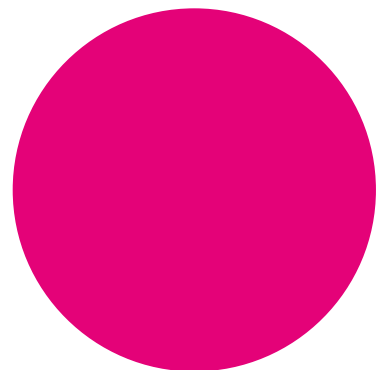
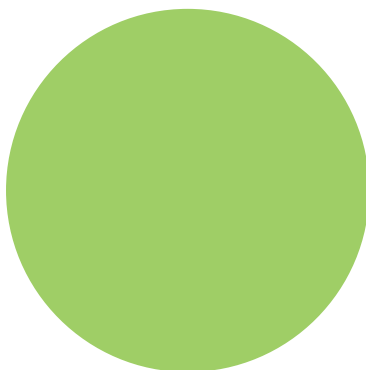
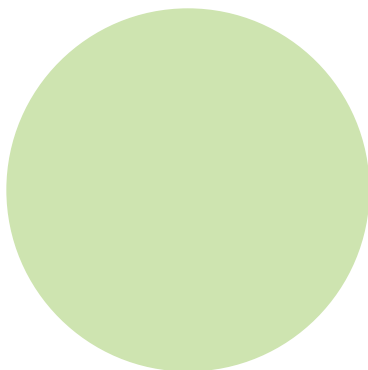
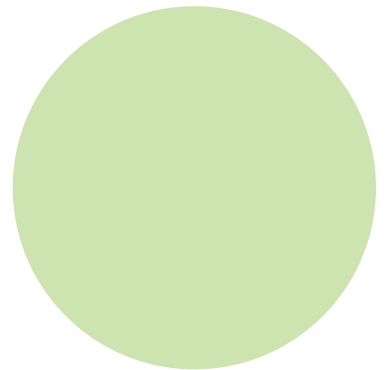
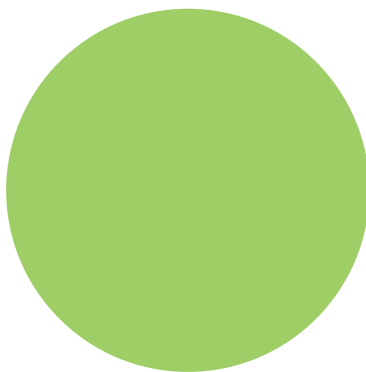
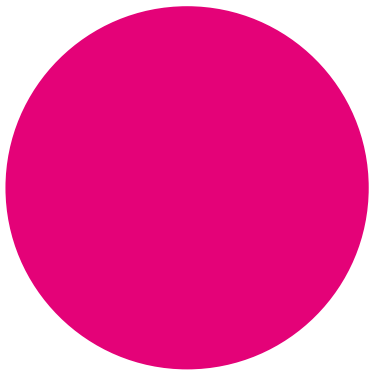


⋮ Making a difference  
⋮ for adult learners

⋮ NIACE policy impact report 2009



Published by



© 2009 National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales)  
21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester  
LE1 7GE

Company registration no. 2603322  
Charity registration no. 1002775

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without the written permission of the publishers, save in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

NIACE has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient financial resources.

