

European Agenda for Adult Learning (2014–15)

Final report (UK)

December 2015

NIACE The National Voice
for Lifelong Learning



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- Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori, Italy
- JISC, UK
- Justice Directorate, Scottish Government / Riaghaltas na h-Alba
- Kilcooley Women's Centre, Northern Ireland
- Lanarkshire Regional Board, Scotland
- LEAD Scotland
- learndirect, UK
- Learning Link Scotland
- Learning South West, England
- Leicester City Council, England
- Leicester College, England
- Libraries Northern Ireland
- Lifelong Learning Directorate, Scottish Government / Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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At the Northern Ireland impact forum, 6 October 2015, Belfast. L-R: Joyce Black, NIACE; Junior Minister Jennifer McCann, Northern Ireland Assembly; Colin Neilands, FALNI; Eileen Kelly, Chair NI Impact Forum



- NRDC, Institute of Education, UK
- NUS, UK
- O2/Telefonica
- Open College Network Northern Ireland
- Open University Northern Ireland
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Paddock Trust, England
- People Plus, UK
- Prisoners' Education Trust/Prisoners' Learning Alliance, England and Wales
- Prospects, UK
- RaPAL, UK
- Reed in Partnership Northern Ireland
- Rochdale Borough Council, England
- Scotland's Learning Partnership, Scotland
- Scottish Business in the Community
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
- Scottish Prison Service
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- Wales TUC
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Foreword



In 2014 NIACE and our partners across the UK set out a new programme of work as part of the European Agenda for Adult Learning. This built on our successes since 2012, but this time we decided to be even more focused on what truly makes a difference to adult learners' lives.

With the publication of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) *Survey of Adult Skills* (Programme of International Assessment of Adult Competencies, PIAAC) in October 2013, a new impetus was given to investigating the competences that help people succeed at work, at home, in their communities, and wider society. Such competences – basic literacy, numeracy, functional, digital and problem-solving skills – were often not truly represented by the qualifications people held. Employers had been telling governments this for years; now there was hard and fast international evidence to back it up.

But we felt that we needed to dig deeper. We aimed to ensure the UK policy communities had the best evidence bases available to support policy formation in each of the four administrations. We continued to support the development of improved approaches to adult literacy in English, numeracy (or mathematics) and problem-solving in technology enriched environments (digital learning). At the same time we wanted to focus more on supporting access to learning and progression for disadvantaged groups.

In this we had the support of the UK Government as well as the European Commission. In fact, I recall the then Minister for Skills at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, saying Britain 'must do more' in valuing international evidence

and learning from it. Matthew Hancock made a link between OECD reports and policy formation, saying: 'Job Study, PISA and PIAAC ... held up a mirror to governments, economies and societies. The reforms they inspired have, directly or indirectly, changed lives.'

To this end we continued to 'hold a mirror up' to policy formation in each of the four UK administrations through promoting our own research into PIAAC, the Citizens' Curriculum, young adult employability, working with excluded groups, and digital skills. We enabled the debate through newly-established forums in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

Because we wanted these meetings, seminars and events to focus on what adult learning achieves in improving people's lives, we called them 'impact forums'. More than 200 people came together across the UK and many attended our summative conference to share their work.

As you will see from our plans for the next two years, there is still much we need to do on the impact of adult learning – both evidencing it and convincing others of its value.

I would like to thank the 205 organisations who worked with us in 2014–15. I hope you enjoy reading this summary of our work together and will stay in touch with us over the next two years of the programme.

David Hughes, Chief Executive, NIACE

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Introduction



Through twelve meetings ... more than 200 people have come together to discuss research presented by NIACE alongside local case studies of practice and policy development

In the twelve years I have been involved in European work at NIACE, I have never been more excited than about our work on the European Agenda for Adult Learning (or EAAL).

Led by the European Commission, the EAAL does not just cover EU countries but includes Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland, and Turkey. The rationale for the EAAL is the positive impact skills has on all levels of society across Europe. In 2012, NIACE was appointed UK National Coordinator to work alongside 31 other countries to have a strategic impact on adult learning policy development in Europe and across the UK.

As part of this work, during 2014–15 we ran a number of projects that you will be able to read about in this report:

- Following up the PIAAC research across the UK
- Basic skills and social inclusion (the Citizens' Curriculum)
- Employability skills for young adults (What Employers Want)
- Supporting progression for excluded groups
- Digital learning in communities (policy development)
- Self-organised groups using digital learning

But we know that it is not enough to run development and research projects in isolation from practitioner feedback. This is particularly critical when there are four different policy climates making the 'weather' in the UK. In my opinion, there is a positive aspect to the devolution of skills policy and planning in that it places an imperative on learning from one another. Looking at the commonalities and the differences in approach and emphases between administrations in promoting digital skills was helpful to our work as

UK National Coordinator.

Our chosen method, and central to our long-term strategy (as David Hughes has already mentioned), was the creation of impact forums in each of the four UK administrations. This was during a period where devolution of skills, Scottish political independence, and the UK's membership of the EU has been under intense scrutiny.

Geographical differences of approach have always been part and parcel of the delivery of adult education in the UK. But what has been striking in the past year is the willingness of policy makers, planners, practitioners, researchers, and learners to come together to discuss these issues at our impact forums. Through twelve meetings in Cardiff, Belfast, Edinburgh, London, Birmingham and Leicester, more than 200 people have come together to discuss research presented by NIACE alongside local case studies of practice and policy development. I have been delighted to see other EAAL national coordinators invited to these meetings, as well as employers and community groups.

Anyone involved in European work will know that one of the key factors for success is always about the partnerships that are formed. The stronger the partnership, the more likely it is to achieve the intended outcomes. Working across the UK, it was essential that we developed additional strong partnerships in Northern Ireland and Scotland to support our existing relationships at NIACE Cymru. Looking back, one of the specific reasons we were able to achieve so much over the last three years was because of the partnerships we developed with Scotland's Learning Partnership, the Forum for Adult Learning Northern Ireland and the UK National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme (Erasmus+), Ecorys and the British Council.

All were key in developing the UK-wide impact forums by bringing together, sometimes for the first time, policy makers with employers, local government officers, learning providers, health providers, third sector organisations, trade unions and community groups, creating a platform for informing and learning. A welcome new partnership formed this year was with the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE). For the first time we can all share across Europe and the UK information and evidence on how we can continue to make the case for adult learning within all areas of public policy.

Earlier in 2015, the European Commission also published its draft joint report on 'ET 2020'. This is the report that sets the objectives and priorities for the next five years of the Commission's work in the area of Education and Training.

