

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION
(ENGLAND & WALES)**

(Registered Company No. 2603322, Registered Charity No. 1002775)

**More, Different and Better
NIACE Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013**

1. NIACE

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is the national non-governmental organisation for England and Wales, which represents the interests of adult learners and potential learners, and all those who make provision for them. NIACE is a membership organisation, with the legal status of a registered charity (No. 1002775) and company limited by guarantee (No. 2603322).

NIACE Dysgu Cymru conducts work in Wales under the umbrella of NIACE supported by the elected NIACE Dysgu Cymru Management Group.

NIACE is a membership organisation that both represents and advances the interests of all adult learners and potential learners – especially those who have benefited least from initial education and training.

2. Objects

The objects of NIACE as described in its Articles of Association are outlined in the appendix to this plan. They outline the range of work and the contexts in which NIACE will pursue the interests of adult learners focusing on England and Wales but drawing on and benefiting from wider international experience.

3. Purpose and Value

NIACE has a core policy goal – to secure more opportunities for adult learners; to extend opportunities to different adult learners, and better quality support for their learning.

Among the core values informing its work are:

- the celebration and promotion of active learning as a key factor to secure personal growth, social change and economic development;

- equality of opportunity, and respect for diversity for learners and those working on their behalf, thus securing a platform for learners' voices in policies affecting them;
- professional reliability and quality, openness, honesty and leadership;
- participatory democracy and social justice, including the opposition to discrimination and oppression;
- reflecting consideration for the environment and for sustainable development, in policies and practice;
- international solidarity with those who share our commitment to adult learning in the wider world.

4. Contexts

4.1 The contexts in which NIACE undertakes its work are:

- sectoral;
- geographical;
- curricular;
- working with and on behalf of under-represented groups;
- Governmental.

Headline details of these areas are outlined below.

A significant volume of work such as on guidance and outreach, credit and qualifications crosses all these contexts. In addition much of the work covered in the plan covers two or more contexts.

4.2 It is both a strength and a weakness of NIACE's current work that teams of staff develop authoritative and developmental programmes of work within the parameters of their specialisms. Whilst NIACE has enjoyed considerable success in its specialist areas the Institute's staff and structures are less effective at deploying resources and skills in addressing newly emerging areas of work, and in vocational education.

A major task for 2008-13 is to develop structures, staff skills and knowledge, and membership engagement, to ensure that NIACE is effective in drawing on the full range of its resources in developing new areas of work, whilst continuing to maintain authority in existing areas.

In the section that follows our expectation is that we should maintain existing high quality work and to address the key objectives identified here.

4.3 Sectoral

NIACE works to support adult learners and those who make provision for them in a range of different sectors:

- voluntary and community sector contexts;
- workplaces;
- local authority providers;
- further education;
- higher education;
- prisons and other secure accommodation.

For 2008-13 key sectoral objectives are:

- to reverse the overall decline in participation in publicly funded provision;
- to re-assert the value of community-based adult learning;
- to strengthen NIACE's work in workplace learning, notably in public sector provision;
- to secure a broad and flexible foundation learning tier;
- to improve part-time learning opportunities in higher education;
- to strengthen support for provision in the voluntary and community sector.

4.4 Geographical

NIACE organises work to respond to decisions affecting adult learning in a range of geographical contexts:

- Wales (through the work of NIACE (Dysgu Cymru));
- English regions;
- Europe;
- International work beyond Europe.

In addition the NIACE Board has identified the need to strengthen NIACE's work alongside providers in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

For 2008-13, key geographical objectives are:

- to consolidate NIACE Dysgu Cymru's role as critical friend to the Welsh Assembly Government, develop its capacity to offer strategic advice to policy makers, and practical advice to providers;
- to establish liaison offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland;
- to develop NIACE's international work as a self-sustaining area of activity;
- to strengthen and develop NIACE's cross-cutting work in the English regions, and in localities.

4.5 4.5 Curricular

NIACE has well-developed programmes of activity in a number of areas, notably:

- family learning;
- financial education;
- information and communications technology;
- e-learning;
- literacy and numeracy;
- English for Speakers of Other Languages.

For 2008-13, in addition to a major commitment to the development of technical and vocational education (see 5 below), key objectives are:

- to build on the successful merger with the Basic Skills Agency;
- to secure sufficient high quality ESOL, literacy and particularly numeracy provision to meet need;
- to secure re-balancing of literacy provision in favour of adults with the lowest level of skill (at entry level 2 and below): to develop workplace literacy, numeracy and language; and to embed language, literacy and numeracy in other training development programmes;
- to continue to develop strategies to overcome the digital divide to foster adult friendly, e-learning programmes and to strengthen tutors' skills in the use of ICTs;
- to seek inter-departmental coherence in the development of family learning;
- to secure improved financial education for adults, and, in particular for poorer, older and young adults.

4.6 Working with under-represented groups

NIACE has undertaken extensive work to foster equality and diversity, and, in particular, we work with and on behalf of:

- older adults;
- younger adults;
- adults with learning difficulties;
- adults with mental health issues;
- adults with disabilities;
- refugees and migrants;

- unemployed adults;
- offenders and ex-offenders;
- carers ;
- people outside the labour market, as well as those targeted by other programmes;
- adults experiencing additional societal barriers to their learning.