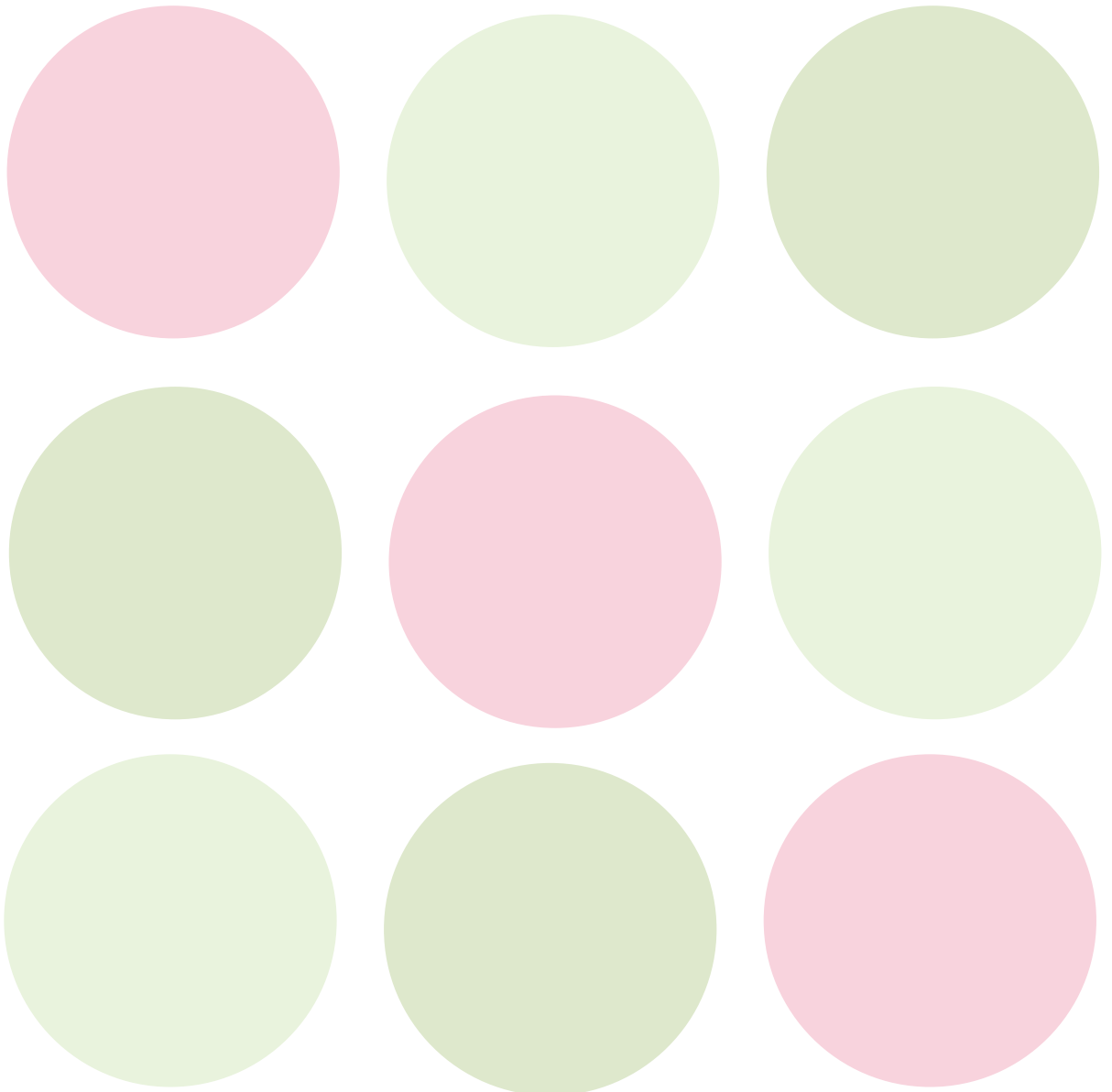
You can find NIACE online at [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

Designed and typeset by Prestige Colour Solutions Limited, Leicester

Printed by Spectrum Printing Services Limited, Leicester

⋮ Making a difference  
⋮ for adult learners

⋮ NIACE policy impact report 2009



# Introduction



NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, is an independent non-governmental organisation and charity. Our corporate and individual members come from a range of places where adults learn: universities, further education colleges, workplaces, local community settings, prisons and in their own homes.

For almost 90 years NIACE has worked to embed a popular and political understanding of the full range of benefits that adult learning offers. We exist to engage more and different adults in better quality learning of all kinds and to campaign for and celebrate the achievements of adult learners; young, old and in all their diversity. Since adult learning permeates and supports a range of public policy priorities beyond the confines of education, our strategies and activities are broad and wide-ranging. We function simultaneously as a research and development centre, a national and international campaigner, a think-tank, as technical experts, trainers and curriculum specialists and as a representative voice for existing and prospective adult learners and those delivering learning of all sorts.

Adult learners include everybody from young adults to individuals in the last years of their lives. Around 39 per cent of the adult population of the United Kingdom participated in some kind of learning in 2009.<sup>1</sup>

- ❖ 349,740 mature students study in universities;
- ❖ 3,095,400 adults in publicly funded further education and skills courses;
- ❖ there are thousands more learning in the workplace;
- ❖ and a great many others learning in informal settings like community groups, online or even at the local pub.

And the diversity of our constituency doesn't end there. The reasons for learning in adult life are just as vast, with adults engaging in learning for leisure, for social contact, to recover from an illness, for a second chance to learn to read and write, to become a better parent, to improve job prospects and for lots of other reasons. Needless to say, the diversity of decision-makers affecting adult learners is enormous and is not confined to any single policy sphere.

This publication will, we hope, illustrate the wide range of areas we cover in our work, our specific policy goals, and examples of how we have already had a policy impact. It illustrates some of our main advocacy initiatives along with the more specific policy goals we address in the areas of health, social mobility, ageing demographics, employability and international development.

<sup>1</sup> Aldridge, F and A Tuckett (2009) *Narrowing Participation*, NIACE: Leicester.



Our core  
aspiration

## More

An increase in the scale and scope of learning opportunities for adults and the number of adults who are active learners.

## Different

Diversity in the types of adult learners – particularly engaging those who benefited least from their initial education.

Opportunities to take part in all kinds of learning activities undertaken for different purposes covering both private and public benefits.

## Better

Improved quality, effectiveness and efficiency in the delivering of learning from learners' perspectives.

# Influencing decision makers

Our advocacy work is a fundamental element of what we do and is a key means of achieving our charitable purposes. At the same time as we explain to the public why adult learning matters and offer best-practice advice, we also advise, support or oppose and suggest policy within the Government and Parliamentary machinery and in work with funders, managers, teachers and learners.