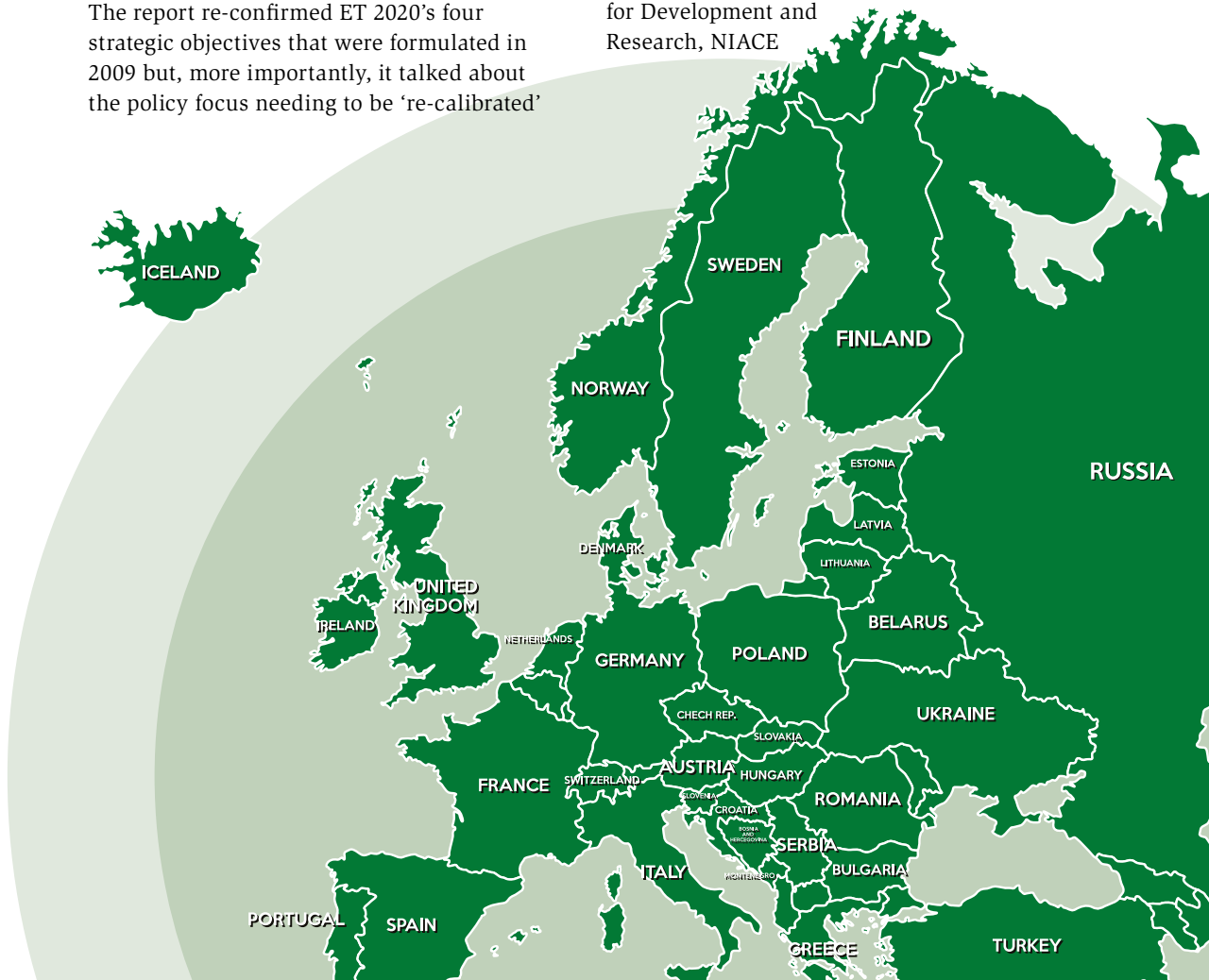
It's positive that there seems to be a real change in approach to education and training. The report re-confirmed ET 2020's four strategic objectives that were formulated in 2009 but, more importantly, it talked about the policy focus needing to be 're-calibrated'

to include both the pressing economic and employment challenges and the role of education in promoting equity and non-discrimination, and in imparting fundamental values, intercultural competences and active citizenship.

This 're-calibration' is very obvious when you check the rest of the text. Lifelong learning strategies are back, with 16 member states being applauded for having their own 'strategies' – the UK among them – which may come as a surprise to some people reading this across the four administrations!

All this gives us a firm basis and clear mandate to press on with the priorities we identified in our programme of work for 2015–17, continuing our work on basic skills, young unemployed adults and digital learning and creating a State of the Nations report in two years' time.

Joyce Black, Assistant Director
for Development and
Research, NIACE



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Summary of project activity



This section highlights some of our achievements for each project between November 2014 and October 2015.

Following up the PIAAC research across the UK

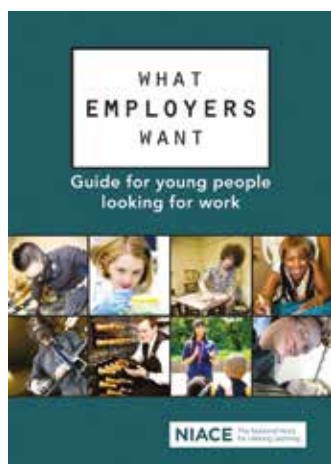
- Presentations on the international Survey of Adult Skills to all the four impact forums at meetings in Birmingham, Belfast, Cardiff, and Edinburgh.
- Discussion on the implication of the PIAAC findings across the UK with more than 100 practitioners.
- Presentation from OECD at the summative conference in London in September 2015 on the latest information on skills in England.

Basic skills and social inclusion (the Citizens' Curriculum)

- Citizens' Curriculum case studies for disadvantaged adults: homeless/vulnerably housed adults, young adults in disadvantaged communities, prisoners, adults recently released from prison, recent migrants, and family learning in disadvantaged communities.
- A final Citizens' Curriculum report, detailing the impact of the approach for adult learners, adult education practitioners and providers, and an infographic summarising key impact.

Employability skills for young adults (What Employers Want)

- A *What Employers Want* website (www.whatemployerswant.org) developed and presented to all four UK forums and in the UK Parliament in September 2015. Members were introduced to the project website and received copies of the guide for young people.
- Further development work with the NOW Group, based in Belfast, Northern Ireland, to develop an adapted framework for the delivery of the activities to meet the needs of young people with disabilities.
- Training sessions for young people to develop their employability skills, based on the earlier research findings of this project.
- A short film made by young people, interviews with employers and promotion via various social media channels including Facebook and Twitter.
- Presentations to the four UK impact forums: England (11 June 2015), Wales (1 July 2015), Scotland (28 September 2015), and Northern Ireland (6 October 2015), and at the UK Skills Show (November 2014).
- Media coverage was secured in *TES* (7 July 2015), *Training Journal* (7 July 2015), *Re:locate* (10 July 2015), *FE News* (13 July 2015), *Children & Young People Now* publication and website (20 August 2015), and *The Sun* (20 August 2015).



The *What Employers Want* guide for young people

▶ APRIL 2015	▶ JUNE 2015	▶ JULY 2015	▶ SEPTEMBER 2015
<p>▶ Citizens' Curriculum presentations at England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland Impact Forums, to UnionLearn and representatives of the health professions unions.</p>	<p>▶ Presentation to the European Basic Skills Network: 'Challenges to Policy Cohesion: The Skills for Life Story.'</p>	<p>▶ National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA) national conference.</p>	<p>▶ Into Work Convention, a national conference for employment skills providers organised by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion.</p>
			<p>▶ Learning at Prisoners' Learning Alliance national conference.</p>

Supporting progression for excluded groups

- A literature review to inform the selection of the case studies, and opened communication channels with key partner agencies in each UK nation.
- Case studies to enable impact data on working with excluded groups to be shared more readily (for example, Monkton Primary School's pupil attainment data).
- Presentations to the four UK impact forums, and the final conference in September 2015.

Digital learning in communities

- Desk research report circulated to UK and European partners.
- Presentation at Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland impact forums with strategies and approaches contrasted and common themes identified and recommendations agreed.
- Webinar presentations and consultation through discussion and polls with UK/European partners and stakeholders.
- Case studies exemplifying use of learning technologies for disadvantaged learners and communities.
- Infographics and social media campaign to disseminate webinar outputs.
- Policy framework presented and discussed with review and revision following wider consultation with European and UK partners.
- Presentation to final conference with debate and discussion on the role of adult and community learning to develop higher-level digital skills.

