond to our changing world; it helps shape it. Technological progress means we have access to many new ways of learning that crosses borders and enables us to connect with other learners and practitioners across the globe.

- **it thinks globally, acts locally**

The UK has signed up to the global Sustainable Development Goals, recognising that the actions of one country impacts on others. Part of this is means reacting to changes in the climate and enforced migration. It means being part of a global community ensuring that refugees and new arrivals are given access to English courses to support integration. Adult basic skills are just above safety and shelter on the hierarchy of need; they are not a 'nice to have'. But in addition, adult learning helps interpret and make sense of what's happening in a 'Post Truth' world.

Similar, to sustainable development we would like to see a requirement of all UK administrations, at whatever level to embed lifelong learning into all policies. Unlike sustainable development, we would like this to be monitored and reported upon.

Just as there should be an equalities impact assessment for all government policies, we believe there should a *lifelong learning policy analysis* that looks at the role of learning in addressing the many challenges all parts of the UK face.



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