Our influencing strategies are multi-dimensional, creative and wide-ranging. We use and deliver mass public outreach campaigns, academic research, parliamentary briefings and events; we privately advise ministers, opposition spokespeople and civil servants and offer training and publications for the adult education field.

These are four examples:

## **NIACE raises demand for learning: Adult Learners' Week and Quick Reads outreach campaigns**

NIACE has run Adult Learners' Week since 1992 and it remains the centrepiece of our work to raise awareness of the value of adult learning in both the public and political spheres. The 2008 campaign's press coverage would have cost, if purchased as advertising, more than £2 million. More than 22,000 people engaged in more than 3,000 events and taster sessions. Around 60,000 people have been motivated to sign up to a course after contact with the campaign during the last three years. NIACE also organises Quick Reads, a campaign led by the publishing industry which uses short, exciting books by best-selling authors and celebrities to encourage reading by adults who are new to reading or who have lost the habit. Thirty-seven titles have been published. Our evaluations found that 90 per cent of adults who have been introduced to Quick Reads say they are more self-confident since using the books, 89 per cent said they were now more likely to read other kinds of books and 57 per cent said their job prospects had improved. Gordon Brown has described the campaign as a "great success story of the English language".

## **NIACE secures funding for adult learning: Adult Safeguarded Learning**

From the Government's 1998 *Learning Age* Green Paper onwards, there was an enthusiastic development of all kinds of learning. However, the adoption of the first Skills Strategy in 2003 marked a strong shift towards qualification-bearing and employability-focused learning. Any funding outside the National Qualifications Framework appeared vulnerable. NIACE, therefore, negotiated with the then Minister for Young People and Adult Skills, Ivan Lewis, a safeguard for adult learning, comprising elements of community-based learning, family learning and neighbourhood learning in deprived communities. This resulted in a £210 million safeguard, which has continued to this day.

## NIACE research: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning

Many of the policy changes we advocate require a profound re-think on how we organise learning, how we fund education and how we view individuals' lifetimes. These are issues that cannot be changed by targeting isolated policies but rather require the creation of a space where the issues can be fully debated and considered with a long-term view. In September 2007 NIACE decided to invest substantially to set up an independent Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning chaired by Sir David Watson and directed by Professor Tom Schuller. The goal of the Inquiry was to offer an authoritative, coherent strategic framework for lifelong learning in the UK. Up to the summer of 2008 the focus was on consulting widely, gathering evidence and listening to as wide a range of perspectives as possible. From then onwards the Inquiry formulated, tested and refined elements of a strategic framework for lifelong learning. Publication of the final report *Learning through Life* took place in September 2009. Its findings and recommendations are now being used to influence Government and Opposition.

## NIACE creates the agenda: Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL)

Every year NIACE publishes an annual survey of participation in adult learning. The launch of the 2009 survey was covered in 19 different media, with coverage on BBC news, *The Guardian* and the *The Times*. NIACE staff also monitor Government figures on the numbers of adult learners in publicly-funded provision. In 2008 we identified a significant drop in adult learner numbers; 1.4 million in three years. This was widely circulated to the media, Government, parliamentarians, shadow ministers and broader stakeholders leading to important coverage in the press and both chambers of Parliament. Our advocacy also resulted in the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties announcing they would give an extra £100 million to adult education to reverse the fall in numbers. The impetus created led to the bringing together of key partners to form a mass coalition, the Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL). NIACE co-founded this non-party political alliance with the University and Colleges Union, the public sector union Unison, the Workers' Educational Association and National Union of Students. It attracted more than 200 national and local supporters. CALL's activities were discussed in the House of Commons, and the alliance organised a packed lobby of Parliament, addressed by speakers from the three main political parties. CALL was crucial in building a strong, engaged response from stakeholders to the Government's Informal Adult Learning consultation that evolved into *The Learning Revolution* White Paper and an investment of £20 million in a *Transformation Fund* to support creative new approaches to reach and engage new learners.



© Paul Hickinbotham



© Paul Hickinbotham

“A very strong and wide range of stakeholders see NIACE as performing an outstanding advocacy and policy role, including investing in developing alternative policy and researching key issues, and displaying policy courage and a mature relationship with Government and funders which is also valued by Government itself.”

(From *Crossroads: the 2009 Quinquennial Review of Top Slice Supported Education Bodies*, the Local Government Association’s review of NIACE.)

NIACE is actively involved in advocating more detailed and specific policy changes across a range of Government departments. NIACE staff and members constitute a world-renowned source of expertise on all spheres of adult learning and as such we are involved in a diverse set of areas ranging from health to innovation. The following section illustrates the more detailed aspects of our advocacy work in the areas set out below.