Self-organised groups using digital learning

- Further development and promotion of self-organised learning (SOL) groups resource website.
- Digital families presentation at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
- Westminster Forum presentation on digital learning.
- Blended learning for niche groups action research report.
- Assistive Technology on the Virtual Campus interactive resource (hosted on the Virtual Campus).
- Round table discussion on Digital Skills with Microsoft.

Reach and engagement

- Close working with EPALE UK to promote the programme, with a presentation at its UK launch in April 2015.
- Impact forums reaching more than 200 participants through 12 meetings across the UK.
- A summative conference in London with 120 participants from 20 countries, with others attending via livestreaming of speeches and panel sessions.
- Continued promotion of our Twitter hashtag #EULearning in order to reach those people who were unable to attend events in person. There were thousands of unique Tweets from users across Europe, reaching a high point during the summative conference.
- Conference social media reached a phenomenal total of 119,090 accounts, via 1500 unique tweets and 500 additional retweets.
- #EULearning appeared across Twitter in excess of 300,000 times.
- There were 122 YouTube views over 24 videos, boosted when EPALE tweeted it.
- General promotion during Adult Learners' Week and Skills Show UK to more than 10,000 people.

OCTOBER 2015

- ▷ Ireland's National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) conference.
- ▷ The final EAAL conference.

- ▷ 21st Century Citizens' national conference, organised by NIACE, the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL), the University and College Union (UCU) and the National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA).

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The basic skills challenge



The challenge

The publication of the OECD's *Survey of Adult Skills* in October 2013 highlighted the size of the challenge facing the UK in terms of adult basic skills. Although the PIAAC survey was carried out in 23 countries, of the UK nations only England and Northern Ireland took part. This was revealing in itself regarding the willingness to invest in hearing the (often problematic political) messages from such benchmarking surveys.

Therefore, one of our aims during 2014–15 was to take the rich data from the OECD survey and present it in some detail to each of the impact forums across the UK. We also invited OECD to present an update at our summative conference.

The UK response

The data from PIAAC strongly influenced the discussion and debate at the England impact forum, with indications that England and Northern Ireland have high proportions of people scoring at or below Level 1 in both literacy and numeracy. Although Wales and Scotland did not participate in the data gathering by the OECD in this 'round', there was discussion about the data, and whether they should be involved next time.

The improvement of English and maths is a high priority for the UK Government, which has commissioned further research using some of the PIAAC data to gain additional insights and perspectives. Embedded approaches have been included in flagship Apprenticeship and Traineeship programmes and Functional Skills are being reviewed, along with the standards for teaching English and maths.

The Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) in Northern Ireland had drawn upon the skills and knowledge of a consultant from Canada to help bring a different perspective on the PIAAC data, from a predominantly English-speaking country, which demonstrated better results than England. Additionally its *Essential Skills for Living* strategy framed the development of basic skills; this strategy was refreshed after the PIAAC data was revealed. However, concerns were expressed about the reduction of funding in community learning provision to help address the developments needed.

The *Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies* (2009) was also discussed at the Scotland impact forum. This survey resulted in the *Adult Literacies Scotland* strategy, which sets out, in a detailed way, how the ambition to increase competence with literacies might be achieved.

No single policy drives the development

01
NIACE BASIC SKILLS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
THE BASIC SKILLS 'CHALLENGE'

- Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)
- International survey led by OECD, including 166,000 adults (aged 16-65) in 24 countries
- Internationally agreed assessment in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments
- Also survey generic skills such as collaborating with others and organising one's time, as well as how adults use skills
- The UK was represented by England and Northern Ireland

"England and Northern Ireland have some of the highest proportions of adults scoring at or below Level 1 in numeracy. 24.1% of adults score at that level compared to the average 19.0%... Some 16.4% of adults score at the lowest level of proficiency in literacy, similar to the average of 15.5%"

OECD (2013)

NIACE
The National Voice for Lifelong Learning

Excerpt from the presentation to the Scotland impact forum, September 2015



Infographic showing the impact of the Citizens' Curriculum, NIACE 2015

of basic or essential skills in Wales; rather, a raft of policies identifies the importance of improving the level of numeracy in particular. The Welsh Assembly Government provided detailed insight into these policies at the Wales impact forum. Data on changes in achievement in literacy and numeracy are drawn from the *National Survey of Adult Skills in Wales* (2010), which indicated significant increases in literacy since 2004 but little change in numeracy. Work in response to these data includes a refocus of the *Employer Pledge*, the development of a Wales Essential

Skills Toolkit, including screening for literacy and numeracy, and initial assessment and diagnostic assessment resources. Learning materials are also being developed and will be ready early in 2016.

The Citizens' Curriculum

For the past year, NIACE has been developing, piloting and evaluating the Citizens' Curriculum,¹ an integrated approach to basic skills delivery, which we feel will address some of the challenges identified through the PIAAC data at a local level.

Building on this, we have continued, working with disadvantaged adults, to develop a set of Citizens' Curriculum models/frameworks for use in the field to support the acquisition of basic skills and promote social inclusion.

Traditionally, basic skills have included language (English for Speakers of Other Languages), literacy and numeracy. More recently, we have also included digital capability as a basic skill for life in the 21st century. As we have seen with studies such as PIAAC, these skills are closely linked to social inclusion because they are seen to be necessary for finding and sustaining work. Moreover, and taking a broader definition of social inclusion which is not restricted to the labour market entry, such skills support participation in local communities and wider society more generally. NIACE research indicates that a wider set of health, civic and personal finance capabilities should also be considered as basic skills, and delivered in an interlinked way, and this underpins the Citizens' Curriculum approach.

In 2014–15 our Citizens' Curriculum pilots each developed a model for working with disadvantaged adults, to promote social inclusion through adult learning opportunities which interlinked the Citizens' Curriculum capabilities and involved learners in co-creation of the content. We focused on six areas: homeless/vulnerably housed adults, young adults in disadvantaged communities, prisoners, adults recently released from

¹ <http://www.niace.org.uk/our-work/life-and-society/citizens-curriculum>

NIACE research indicates that a wider set of health, civic and personal finance capabilities should also be considered as basic skills, and delivered in an interlinked way, and this underpins the Citizens' Curriculum approach

prison, recent migrants, and family learning in disadvantaged communities. These groups were identified in accordance with UK Government priorities as being particularly at risk of social exclusion.

The impact forum meetings allowed us to compare and contrast these Citizens' Curriculum models and frameworks with a range of practices from across the UK nations. For instance in Scotland, we heard examples from Inverclyde Council's community learning provision and Access to Industry's programme working with women in prison.

The Citizens' Curriculum case studies were subsequently presented at a range of national conferences and forums in England, which provided further opportunities to engage with providers, practitioners and policy makers to promote the Citizens' Curriculum approach, identify contexts where it might support the development of current practice to achieve better outcomes for disadvantaged learners and discuss how the Citizens' Curriculum could be adopted in these settings.

Through our impact forums, and at our summative conference, participants heard the evidence from NIACE's work to develop programmes based on the Citizens' Curriculum. This approach ensures all individuals have the core set of skills they need for the 21st century, including English, maths, ESOL, digital, civic, health and financial capabilities. Crucially, there is flexibility in the programme to adapt it to different contexts and local settings, and learners are involved in its co-creation, so each project was truly responsive to learners' needs and interests, and those of the local community.