For 2008-13, key objectives with under-represented groups are:

- to develop programmes to develop employability amongst under-represented groups;
- to strengthen provision fostering agency and self-advocacy among individuals and groups returning to learning;
- to develop provision with offenders and ex-offenders and those making provision for them;
- to maintain and strengthen equality and diversity work for learners, potential learners, and those who make provision for them.

4.7 Government and Civil Society

In addition to its work with the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills, Welsh Assembly Government, and local government, as a 'critical friend'; NIACE engages with the full range of organisations active in civil society, to promote the public benefits of adult learning across different areas of policy and activity.

NIACE also undertakes advocacy, development and research to represent the interests of adult learners arising from the work of:

- the Department of Work and Pensions;
- the Department of Communities and Local Government;
- the Ministry of Defence;
- the Ministry of Justice;
- the Department of Health;
- the Department for International Development;
- the Department of Culture, Media and Sport;
- the Cabinet Office;
- the Department of Children, Schools and Families;
- and with the European Commission, Regional Development Agencies, Government offices, and government bodies, notably the Learning and Skills Council, the Quality Improvement Agency, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, and BECTa.

For 2008-13, the key objectives are:

- to diversify income streams and work programmes across government departments, and secure work with the public sector workforce;
- to work across government to improve the range and quality of learning opportunities for adults;
- to build on the range of existing partnerships and to strengthen alliances and advocacy work with civil society organizations, with trusts and other charities.

4.8 Campaigns

Adult Learners' Week, Quick Reads and NIACE's other campaigns are major vehicles in celebrating existing adult learning, and encouraging others to take part. NIACE will continue to use motivational campaigning as a tool for furthering adult learners' interest.

4.9 Inter-sectoral collaboration and coherence

In all the work outlined above, NIACE will work to maximise inter-sectoral collaboration and coherence.

5. Developmental priorities

5.1 To respond to the challenges posed by social and economic change, and to inform emerging public policy, NIACE will, in addition, address five developmental priorities:

- **Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning** – to continue to sponsor and support the independent Inquiry, to promote its research findings and secure serious policy responses to its proposals;
- **Demography** – to develop policy and support best practice for the effective engagement of adults, young and old, inside and outside the labour market, through the life course and in the light of demographic change;
- **Learning at Work** – to support the development of expansive learning workplaces, and the development of adult learning opportunities at work;
- **Employability** – to develop policy and support best practice in offering opportunities to develop skills for employability for people at work, securing work, and currently at a distance from the labour market;
- **Technical and Vocational education** – to strengthen provision for adults in numeracy, science and wider vocational and technical studies.

5.2 Professional development of the workforce

Given the scale of external change, and the Government's welcome commitment to strengthening the professionalism of the lifelong learning workforce, NIACE will also continue and strengthen its commitment to the continuous development of staff in lifelong learning.

For 2008-13, key objectives are:

- to support lifelong learning employers in workforce development for themselves, and their staff;
- to support the professionalism of the lifelong learning workforce;
- to secure support for quality enhancement in self-organised opportunities for adult learning.

6. Ways of Working

To achieve the priorities outlined above, NIACE will:

- maintain and improve our position as the major educational organisation representing the interests of adult learners across all sectors where adults learn;
- undertake advocacy work to press the case for high quality, affordable learning opportunities for adults that offer breadth of choice, effective outreach strategies and opportunities for progression;
- strengthen initiatives to secure effective learner representation in the governance and planning of adult learning opportunities;
- inform, debate, and develop capacity among the lifelong learning workforce and through advocacy, research, development and publications, conferences, training and information work;
- continue to strengthen the work of NIACE Dysgu Cymru, and to work alongside partner agencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland to build support for adult learning across the UK;
- continue its commitment to working in partnership with others sharing its values and purposes;
- foster equality and diversity in all its work;
- recruit, develop and maintain a motivated, skilled and prepared workforce, reflecting the diversity of the communities the Institute serves, and able to deliver across its range of programmes.

7. Well managed learning organisation

NIACE aspires to match its advocacy with good practice as an employer, and its governance.

To this end it will:

- review its business processes to contain costs, whilst maintaining value for money, and to maximise income to maintain a financially robust, entrepreneurial and cost-effective organisation;
- pursue high quality in all of its work, maintain its status as an Investor in People and achieve at least the first level recognition in the European Foundation for Quality Management;
- review and revitalise the engagement of members and users in its work;
- expand the number of organisations in membership;
- maintain standards of governance that secure a proper focus on the charity's priorities;
- continue the implementation of the e-strategy adopted in 2007;
- review the organisation's branding and market position and improve internal and external communications;
- secure accommodation facilities and equipment to meet its needs;
- reflect its equal opportunities policies in its practices.

Conclusion

If we achieve all this there will, of course, be more to do to secure further opportunities for adults. We expect to review the plan annually to take account of changing circumstances and new challenges.

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The Objects of the Institute as defined in its Articles of Association

The object of the Institute, as defined in its constitution, is the study and the general advancement of adult continuing education. In pursuit of this object, a number of functions are identified:

- a. Convening conferences, seminars and meetings.
- b. Collecting and disseminating information.
- c. Conducting enquiries and research.
- d. Publishing and distributing publications.
- e. Undertaking special projects, and administering special agencies set up by the NIACE Board.
- f. Developing co-operative relations with organisations, institutions and individuals promoting adult continuing education in other countries and with appropriate international organisations.
- g. Representing the interests of adult learners and the bodies that serve them
- h. Renting, leasing, buying or selling property to facilitate its work or that of agencies for which it is responsible.