- Health and well-being
- Older people's lives
- Social mobility and a more equal society
- Family life
- Active citizenship and empowered, cohesive communities
- A resilient and productive economy
- International development
- Sustainability



## The wider impact of adult learning

## Impact of adult learning on: health and well-being



### Facts

- ❖ Research<sup>2</sup> shows that for every 100,000 women enrolled in adult learning in the UK an estimated 116–134 cancers could be prevented because of greater take-up of cervical smear tests.
- ❖ Taking one or two non-accredited courses as an adult is estimated to increase the chances of giving up smoking by age 42 from 24 per cent to 27.3 per cent.
- ❖ Taking women without qualifications to Level 2 (equivalent to a GSCE of grade A–C) would reduce the risks of depression at age 42 by 15 per cent, worth an estimated saving of up to £200 million a year in the UK.
- ❖ Adult learning appears to slow the development of two brain lesions that are the hallmarks of Alzheimer's Disease.
- ❖ Fourteen per cent of adults who took one or two leisure courses increased their sports/leisure membership between the ages of 33 and 42 compared to the predicted 9 per cent of adults with similar characteristics who took no courses of any type.
- ❖ Participation in adult learning is related to taking more exercise. It is predicted that 38 per cent of adults with the characteristics of learners would increase their level of exercise between the ages of 33 and 42 without taking any courses. The estimated effect of taking three to ten courses is to increase this proportion from 38 per cent to 45 per cent.

### What NIACE wants

- ❖ Government to recognise the impact of adult learning on overall well-being through the creation of an adult learning participation target which would include engagement in all kinds of learning.
- ❖ HM Treasury to monitor the benefits and savings that adult learning makes to other departments' public expenditure such as the Department of Health. This would allow for provision that falls between two categories, health and education, to be mainstreamed and become a funding priority.
- ❖ The Department of Health to use adult learning in a preventative health strategy.
- ❖ The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills to commit to making the post-16 learning sector an example of promoting positive mental health and well-being with a similar scheme to the NHS's pledge as a *Mindful Employer*.
- ❖ The Adult Advancement and Careers Service to recognise the power of adult learning in maintaining, lifting, and re-motivating people's well-being.
- ❖ The development and policy use of a well-being indicator.
- ❖ Establishing participation in learning and skills as an outcome referred to by the Department of Health's *Improving Access to Psychological Therapies* (IAPT) framework.
- ❖ A Qualifications Credit Framework that is fully populated with units at Entry Levels 1 and 2 with a curriculum on how to manage your health at critical transition points of life.

2 Feinstein, L et al. (2008) *The Social and Personal Benefits of Learning: A summary of key research findings*, Institute of Education: London.

## Case study: NIACE's policy impact on promoting health and well-being through adult learning

NIACE's research has shown consistently that adult learning is a good tool to re-motivate people with poor well-being who are beginning to struggle with mental ill health. However, education is rarely uppermost in the mind of GPs when they see patients. In 2000 NIACE obtained funding from the European Social Fund, the East Midlands Development Agency, Nottingham Health Action Zone and the Information, Advice and Guidance Network to establish a programme that would place learning advisors inside GPs surgeries to prescribe learning as part of route back into encouraging well-being. The project, *Prescriptions for Learning*, produced very positive results. Of the 49 people referred to a learning advisor, 46 took up their appointment and 32 went on to participate in a learning activity. When individuals were asked whether getting involved with learning had made any difference to them, the overwhelmingly response was "yes" and interviewees were very enthusiastic, reporting benefits to their mental health and, in some cases physical benefits too. This project was ahead of its time and our work in this area is not over. As the initial funding ran out, arguments broke out over which Department should have responsibility for carrying the initiative on. The Health Service reckoned that the education budget should bear the cost, since the benefits were largely educational, whilst Education argued the opposite. This project has made NIACE aware of the need for Government departments to work towards common objectives and we continue to orientate our policy work towards this goal. We are now directing our efforts towards the new Adult Advancement and Careers Service and seeking to influence Government so that the value of adult learning becomes a key strand of the health agenda.



© Stuart Hollis

## Impact of adult learning on: older people's lives

### Facts

England's population is ageing and this trend will increase rapidly over the next 20 years. In 2009 around 17.7 million people are aged 50 or over; by 2029 this will have increased to 22.9 million.

- ❖ Studies by the Institute of Employment Studies<sup>3</sup> show that 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.
- ❖ For people aged between 50 and 71, being disabled or in poor health is a barrier to participation in learning. However, higher proportions of learners with disabilities or health problems reported various positive benefits of learning, compared to those in good health.
- ❖ The same study showed that 80 per cent of older learners reported a positive impact of learning on at least one of the following areas: their enjoyment of life; their self-confidence; how they felt about themselves; satisfaction with other areas of life; and their ability to cope.
- ❖ Furthermore, it showed that 42 per cent of older learners reported an improvement in their ability to stand up and be heard and/or their willingness to take responsibility.
- ❖ Twenty-eight per cent reported an increased involvement in social, community and/or voluntary activities as a result of learning.