Given the summative conference's focus on impact, it was especially pleasing to hear evidence from Rochdale Council of multiple impacts in their pilot.² These ranged from increased participation in learning and improved outcomes for individual participants, to cashable savings for the local authority and other agencies. This is invaluable evidence to make the case for more flexible and personalised forms of learning which are not driven by the delivery of qualifications, but by positive outcomes that benefit the individual, local community and the wider economy.

We are also developing a Citizens' Curriculum model for unemployed adults in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance which will be the focus of a randomised control trial – or as close to one as possible, given the complexities and the variables, not least in the characteristics of the adult learners who will participate.

We've got some great testimonies and case studies of the impact of the Citizens' Curriculum pilots so far.³ But for those who demand hard data, we hope that this will go some way to provide the evidence of impact needed to ensure that the Citizens' Curriculum becomes a widely adopted model for literacy, numeracy and life skills delivery across the learning and skills sector, and one in which increasing numbers of adult learners choose to participate.

² <http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Rochdale%20Borough%20Council.pdf>
³ <http://www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/life-and-society/citizens'-curriculum-case-studies>

5

The inclusion challenge

The challenge

One of the consistent messages that has come out of research undertaken by NIACE, the UK Government, the European Commission, and OECD is that there are inequalities in accessing adult education opportunities of all kinds. This persistent problem has many facets, for example:

- Those adults with high educational attainment are more likely to access further opportunities (inequalities due to prior education).
- Adults in higher-level job roles are more likely to access further training

and development (inequalities due to employment status).

- Those with greater wealth or social status are more likely to access learning (inequalities due to social and/or economic class).
- People with disabilities or experiencing other forms of exclusion are less likely to access learning (inequalities due to disabilities and difference).

These inequalities apply right across the UK as our follow-up work to PIAAC has shown. The challenge, therefore, was how to develop effective ways to support excluded learners.

Tim Harford, bestselling author of *The Undercover Economist*, speaks about the importance of randomised control trials, at the summative conference, London, September 2015



Our response

We looked at ways to address this multi-faceted challenge, by enabling better support for those practitioners working with socially excluded groups and those furthest from learning including ex-offenders, offenders in the community, homeless people, care leavers and young adult carers.

Using existing networks of practitioners and paraprofessionals (such as community learning champions and learning ambassadors) a strong evidence base was built to demonstrate impact and the effectiveness of community learning approaches in reaching, engaging with and enabling progression of excluded learners.

We undertook a literature review and presented findings to all impact forums, in order to develop eight case studies for publication.⁴ These case studies demonstrate effective approaches to supporting socially excluded groups and those furthest from learning. Some were written by learners themselves and recount their first-hand experience of engaging in learning and the benefits they have experienced as a result. Others focus on the work of organisations or projects which target specific groups which are excluded from mainstream society for various reasons.



CASE STUDY: LEARNERS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

‘Action Mental Health run several courses in their facilities in Antrim and the one that appealed to me the most was the cookery class. This gave me a reason to get out of bed in morning, a purpose and something to do. It also got me out amongst people again, which was good for my confidence. In this country unfortunately there is still a stigma attached to mental health problems and sometimes I can feel different to others, but on the course everyone else had problems, so I didn’t have to worry about being ‘different’ and no longer felt alone....

‘Come May this year I will have finished the Access to University Course and I am on track to pass; this will enable me to advance to university. The other students on the course elected me class representative. Doing the Access Course has helped me in so many ways: my self-worth, self-confidence and self-esteem levels have all risen. Today I am nearly unrecognisable from the person I was back in October 2012, and a lot of it is down to Action Mental Health.’ (An Action Mental Health client)

CASE STUDY: EX-OFFENDERS IN WALES

Thorncliffe Recycling Site in Abergele has been working in partnership with North Wales Police and the Probation Service on an innovative project to break the cycle of offending.

The 8 Ways Project aims to reduce crime and re-offending by helping people to deal with the many issues in their lives that lead them to offend. The project offers support in relation to the eight main issues facing ex-offenders: drugs; alcohol; accommodation and housing; children and families; finance, benefits and debt; mental and physical health; attitudes, thinking and behaviour; and education, training and employment.

One learner who has been involved in the project said, ‘It is so good to feel that someone trusts you to do a good job, making you feel like a valued member of staff. Having a regular wage has allowed me and my family to move into a bigger house, something that would have been impossible before. I’m a lot healthier, fitter and happier ... I am so grateful for this opportunity.’

⁴ <http://www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/life-and-society/citizens%E2%80%99-curriculum-case-studies>



►
 Claire Arnold, NIACE
 Cymru 'Overall Learner'
 Inspire! 2015 Award
 Winner, presented
 her learning journey
 to the EAAL impact
 forum in Wales. She
 gave valuable personal
 insight into developing
 learning opportunities
 for individuals and
 communities in areas of
 poverty, low skills and
 high unemployment.
 To show the impact
 of reaching parents
 with family and adult
 learning, a film was
 produced following
 Claire's input to
 the EAAL⁵

CASE STUDY: HOMELESS AND VULNERABLY HOUSED ADULTS IN ENGLAND

St. Mungo's Broadway is a charity which works across London and the South of England to help people recover from the issues that create homelessness and rebuild their lives. As part of their work, St Mungo's Broadway offers learning provision at a residential college based in Clapham, London. The aim of the college is to equip residents with the skills needed to make a fresh start and move on in their lives. The college can accommodate up to ten residents who usually stay for between three and six months. While living at the college, residents engage in a full-time educational programme that combines academic learning with developing independent living skills.

As a result of the support and assistance they receive at the college, many learners become more positive towards learning, working and volunteering. They often progress to further education or volunteering opportunities after completing the residential college programme and have much higher aspirations and confidence in their abilities. These learners are now making a positive contribution to not only their own lives but also their families and local communities.

CASE STUDY: NEWLY ARRIVED AND SETTLED FAMILIES WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN SCOTLAND

Every local authority in Scotland is faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of newly arrived families. With an increase in newcomers to Scotland, the numbers of which are often unpredictable, Adult Learning in East Renfrewshire Council is working with partners to find ways to help meet the needs of those settling in Scotland, to enable them to feel supported and part of the community.

'Learning together', was aimed at parents of preschool, primary 1 and primary 2 children from around the world, to improve their English language skills related to their children's learning in the classroom.

The course gave learners a chance to discuss the challenges they face as parents and become more knowledgeable about how children learn in the classroom. Every lesson involved a level of discussion about what the children are doing at school on a weekly basis, events that are coming up, how to complete forms and read letters from the schools and how the children achieve different awards and get involved in school life.

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IwVDmnZVSM>

6

The digital challenge



The challenge

An undoubted consequence of technological innovation is the need for digital skills. These skills are essential for every member of 21st-century society to access information and public services, interact, learn, find and gain employment or progress their careers.

And yet nearly 20 per cent of Europeans have never used the internet. In the UK, there are approximately 10.5 million adults who do not have basic digital skills. Sixty-nine per cent are in the 'C2DE' socio-economic bracket which includes the most disadvantaged and excluded members of our society, people who are often furthest from the labour market.

According to the European Commission, 90 per cent of all jobs require basic digital skills in almost every area of employment, with digital technology complementing other skills. But an estimated 40 per cent of people in the EU workforce do not have the necessary skills, while 14 per cent have no digital skills at all.

PIAAC reviewed skills across OECD nations in 2013 and found that an average of 14.9 per cent of adults across OECD countries possessed either no or basic levels of ICT competence. In the UK around half of adults do not have the digital skills needed by employers, with 62 per cent of employers concerned about the level of IT skills in their current workforce.

