

# The Wider Impact of Adult and Community Learning in Shaping Local Communities

Tuesday 21 September 2010

Ickworth House, Horringer, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP29 5QE

## Background

The Coalition Government has put on record its commitment to lifelong learning. *“Adult learning has a really important role to play in encouraging active citizenship. ... We know that adult learning doesn’t just help people find work – it can also have benefits for people’s health and even for reducing crime.”* David Cameron, May 2010. *“Adult education – make no mistake – brings hope and the promise of a better society founded on social mobility, social justice and social cohesion. It both enriches the lives of individuals and the communities of which they are a part.”* John Hayes, May 2010. *“There is growing demand for adult and community learning. This is not only valuable in its own right, but also as an activity that can stimulate people to learn for vocational reasons as well as for enjoyment”* John Hayes, July 2010. *“Education for education’s sake – learning how to learn – benefits the economy in the long term. Philistinism is bad economics. It is also fundamentally unacceptable.”* Vince Cable, June 2010.

## What the research tells us

The transformative power of lifelong learning and its ability to enhance the quality of life of individuals and communities is well established. There is a significant body of evidence which demonstrates that:

- Lifelong learning is part of the apparatus of a civilised society, sustaining people in their current economic and social responsibilities and also offering a route to personal and social fulfilment, transformation, development and prosperity
- People with more education are more likely to be healthy

- Education has a direct effect on well-being and can have a cumulative effect by influencing the social and economic environment in which people spend their lives
- Investment in learning for older people can reduce the costs of medical and social care and improve the quality of life for older people, their families and communities
- A ‘learning family’ where adults and children are enthused and involved in their own and each others’ learning has positive effects for both children and adults and is often a gateway to other forms of civic engagement
- Participation in adult learning contributes to positive changes in social and political attitudes and contributes to increases in civic and political participation.

## The local authority role

Recent Transformation Fund projects have demonstrated that modest sums of public spending, particularly when public sector organisations and community groups work together, can unlock the kinds of innovative and creative changes that make a difference to the lives of individuals and the communities of which they are a part. In this way lifelong learning can be more than a public service but can become a powerful instrument of cultural change – providing a bridge between public, private and voluntary sector whether at regional, sub-regional or local levels. Local authorities are uniquely placed to unlock the learning potential of many local services. They can ensure that lifelong learning plays a strong role in local strategies for community cohesion, active citizenship, health and well-being.

Please retain pages 1 - 4

This could include:

- developing a culture of learning in families
- responding to demographic changes in the community by helping older people to keep mentally and physically active and fit
- supporting communities through the after-effects of the recession
- targeting activities to engage people in local democratic processes
- engaging people in digital technologies
- learning for a green future.

The key to success will be that the learning meets local needs and supports a range of social and economic priorities of elected bodies.

## Reinvigorating adult and community learning

In July 2010 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published *Skills for Sustainable Growth: Consultation on the future direction of skills policy*. This document:

- confirms the ways in which adult and community learning is seen to contribute to the aims of the Big Society programme
- applauds the existing wide variety of adult and community learning activities which enrich their local communities and are often delivered by learning providers in partnership with private and third sector organisations
- makes a commitment to reinvigorate adult and community learning to help individuals, families and communities to create the local services they want
- seeks to strengthen the relationships between colleges, local authorities, charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises by encouraging local leadership

- welcomes ideas for how businesses and others could be encouraged to engage in supporting local community learning to help create local ownership and momentum.

## Aims

This event will:

- explore the wider benefits of adult and community learning in relation to health, well-being, social cohesion, civic engagement, the Big Society and a host of other social policy areas which help create a better society
- identify how adult and community learning acts as the 'golden thread' linking across local authority priorities and how adult and community learning can play a strong role in local strategies including those for community cohesion, active citizenship and health and well-being
- review the ways in which learning providers, local authorities and other public and third sector organisations can work together to meet community needs at a local level
- celebrate developments in adult and community learning in the East of England and showcase innovative practice.

## Audience

Local authority lead members and portfolio holders. Senior leaders in local authorities, Colleges of Further Education, third sector organisations, and museums, libraries and archives. Public sector organisations working in health, care, community cohesion, services for older people, and children's services. Workplace learning providers and support agencies, trade unions and employers. Organisations involved in delivering Transformation Fund projects or Community Learning Champion projects and those organisations which have signed the Learning Pledge.

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## Provisional Programme

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|--------------|---|
| <b>09:30</b> | Arrival and registration  |
| <b>10:00</b> | Morning session <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Policy input – BIS</li><li>• Wider benefits of learning</li><li>• Case studies</li></ul>                |
| <b>12:35</b> | Lunch and market place  |
| <b>13:30</b> | Afternoon session <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local authority perspective</li><li>• Discussion groups</li><li>• Questions to expert panel</li></ul> |
| <b>15:30</b> | Close of event  |

This programme is correct at the time of going to press. The organisers reserve the right to make changes to the published programme in the event of one or more of the advertised speakers being unable to attend. Participants have no claim against NIACE in respect of such changes.

## Event information

- Arrival and registration is at 9:30am for a 10:00am start. The event will end at 15:30pm
- Attendance is free to delegates from the East of England region
- Places will be allocated in order of receipt of completed application forms (one form per person)
- Places can be reserved online via: [www.niace.org.uk/events](http://www.niace.org.uk/events)  
Alternatively completed and signed application forms can be faxed or posted to NIACE by the closing date. Reservations by telephone cannot be accepted
- Application forms are individually acknowledged by e-mail. Joining instructions, including map and directions, will be e-mailed out one week before the event
- Participants should be prepared to take their own notes as there will not be handouts for all sessions.
- If you have not received an e-mail confirming your attendance and joining instructions 4 working days before the event please contact:

### NIACE Events Team

Tel: 0116 204 2833

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## Application conditions

Event: Tuesday 21 September 2010

**Closing Date: Thursday 9 September 2010**

- Substitutions are to be advised **5 working days** prior to the event
- A **10 working days** notice period is required for provision of electronic note-takers, sign language interpreters and transcription to Braille
- Places will be normally limited to 2 representatives from each organisation except in the case of local authorities
- NIACE reserves the right to reject applicants who are not from the target audience list
- Attendance will be restricted to delegates from the East of England region.

For more information, to download an application form or to reserve a place online, visit the NIACE website:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/events>

Enquiries to NIACE Events Team - Tel: 0116 204 2833 / E-mail: [events@niace.org.uk](mailto:events@niace.org.uk)  
NIACE, Renaissance House, 20 Princess Road West, Leicester LE1 6TP

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, was founded in 1921. The National Institute seeks to secure an education system responsive to the diversity of adults' needs and aspirations as learners, and in particular to those who benefited least from initial education. It is our belief that a system fit for adults of all ages and in all their complexity will work better for all learners.

The National Institute is active in many areas - in research, development, publishing, seminars, conferences and training courses, and has an active individual membership.

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