### What NIACE wants

- ❖ The large decline in older people participating in learning to be addressed by identifying learning as an element of a broader ageing strategy.
- ❖ The creation of a national framework of what is considered to be an appropriate range of learning opportunities any older person can expect to find locally.
- ❖ Regular monitoring of older people's participation in learning, and their views about what is available, against an agreed curriculum framework.
- ❖ Local authorities to be given a statutory role in coordinating, leading and guaranteeing older people's learning at local levels along with mechanisms for measuring progress. Whilst local authorities have a responsibility for the welfare and well-being of their communities, their role in adult education has been eroded. They need to be given an explicit responsibility for the development of appropriate lifelong learning opportunities for older people.
- ❖ Recognition of the role of learning for older people as a critical component of well-being and healthy lifestyles by ensuring that specific national indicators for older people's learning are included in the next Comprehensive Spending Review.
- ❖ A stronger commitment from Government, public services and the private sector to "age-proof" services, ensuring wherever possible that older people have equal access to opportunities, rather than parallel special services.
- ❖ Strengthening the prevention of elder financial abuse through learning.
- ❖ A Skills Health Check and "refit" at age 45.

<sup>3</sup> Dench, S and J Regan (2000) *Learning in Later Life: Motivation and Impact*, Research Report RR183, Department for Education and Employment.

### Case study: NIACE's policy impact on older people

In 2006, Government created an *Opportunity Age Strategy* Partnership Group to coordinate its Opportunity Age Strategy. An education and training sub-group was created and Government asked NIACE to provide its secretariat. NIACE ran this group bringing together all the national organisations dealing with older people's learning. From the group's discussions NIACE produced a policy paper, *Older People's Learning: An Action Plan*, making recommendations about what should be the priorities regarding older peoples' learning. Government has taken into consideration these policy suggestions and has agreed to sponsor a national conference to discuss them. The publication has also informed the decision on what type of projects devoted to older learners will be supported by the £20 million *Transformation Fund*.



## Impact of adult learning on: social mobility and a more equal society



© Northern College

## Facts

- ❖ Research findings<sup>4</sup> consistently identify a return from later-life investment in education through improvements in occupationally-based social status.
- ❖ A review of the available facts suggests that, for those who attempt to gain entry to the labour market from a situation of inactivity or unemployment, there is evidence of a monetary return attached to various levels and types of training and education.

## What NIACE wants

- ❖ Reversal of the withdrawal of funding for equivalent or lower qualifications in higher education, especially for vulnerable groups such as carers and minority ethnic groups.
- ❖ Targeted resources within Train to Gain and the apprenticeship schemes for minority ethnic groups.
- ❖ Government to provide clear and decisive leadership by modelling best race equality practice as an employer.
- ❖ The new Skills Funding Agency to have a remit that guarantees outreach work and equality of access to learning through a National Outreach Service.
- ❖ Elimination of the 21-hour rule for carers, which would allow recipients of Carer's Allowance to study full-time or part-time without losing their benefits.
- ❖ The allocation of learning funds for carers via local authorities so that training budgets are linked to local strategies for carers' education and training.
- ❖ A specific form of skills accounts for carers that would allow them to follow non-linear learning pathways over several years.
- ❖ Promotion of learning opportunities for people with disabilities and limiting health conditions.
- ❖ An Entry Level curriculum for learners with learning difficulties (especially adults) that is not fully accreditation driven and Skills for Life led, and allows access to a broad, holistic curriculum to support learners with leisure and pleasure activities and one that offers appropriate challenges.
- ❖ Protecting and ensuring continuation of funding for learners with profound complex learning difficulties as the system progresses to the Qualifications Curriculum Framework in 2010 by creating a joint set of resources coming from health care, social care and the skills sector.
- ❖ Government to address the fact that learning opportunities in high-security prisons are funded and delivered by the NHS and not subject to LSC quality regulations.

4 Blanden, J et al. (2009) *The Effect of Lifelong Learning on Intra-generational Social Mobility: Evidence from Longitudinal Data in the United Kingdom*, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills: London.

### **Case study: NIACE's policy impact on young adult carers**

For a number of years now NIACE has been concerned with the policy void which fails to attend to the transition needs of young adult carers (16–25 years old) in further and adult education. To raise the profile of this issue with policymakers, NIACE obtained funding from the Nuffield Foundation to research and identify key issues around access to education and training for young adult carers in England, with a specific focus upon their transitions. This project has been undertaken by staff in NIACE's Young Adults' team and the Health and Disability Equality team. It emerges from a significant body of research and development work undertaken by the two teams, focusing upon the needs and experiences of disadvantaged young adults, and access to education for people with learning disabilities and their carers. Furthermore, we obtained funding from the Learning and Skills Council to identify the practical, psychological and structural barriers to mainstream education for carers and to analyse the policies and practices in further and adult education that contribute to these systemic difficulties. The report and its recommendations will be published shortly by the LSC. As a result of this work, the Department of Health is now funding a new NIACE project called *Who Cares?* that will look at the education and training needs of young adult carers with a particular focus on those who have learning difficulties.