Digitisation is having a profound impact on businesses. Employers recognise the value of digital skills both now and in the future, for existing and future staff. They recognise that it is not just about installing new technologies, it is about staff using technology to share, connect and analyse, increasing productivity

and efficiency as well as connecting with customers and reaching new audiences.

Our response

NIACE researchers presented to each of the impact forums across the UK to enable a discussion about how the most disadvantaged are more likely to lack these skills, making them less likely to be employed, or able to support their families' learning or full participation in society.

Participants in the impact forums argued that while community based interventions are successful in supporting the most vulnerable in taking their first steps in digital competence, they should also offer more opportunities to progress these skills to support employment. They also agreed that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to fulfill their digital potential and that community and family learning has an essential role to play in offering greater access to opportunities for a wider variety of young people and their families.

Impact forum meetings in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales allowed us to discuss these findings and contrast key drivers and approaches in each of the UK nations. In Wales we discussed the *Welsh Government Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan 2014*, how it linked with Wales' Tackling Poverty and Economic priorities and its exemplification through the work of Communities 2.0, and heard plans for its successor, Digital Communities Wales. In Scotland, we discussed the aims of the government's Digital Scotland strategy and the work of the Scottish Council

In the UK around half of adults do not have the digital skills needed by employers, with 62 per cent of employers concerned about the level of IT skills in their current workforce

for Voluntary Services in digital inclusion. This was followed by discussion sessions on embedding technology in adult learning hosted by NIACE, digital skills from Learning Links Scotland and approaches to tackling the digital divide from Scotland's Learning Partnership. In Ireland the NIACE research paper was presented for discussion and debate.

Forum participants reached a consensus that this could only be achieved through partnership, at European, national and local levels, between community learning providers, community organisations, the technology third sector, national and international agencies, schools, employers and, in England, with Local Enterprise Partnerships.

As a result, NIACE established a national partnership with these stakeholders to increase the number of disadvantaged people participating in digital activities and to support changes in attitudes to the importance of digital skills for life, work, employment and careers. This, alongside other approaches from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, was

discussed further at the summative conference, identifying how we can work together more coherently across Europe for a more inclusive digital future.

Our work in 2014–15 included activities to assess need, evaluate approaches and disseminate findings and effective practice relating to digital learning and skills in response to these challenges. This included development work on:

- an online dissemination platform for best practice (AE-PRO) to increase the knowledge of staff about adult education in Europe,⁶
- pan-European Open Educational Resources (OER-UP),⁷
- the use of blended learning approaches to engage and encourage use of technology by lower-level learners,
- digital skills for older people in Northern Ireland, and
- increasing access to digital opportunities for parents/carers and young people in disadvantaged families, and developing their digital skills to levels required for current and future employment.

Sally Dyson, Head of Digital Participation, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), talks about the importance of learning the right skills to support people to make the most of digital technologies



Our work with technology in prisons responded to the identified need for suitable resources for learners with learning difficulties/challenges. Forty-eight per cent of prisoners have low literacy skills and find it difficult to learn using standard text-based materials. However, our analysis of digital content identified few examples of suitable resources for these learners and the need for more engaging maths and English resources.

Addressing this, we also delivered a programme and resources for prison staff and tutors to create interactive, accessible content, particularly basic skills resources, to cascade these skills to their colleagues and to promote the use of interactive learning resources in prisons. Related work also included action research in the implications of using learners' own technologies, especially for disadvantaged adults.

⁶ <http://www.ae-pro.eu/>

⁷ <http://www.oerup.eu/home/>

NIACE established a national partnership to increase the number of disadvantaged people participating in digital activities and to support changes in attitudes to the importance of digital skills for life, work, employment and careers

Self-organised learning and digital skills

The use of technologies in informal and community learning differs significantly from other forms of post-16 and adult education. For example, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) found that the use of connected devices and cloud technology, despite being commonly used in informal situations, was not found to have had any major impact on informal learning across Europe.

To help address this issue, in 2013 we developed an online resource for self-organised groups. In 2014–15 we continued the work by improving and maintaining the resource, sharing with colleagues across Europe, and working the UK impact forums to look at ways of extending, developing and mainstreaming the work.

NIACE supported these groups with a resource kit that featured many of the tools identified in a series of webinars focusing on technological approaches to English/language and numeracy provision across Europe. The webinar, attended by 95 people, found that access was perceived as the greatest barrier to progressing technology driven learning (by 64.2 per cent of delegates), with support for

staff development (14.2 per cent) being the next largest.

The webinar also explored alternative learning models both in terms of delivery (for example, flipped classroom) and in terms of digital tools for delivery (such as online quiz software). We found that many tutors delivering basic skills were aware of few or no resources or models, but highly valued the chance for further networking and support.

As a result of this feedback, NIACE delivered a further series of five free one-hour webinars which were attended by providers and practitioners from across the UK and Europe. Webinars were open to delegates internationally and featured contributors from across the world. The webinars had an average live attendance of 82 delegates and an additional average of 175 views of the recording. They were attended primarily by digital learning practitioners and found enthusiastic support for the use of learning technologies in community learning. They also identified a lack of senior management support, tools and resources to drive this agenda forward.



7

The employability challenge

The challenge

Across Europe youth unemployment (for adults aged between 18 and 24) is higher than average and in some cases significantly so. Although UK labour market figures show a fall in youth unemployment in the last year, the challenge of youth unemployment is far from over. In the UK, 479,000 (6.6 per cent of the youth population) are still unemployed and not in full-time education.

Employers are from Mars, Young People are from Venus was the aptly named title of a report published by CIPD in 2013.⁸ It refers to the much-reported disconnect between employers and young people who are looking for jobs.

For many young people, what employers want is a bit of a mystery. We regularly hear reports that ‘young people aren’t prepared for the world of work’ and that ‘employers would rather recruit an older person.’ This often leaves young people feeling demoralised and confused about what employers are actually looking for.

Our response

Learning and skills providers have a vital role to play in enabling young people to understand

what employers are looking for and how they can develop the skills that will enable them to successfully bridge the gap to employment.

NIACE aimed to carry out new research conducted by young people to discover what employers want. This was based on the principle of co-creation; that the young people should have a strong influence on the research plan and its implementation.

Together, we developed a website called What Employers Want, which provides information and resources for both young people and employers.

To further develop the site for young people with different levels of learning abilities (often a long way from the labour market) NIACE worked with NOW, a voluntary organisation in Belfast, to involve young people in interviewing employers and lead the research. The research posed three questions:

- What are employability skills?
- What are employers looking for in young recruits?
- How can young people develop skills for employability?

Through the interviews they conducted, young people from England, Scotland, Wales and



What Employers Want

www.whatemployerswant.org

A key output of this project is the What Employers Want website, which provides a range of information and resources for use by both young people and learning providers who support young people to gain skills for employment.

⁸ <http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/mars-venus-jobs-mismatch.aspx>

The What Employers
Want website included
video interviews with UK
business leaders



Northern Ireland found out that employers value:

- a positive attitude – spark, enthusiasm and commitment,
- soft skills – such as problem solving, communication and teamwork, and
- good literacy and numeracy skills and the ability to use ICT effectively.

Young people from the
NOW project celebrate
their achievement in
completing the course



Experience is also deemed to be very important, whether work experience, hobbies, volunteering or experience gained through responsibilities at home.

The findings of this project are not new, but what is new and unique is the process. Young people were trained, supported and empowered to talk directly to employers.