### **Case study: NIACE's policy impact on adults with mental ill-health**

Over the past five years, NIACE has developed a high profile for our mental health work. This has been reflected by a level of funding from the Learning and Skills Council that has enabled us to lead a national programme of work, appoint nine Regional Project Officers who have a presence in regional LSC offices and create a mental health network with a cross-sector membership of approximately 1,700 contacts. Consequently, we have succeeded in achieving national and regional visibility and impact for this area of activity. It has also enabled us to support the LSC to produce a refresh of its mental health strategy which clearly states the need, and the commitment of the LSC, to safeguard the needs of this group of learners through the Machinery of Government changes. In 2009-10, NIACE will support an LSC Transition Management Group with the aim of facilitating cross-government commitment to the LSC mental health strategy, supporting this work through structural changes and maintaining a high profile for mental health work with the LSC's successor agencies. A further contract is being negotiated to develop strategic support in relation to adults with mental health needs in other marginalised and disadvantaged groups, for example, offenders, people from black and minority ethnic groups and people with other disabilities. We have also influenced the LSC to lead on "Mindful Employer" practices and have developed a training package to support mental health and well-being amongst the post-16 workforce.

## Impact of adult learning on: family life

### Facts

Because considerable inequality is already apparent when children reach school age, families are one of the most powerful factors in determining children's life chances.

- ❖ Research<sup>5</sup> has found that parental involvement in school is more than four times as important in influencing performance of young people aged 16 than socio-economic class. Family learning is the most effective tool to involve the parents of disadvantaged children.
- ❖ After completing family learning courses, learners reported having gained new skills, greater levels of confidence and understanding, improved communications and changed relationships with their families and communities.

### What NIACE wants:

- ❖ Government to establish an effective method of ensuring that the learning needs of adult family members are considered alongside that of their children. For joint family activities this could follow a similar method to that of lead practitioners for children.
- ❖ To ensure that the role of parents as adult learners in their own right is promoted in all family-related policy initiatives.
- ❖ To secure chances for a wider-ranging curriculum of formal, informal and volunteering opportunities that promote learning and resilience in families and communities which should be adopted within funding and curriculum framework regimes.
- ❖ The inclusion of learning as a family as a critical component within the parenting support agenda by making it a requirement that it is included in every local authority's parenting support strategy.
- ❖ Building on the approach adopted by the Learning and Skills Council for the Family Learning Impact Funding, to promote wider recognition of the outcomes of learning across the personal, social, educational and economic areas of family life – recognising, recording and celebrating success.
- ❖ Subject to the format of national indicators following the next Comprehensive Spending Review, to secure recognition for the contribution and economic value of family and intergenerational learning to society.
- ❖ All professionals working with children and families in learning and social care activities to have a shared understanding through initial training and on-going continuing professional development of the impact and benefit of developing a changed culture of learning.

<sup>5</sup> Nunn, A et al. (2007) *Factors influencing social mobility*, Research Report No 450, Department for Work and Pensions: London.

## Case study: NIACE's policy impact on family learning and progression

In 2007 NIACE reviewed the methods used by the Learning and Skills Council to measure progression from family learning programmes. NIACE identified a need for a broader definition of what constitutes progression, one that would include not only economic benefits but also the educational, personal, social and collective progression outcomes of the programmes. As a result the LSC has adopted NIACE's proposed definition and now measures the success of programmes funded through *Family Learning Impact Funding* based on a more inclusive definition of progression that reflects adults' numerous needs and the clear benefits of learning.



© Paul Hickinbotham

## Impact of adult learning on: active citizenship and empowered, cohesive communities



## Facts

- ❖ Studies<sup>6</sup> find that taking three to ten leisure courses raises racial tolerance by almost 75 per cent more than the predicted change in this attitude for similar adults.
- ❖ Whilst adult education does not appear to change the attitudes of those with extreme racist-authoritarian views, it does seem to prevent individuals from adopting such extremist attitudes.
- ❖ Taking part in adult education is associated with a greater likelihood of voting.
- ❖ Men with the poorest literacy and numeracy skills tend to lead a solitary life.
- ❖ Participation in each of the four types of adult learning (academically accredited, vocationally accredited, work-related and leisure) contributes separately to positive changes in social and political attitudes. Participation in three of the four course types (the exception being vocationally accredited courses) contributes to increases in civic and political participation.
- ❖ The effects on civic participation of taking leisure courses are particularly marked for those with qualifications below Level 2 at age 33.

## What NIACE wants:

- ❖ Inclusion of lifelong learning as an intrinsic element of Regional Development Agencies and sub-regional economic development agendas. Adult learning should be made more central to regional, sub-regional and local policy development and implementation.
- ❖ An expanded engagement of local authority elected members and key policy officers in a wider vision of adult learning across the agendas of local government.
- ❖ Inspection processes and quality monitoring regimes (LSC Framework for Excellence or successor framework) that are customised suitably so as better to support and not to disadvantage providers of formal, non-formal and informal adult learning.
- ❖ Access for asylum seekers, and other excluded new arrival groups such as people on spouse visas, to appropriate, further and higher education funding for a range of learning opportunities, including English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL), from day one by removing funding eligibility restrictions.
- ❖ More celebration and promotion of citizenship tests and award ceremonies, which have proved extremely popular.
- ❖ Involvement of Sector Skills Councils in the National ESOL Forum and Reference Group to highlight the need to address community cohesion issues in the workplace.
- ❖ Tackling the loophole in legislation that allows the creation of scam colleges targeting migrants, by only allowing LSC providers to be ESOL citizenship providers.
- ❖ The right to access FE funding, including Learner Support Funds for other excluded vulnerable migrants.