In addition, our new researchers said they gained practical skills from organising and conducting interviews with employers; they felt more confident in interviews; many were able to secure work experience with the employers they spoke to; and a number progressed into employment.

As one said, 'it's made me a lot more proactive and a lot more confident with regards to applying for work ... it's made me more confident making that initial contact.'

The 2014–15 cohort of young researchers have named themselves 'The Dependables'! We're sure with their help we will be able to extend What Employers Want and empower more young people to gain the skills and experience they need to make sustained transitions to work.



The impact challenge

The challenge

Adult learning and skills in the UK operates in a devolved policy context. There is no universal governance system across the UK; devolved administrations have been created in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The legislative authorities include the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly. The UK Parliament legislates for England-only matters; some English regions and cities are in the process of being granted devolved powers. Whereas the education systems in Wales and Northern Ireland are similar to those in England, Scotland has, historically, developed different models.

This means that European messages, research, initiatives, and comparisons play out differently in each of the four UK administrations. Research findings need to be contextualised to maximise impact.

A related challenge, in this context, is how to discuss the impact of adult learning itself. In one administration, there may be a greater interest in health benefits; in another, the impact of learning on employment. With each difference, there is an opportunity to share research and approaches to promoting the economic and social benefits of adult learning.

Our response

The impact forums were designed to encourage discussion and debate at the four administrative levels of the UK (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland). In the first instance, they were to provide opportunities for sharing information,

ideas, issues and challenges as well as identifying some responses, by bringing together organisations, groups and agencies with an interest in adult learning to share research insights and knowledge and explore experiences. The forums were formally evaluated by NIACE and a full report, *Thinking about Impact*, published.⁹

Between 20 and 25 people were involved in each forum, with diverse sectors and organisations being represented. In addition to ‘the usual suspects’ of adult learning providers and relevant national and local government departments, members came from community and voluntary organisations concerned with such issues as drug and alcohol abuse, mental health and homelessness as well as with young people, elderly people and women. Employers’ organisations were represented along with small and large businesses and commercial organisations; universities, including the Open University; the BBC; further education colleges; development agencies and trades union organisations, including Unionlearn. Adult learners were also represented. This diversity meant that information, knowledge-sharing and discussion reached a wide range of organisations and individuals.

Research papers and evidence were presented by NIACE, as part of its work as the UK National Coordinator, and by invited local organisations from each forum, according to the theme of the meeting. Policies and guidance from the different governance perspectives were identified and reported, and examples of developmental activities, programmes, practice, and case studies were shared. The success of developments, as well

⁹ <http://bit.ly/2271Mij>

Networking between attendees, in response to what was heard and discussed, was a strong feature of the [impact] forums, with new relationships and links across providers and sectors beginning to emerge

as the challenges and issues, were identified and assessed, responses were aired and ideas for further development by forum members taken away. Networking between attendees, in response to what was heard and discussed, was a strong feature of the forums, with new relationships and links across providers and sectors beginning to emerge.

The impact of creating forums was very quickly identified. Three of the UK administrations (England, Scotland and Wales) have adult learning organisations which conduct research and development to support advocacy and speak out for the right of adults to learn. They described how they gained by being able to facilitate gatherings of more and different organisations and agencies, with whom to share research and evidence of the impact of adult learning. The forums added valuable impetus to their work. However, in Northern Ireland, where the work of FALNI (Forum for Adult Learning Northern Ireland) was enhanced, with resources available to support networking and action planning, there is no such organisation. The impact forum in Northern Ireland filled a gap and provided an opportunity to galvanise adult learning

stakeholders to share evidence of impact and begin to mobilise action.

Examples of practice discussed

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a UK organisation operating through regional and local structures, which took the decision to conduct an annual survey with a follow-up survey of learners, 18 months after completion of their learning. They capture case studies using a template format to record information in a consistent way. This means that they use both quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate impact to potential funders and partners, as well as inform their research into responsiveness, curricula, learners' profiles, learners' needs, systems and processes. The impact recorded includes increased health and well-being, year-on-year increases in volunteering, increases in confidence, and increased pay for those in employment. A key impact is the development of social capital. This approach could be transferred to other organisations, especially those that operate across multiple sites and locations.

In England, the Community Health and

Delegates at the summative conference, September 2015, London



Learning Foundation uses a pre- and post-assessment approach to identify the changes in relation to healthier lifestyles. The key questions asked of participants are ‘What changes?’ ‘For whom?’ and ‘How?’ The multi-faceted approach to data gathering includes case studies, focus groups’ feedback, learners’ diaries and quantitative data, and is based on a theory of change model, captured by an Outcomes Star process.¹⁰ The impacts recorded included changes in health and family lifestyle, increases in self-agency and reductions in social isolation. It was possible to quantify the savings made through reductions in NHS usage, over time, of £3bn.

In Northern Ireland, Invest NI recounted how a large enterprise, recognised as an excellent employer, was seeking to recruit 80 software engineers. They were over-subscribed with applicants. Generally, all those who were selected for interview were deemed to be technically qualified but only 23 demonstrated the non-technical skills/attributes sought by the employer. This example is supported by research carried out in 2014 by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills in the form of a UK Employer Skills survey. When asked if employees were suitably qualified for their role, employers responded that approximately 90 per cent were qualified or overqualified. When asked if employees had the necessary skills and attributes to be effective in their role, the employer perception was contrary to the qualification perception.

Welsh Government representatives provided detailed insight into the policies that influenced adult learning and excluded groups. These included their Strategic Equality Plan, Refugee Inclusion, Community Cohesion, Communities for Work and Communities First policies. Part of the responses to these policies were closely linked to and dependent upon their Community Learning policy and provision.

In England, the Education of Disadvantaged Children policy is enhanced through family

learning in schools and children’s centres, which are located in particular areas or communities. Work with migrant families is also supported. The NIACE-published report of the Family Learning Inquiry, *Family Learning Works*, indicated how working with local authorities enhances not only the skills of the adults taking part but also those of their children and of their grandparents and carers.¹¹

In Northern Ireland, policies relating to homelessness, offending and learning difficulties were reflected in the concerns expressed at the forum. However, the development of opportunities for women who come from particular communities or situations continues to be an area of great concern. The case studies presented indicated how, without community learning opportunities to provide stepping stones towards further learning, many of these people would continue to be excluded from services and opportunities. Learning beyond school about a post-conflict community was also recognised as a vital part of Northern Ireland’s continuing development.

The Scottish Government’s *Statement of Ambition* embraces issues of the wider engagement and participation of individuals. It influences the scope and direction of adult learning provision, embracing issues of equity and inclusion as well as community development and cohesion. Under this umbrella Statement, *The Adult Learning in Scotland* paper of 2014 sets out an ambition for lifelong, life-wide and learner-centred service.¹²

The Forum in Wales heard how Communities First-supported work with people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds into health and social care employment sectors, through employability programmes organised by Communities for Work, a Welsh Government initiative working with Jobcentre Plus advisors and mentors and some informal learning activities for both adults and young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

¹⁰ www.outcomesstar.org.uk

¹¹ <http://shop.niace.org.uk/family-learning-inquiry-report.html> (accessed 30/11/15)

¹² http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/AdultLearningStatementofAmbition_tcm4-826940.pdf



Reach and engagement



Our approach

A key part of the role of a national coordinator is to share and disseminate best practice, link with other UK-based initiatives like Adult Learners' Week and the Skills Show, and to involve as many partners as possible.

To this end we have worked closely with the UK National Agency for Erasmus+ since 2012 to ensure joint working, joint use of platforms and websites to promote each other's programme of work. In this year's programme we also worked in partnership with the Electronic Platform for Lifelong Learning in Europe (EPALE UK) to reach as large an audience as possible.

We were pleased to present information about the work of national coordinators to the formal launch of EPALE UK in April 2015. In addition, NIACE and its partners have used their own website articles, postings and blogs to refer to the EAAL work and the UK work programme.

Due to the effectiveness of social media in reaching wider audiences, particularly of practitioners, we have used NIACE HQ's, NIACE Cymru's and NIACE staff Twitter accounts to promote EAAL work and the UK work programme to approximately 10,000 unique followers in more than 30 countries. To maintain a clear focus for our tweets, and to monitor progress, we have used the hashtag #EULearning, which was also used in 2012-14.

Through our membership of the ICAE, EAEA and EBSN we have promoted our work and the EAAL to fellow members and encouraged participation in events.

Highlights of the 2014-15 programme

- Close working with EPALE UK to promote the programme, with a presentation at its UK launch in April 2015.
- Impact forums reaching more than 200 participants over 12 meetings across the UK.
- A summative conference in London with 120 participants from 20 countries, with others attending via livestreaming of speeches and panel sessions.
- Continued promotion of our Twitter hashtag #EULearning in order to reach those people who were unable to attend out events in person. There were thousands of unique tweets from users across Europe, reaching a high point during the summative conference.
- Conference social media reached a phenomenal total of 119,090 accounts, via 1500 unique tweets and 500 additional retweets.
- #EULearning appeared across Twitter in excess of 300,000 times.
- 122 YouTube Views over 24 videos, boosted when EPALE tweeted.

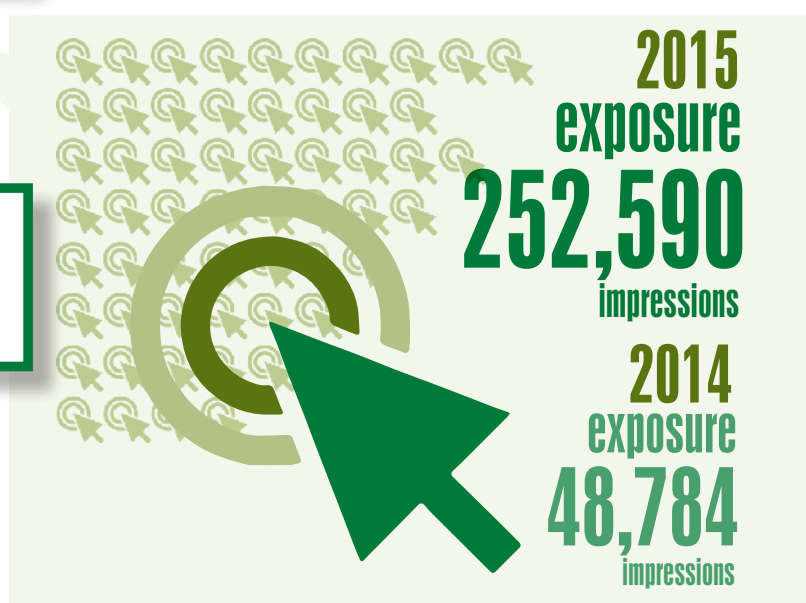
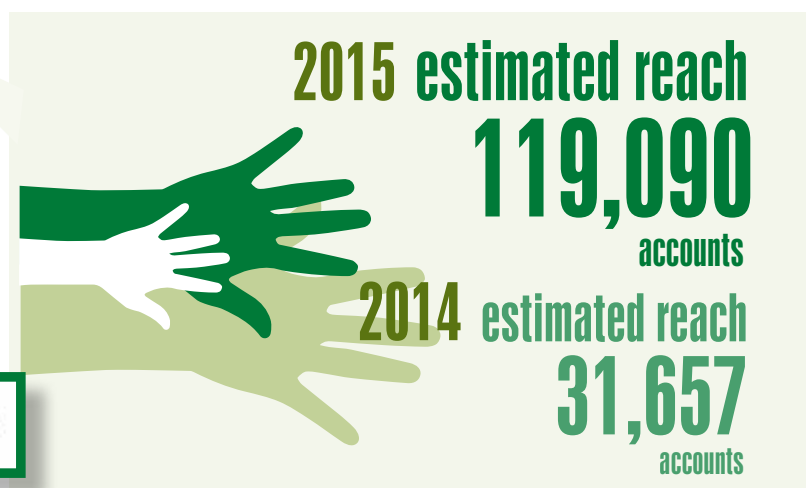
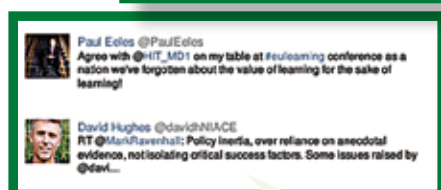
Other media coverage of our EAAL projects

Media coverage was secured in:

- *TES* – 7th July 2015
- *Training Journal* – 7th July 2015
- *Re:locate Magazine* – 10th July 2015
- *FE News* – 13th July 2015
- *The Sun* – 20th August 2015

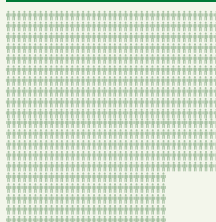
Conference social media reached a phenomenal total of 119,090 accounts ... #EULearning appeared across Twitter in excess of 300,000 times

#EULearning



activity 2015

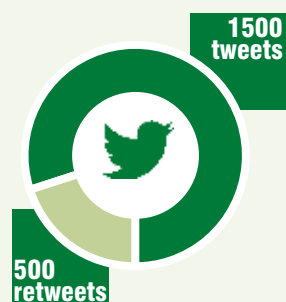
1500 tweets



44 contributors



15 hours



2014

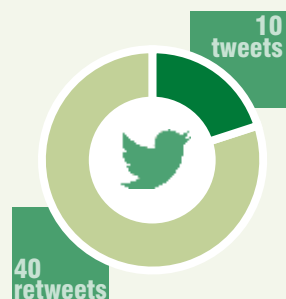
50 tweets



25 contributors



15 hours



Twitter reach of the hashtag #EULearning, with 2014 measures for comparison

A key part of our UK strategy has been to promote the EAAL during other events and campaigns we are involved in, such as Adult Learners' Week and Skills Show UK

Adult Learners' Week

A key part of our UK strategy has been to promote the EAAL during other events and campaigns we are involved in such as Adult Learners' Week and Skills Show UK. During 2014–15 we reached more than 10,000 people through these events to raise awareness of the EAAL.

Our events

In addition to exploiting NIACE's strong links with educational media outlets and social media, we have run or attended 20 face-to-face events and webinars reaching more than 500 people excluding the impact forums.

The summative conference was attended by 120 delegates from 20 countries including other national coordinators, representatives from the European Commission, UK administrations, local government, the voluntary sector, further and higher education, and schools. It was the third in a series of four events as part of the UK's contribution to the EAAL. The first was in Cardiff in 2013, and the second in Edinburgh, in 2014.

The conference was planned by a group which reported to the UK reference group for the EAAL. This comprises the UK National Agency for Erasmus+, EPALE UK, NIACE Cymru, Scotland's Learning Partnership, the Forum for Adult Learning Northern Ireland, and NIACE in its role as UK National Coordinator.