6 Feinstein, L. et al. (2008) *The Social and Personal Benefits of Learning: A summary of key research findings*, Institute of Education: London.

## Case study: NIACE's policy impact in access to English for Speakers of Other Languages and disadvantaged groups

NIACE's involvement with ESOL is long-standing: a major contribution to the debate was the 2006 report *More than a language* produced by our Committee of Inquiry into ESOL. The Inquiry consulted widely and analysed existing evidence on the provision of adult learning for people with ESOL needs in England. It demonstrated the extent and changing nature of the demand for ESOL classes and provided realistic and helpful recommendations to policymakers, funders, inspectorates, providers and practitioners for the future good of ESOL provision in England. The Government responded directly to NIACE and agreed with many of the recommendations, which it then built into its Skills for Life delivery plan. However, not all of our recommendations were taken on board by Government and we continue to work towards better provision for ESOL.

In 2007, for example, the UK Government withdrew the right of asylum seekers to attend English language courses for their first six months in the country. As a direct result NIACE launched a new campaign, *A Right to a Voice*, to highlight the human rights injustices of Government policy and to seek its reversal. Over 100 organisations and individuals including Oxfam, the Refugee Council and the Archbishop of Canterbury have joined the campaign. Alongside putting pressure on Government, NIACE is facilitating established groups of asylum seekers, supported by volunteers, to meet weekly and help each other through a six-month Welcome to Britain programme – dovetailing agenda-setting campaigning with practical support.

Another area of our work is with Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali women, who, research consistently shows, have fewer English language skills than other minority ethnic women. An ambitious NIACE research study, *Dare to Dream*, investigated the barriers to learning that this group of women face and provided recommendations that might help them progress. The success of the study triggered further work for NIACE funded by the European Integration Fund and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills which brought together 160 women from Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali communities in London to identify their learning needs and help them access all types of learning. The project, *A Woman's Place*, targeted specific groups of women who are likely to have lower levels of English language skills and who are at risk of social exclusion. Ten pilot programmes are now in place testing NIACE's *Dare to Dream Community Planning and Outreach Framework*, engaging women in a range of learning activities including ESOL.

## Impact of adult learning on: a resilient and productive economy



## Facts

- ❖ Research<sup>7</sup> shows that people who were out of the labour market at the beginning of the period (1991) were more likely to be in work in 2000 if they had acquired a formal qualification in the interim.
- ❖ Male workers who undertook work-related training in mid career (age 33–42) experienced 4–5 per cent higher wage growth over the period 1991–2000, compared to similar workers who did not undertake any training.
- ❖ Businesses that do not invest in talent are two-and-a-half times more likely to fail, whereas those that carry on training will recover more quickly.
- ❖ For both men and women, work-related adult learning is associated with positive willingness to work. Workers who receive training are less likely to leave.

## What NIACE wants:

- ❖ A re-balancing of provision for learners with pre-Entry and Entry Level skills, ensuring better access to, and support for, first-step learning. This means the creation of a Foundation Learning Tier which is inclusive and meets the widely different needs of learners with no, or partial, qualifications.
- ❖ ESOL funding that does not skew provision towards Level 1 (which results in insufficient provision to meet the highest levels of demand at Entry Levels 1 and 2).
- ❖ Raised confidence amongst non-numeracy adult learning specialists about how to embed and engage learners with maths. Such practitioners include vocational and literacy teachers and trainers, assessors, Union Learning Representatives and other front-line workers and intermediaries.
- ❖ A careful and significant piloting of Functional Skills qualifications with adult learners, together with a much more considered assessment of the risks involved in any transition from Skills for Life qualifications.
- ❖ Increased connectivity between the focus on employability in the Foundation Learning Tier and Progression Pathways and the Department for Work and Pensions' Welfare to Work programme and skills for jobs.
- ❖ An outcome-based rather than target-based approach to adult learning. For example, Train to Gain programmes need to result in real learning and not just in the accreditation of existing skills.
- ❖ Reform General Qualifications to bring them within the scope of the Qualifications Credit Framework. Individual units within the QCF should be funded on the basis of their credit values.

7 Feinstein, L. et al (2004) *The Labour Market Impact of Adult Education and Training: A Cohort Analysis*, Centre for the Economics of Education: London

- ❖ Train to Gain funding to be used effectively and to provide opportunities for all, including adults who have benefited least from their initial education and people with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- ❖ All adults to have choices to acquire skills in using digital technology with Government policy on e-learning reflecting the needs of adults especially those with the least previous access to learning.
- ❖ A post-16 workforce trained to use ICT effectively with adult learners.
- ❖ The creation of joint outcome targets for funding streams for people with learning difficulties and disabilities between the LSC and DWP. Currently, learning providers face disincentives to give this group of learners, opportunities to take up work before finishing their courses because funding can only be retrieved if qualifications are achieved.