The focus of the conference was led by the following: 'Despite research showing that learning of all kinds has a profound impact on people's lives (health and independence, earnings, civic engagement, etc.) it has become less of a priority for both the public and private purse. Is one of the reasons we are becoming more reluctant to invest in adult learning is because we cannot see its impact?'

The conference showcased the research NIACE and its partners had undertaken as part of the EAAL on basic skills and the Citizens' Curriculum, digital skills, young adult employability, and working with excluded groups. The aim was to report of the progress of the research alongside developments in each

of the four UK administrations responsible for adult learning policy.

The conference was held at the City Lit, one of the greatest adult learning institutions in the UK. Principal and Chief Executive Mark Malcolmson welcomed delegates to the conference and emphasised the support of UK adult educators for the EAAL. NIACE and its partners would like to thank City Lit staff and students for letting us join them for two days, for the use of the excellent teaching rooms and the wonderful catering.

A full conference report, *Realising Impact: Making a Difference through Adult Learning*, has been published.¹³

Presentations at other events

We spoke to approximately 500 people at a further 20 events and webinars including the following.

- 'What Employers Want', UK Skills Show 2014.
- 'The European Agenda for Adult Learning', EPALE UK launch.
- A presentation on the Citizens' Curriculum approach to Unionlearn and representatives of the health professions unions.
- NIACE's 'Citizens' Curriculum: A New Agenda for a New Government' event, sharing the lessons from the Citizens' Curriculum Pilots – held in the presence of NIACE's Patron, HRH The Princess Royal.
- A presentation on the Citizens' Curriculum pilot models/framework for migrants (Leicester College, English for Action pilots) at the National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA) national conference.
- A presentation on the Citizens' Curriculum approach for unemployed adults and excluded groups at the Into Work Convention, a national conference for employment skills providers organised by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion.
- A presentation on the Citizens' Curriculum pilot models/frameworks for offender learning at the Prisoners' Learning Alliance national conference.

¹³ <http://www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/promoting-learning-and-skills/european-agenda-adult-learning-resources>

Jon Ashworth MP speaks at the Parliamentary event, with Lord Boswell of Aynho and Gisela Stuart MP



- A presentation on intensive approaches to the delivery of basic skills for unemployed adults to Ireland's National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) conference.
- 'Skills for Life? English, Maths and ESOL for 21st Century Citizens' national conference, organised by NIACE, National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL), the University and College Union (UCU) and the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA).
- A digital families presentation with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
- A joint presentation with the National Agency for Erasmus+ at the UK Digital Skills Conference.
- A Westminster Forum presentation on digital learning.
- Blended Learning for niche groups action research report.
- 'Assistive Technology on the Virtual Campus' interactive resource (hosted on the Virtual Campus).
- Round table discussion on Digital Skills with Microsoft UK.
- A workshop at a national event for the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), 'Europe Matters for Wales'.

Parliamentary event

In September 2015 we held a reception and seminar at the UK Parliament to promote work across the four administrations on the What Employers Want website. This was attended by more than 50 policy makers, influencers, learners and practitioners, with speeches from MPs Gisela Stuart and Jon Ashworth, and Lord Boswell of Aynho, chair of the national inquiry into adult literacy in England, *Work, Society and Lifelong Literacy* (2011)

10

The future: Our work in 2015–17



The challenges outlined in this report will not go away. Indeed, with constraints on public funding some of the most excluded groups in society will find themselves further disadvantaged. The cuts to adult learning and skills mean that our approaches to addressing these issues will have to be more imaginative – and effective.

International benchmarks such as the OECD *Survey of Adult Skills* indicate that the UK, like most European nations, faces significant challenges in attainment in basic and digital skills. These challenges are more acute for groups such as 16–24 year olds, socially excluded adults and those out of work.

During 2016–17, we will continue to focus UK work on improving skills for low-skilled individuals and participation in learning for groups currently excluded from education, training and the labour market. We will help bring about change by influencing both policy makers and practitioners. A key issue we have identified is the need to engage a wider audience outside adult learning policy/practice circles.

The result in 2017 will be a *State of the Nations* report.

We will continue to focus UK work on improving skills for low-skilled individuals and participation in learning for groups currently excluded from education, training and the labour market

Timescale for delivery

- Winter 2015: establish research group, write policy briefings, impact forum meetings.
- Spring 2016: further research and promotion via NIACE/EPAL blogs.
- Summer 2016: interim State of the Nations report and year one conference/webinar.
- Autumn–winter 2016: further EU and UK research.
- Spring–autumn 2017: final reports and conference.

We envisage our impact forums continuing to follow a broadly similar format but,

increasingly, shaping their own agendas to advocate and meet the identified needs of their populations. In partnership with NIACE as the EAAL UK National Coordinator, they are well placed to gather information on need as well as what creates and optimises impact. Each forum will:

- convene at least three times per annum at times to maximise synergies with policy cycles in each administration,
- promote its work through progress blogs for EPAL UK,
- enable greater policy coherence through sharing existing research, looking for regional and local case studies, and disseminating it,
- promote evidence-based approaches to policy development and formulation across the UK, particularly around the social and economic impact of learning, and
- produce, translate and disseminate evidence to networks from other work packages.

We expect the programme will have the following outcomes and impact by 2017:

- Greater awareness of the EAAL in the UK, and policy coherence between the four UK national administrations and the UK Government, ensuring policy development is evidence-based, accessible and effective.
- A *State of the Nation (or Nations)* report outlining the current state of play in UK adult learning to inform future policy development.
- A fully piloted Citizens' Curriculum with outline longitudinal findings that provide evidence for future policy development across the UK and Europe to enhance basic skills levels and other key competences.
- Documented evaluations of young people-

led participant research to inform policy development and practice.

- Influential reports from UK impact forums on how they have contextualised research to enable better regional policy development and planning.
- A fully trialled and developed CPD programme to support adult educators in the four UK nations to better use technology to support under-represented groups.
- The direct participation of 200 practitioners and policy makers in two international

conferences in the UK, with the involvement of EC colleagues, EPALE and other national coordinators.

- Virtual participation via social media of 5000 people interested in adult learning policy development.

We would like to thank our partners, Scotland's Learning Partnership, the Forum for Adult Learning Northern Ireland, the National Agency for Erasmus+, and EPALE UK, for their support in putting this programme together.



Funding opportunities for education, training and youth providers

Organisations are encouraged to access funding for staff training and work experience placements for students, learners, trainees, apprentices and volunteers through the Erasmus+ programme. Erasmus+ is the EU's funding programme for education, training, youth and sport, and provides opportunities to undertake creative and worthwhile activities.

Funding will be available on an annual basis for UK organisations to improve their training provision for staff and learners. Adult education organisations, schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, enterprises, youth organisations and other public or private organisations can participate in the programme. Grants enable organisations to offer training and work experience in another country and to take part in innovative activities to help improve provision, boost growth and create jobs.

To find out more, and to access further information and application support visit
www.erasmusplus.org.uk/about-erasmus.



Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport.
 The Erasmus+ UK National Agency is a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.



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It is a free multilingual community platform for adult learning professionals across Europe. Through participating in EPALE, you will be able to:

- Access high quality learning resources
- Get the latest adult education news and developments
- Search for adult learning events
- Participate in online theme based discussions
- Share best practices with other adult learning professionals
- Search for an Erasmus + partner to carry out projects with and apply for funding.

Any queries, contact our helpline:

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NIACE and the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion are to become one organisation

Our new organisation, the Learning and Work Institute, launches in January 2016. The Learning and Work Institute will promote lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion for the benefit of individuals, families, communities, businesses and the wider economy.