### **Case study: NIACE's impact on supporting the transition from education to employment of adults with learning difficulties**

In 2002, NIACE successfully brought to the fore the fact that many people with learning difficulties fail to make the jump from attending further or adult education to paid employment. The Department of Health accepted our proposal to look at this issue in depth and funded a project *Making the Jump*, through a competitive grant from Section 64 funding. Our work highlighted good practice where vocational courses or training were leading adults with learning difficulties to make the transition to employment and drew out the key factors for success. By November 2005 when the Report of the Steering Group that reviewed the LSC's planning and funding of provision for adult learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, *Through Inclusion to Excellence*, NIACE was an influential voice on the subject and our work was referenced ten times throughout the report.

Our concerns and recommendations, such as the importance of partnership work and people-centred approaches, have since then been taken into consideration. NIACE is now involved in the *Getting a Life* programme which is a three-year cross-government initiative funded jointly by the Office for Disability Issues, Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Schools Children and Families. We provide training throughout the various pilot sites on creating people-centred approaches so that services in touch with this group of adults are working in partnership. Furthermore, a current NIACE project *Making it Work* is developing a guide for learning and skills providers to embed the supported employment approach in vocational provision for people with learning difficulties. This project has a direct link into the *Getting a Life* programme sites that will be trialling the pack and introductory sessions. NIACE is now an established well-regarded partner of Government in this area and we continue to be in close contact with the Cabinet Office's team taking this work forward.

## Impact of adult learning on: international development

### Facts

“First we must educate adults because our children will not have an impact on our economic development for five, 10 or even 20 years. The attitudes of adults... on the other hand, have an impact now. The people must understand the plans for development of this country; they must be able to participate in changes which are necessary. Only if they are willing and able to do this will this plan succeed.” Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania (1964)

- ❖ Studies<sup>8</sup> show that many important development indicators such as fertility rates and child mortality are strongly influenced by the extent to which women are empowered. Women’s empowerment itself depends on earning power, property rights and, not least, their education and literacy.
- ❖ The average literacy score in a given population is a better indicator of growth than the percentage of the population with very high literacy scores. A country that focuses on promoting strong literacy skills widely throughout its population will be more successful in fostering growth and well-being than one in which the gap between high-skill and low-skill groups is large.
- ❖ Findings suggest that adult literacy programmes help poor people to raise their income, and that they compared positively to the returns of primary school education.
- ❖ “The returns to investment in adult literacy programmes are generally comparable to, and compare favourably with, those from investments in primary education. In practice, the opportunity cost for a child to attend school is typically lower than for an adult literacy programme. Yet, the opportunity to realise the benefits is more immediate for an adult who is already in some way involved in the world of work.”<sup>9</sup>
- ❖ Development economists have shown that more educated and literate adults/parents have healthier lives, reduced fertility and less disease-prone children with more nutritious diets.

### What NIACE wants:

- ❖ Recognition and implementation of adult learning as a human right.
- ❖ The integration of adult learning with International Aid programmes as an effective way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, with particular emphasis on the effectiveness of adult literacy and family learning.
- ❖ Increased global skills, knowledge and understanding amongst the UK population to address globalisation, international inter-dependency, social inclusion and community cohesion.
- ❖ Optimisation of knowledge transfer between countries to learn from each other about effective policies, processes and practices of adult learning.

8 Lind, A (2008) “Why literacy for all?” in *Literacy for All: Making a Difference*, UNESCO: Paris.

9 Lind (2008) *op.cit*



© Northern College

### **Case study: NIACE's policy impact on the adult learning dimensions of international development**

NIACE is a key member of the International Council for Adult Education and regularly participates in international forums. Several of NIACE's staff participate in UNESCO committees. Furthermore, in 1997, our Chief Executive was invited to be part of the UK official delegation to the fifth UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA V. NIACE's participation led to the proposal during the conference of the creation of an International Adult Learners' Week, a motion that was accepted in the conference and by UNESCO. The Week is modelled on NIACE's own festival, Adult Learners' Week, which has promoted and celebrated the achievements of adult learners in the UK since 1992. Copied now in more than 50 countries, each year a different country hosts International Adult Learners' Week sponsored by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. For the 2009 upcoming CONFINTEA VI, NIACE has once again been asked to advise Ministers and be part of the UK official delegation to Belem, Brazil. We were also commissioned to write the UK country report on the state of British adult learning for the conference on behalf of the Government. Through this work we seek to influence the relevant UK departments to recognise the significance of adult learning and contributions it can make to their developmental programmes. This advocacy work is in its early stages but we have already been successful in securing a scoping exercise, commissioned by the Joint International Unit the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, to propose a range of possible projects or models of how English and African organisations can work together in the field of adult learning.

## Impact of adult learning on: sustainability

### Facts

Climate change is arguably the biggest challenge facing the world today. There is an urgent need to change the way we live, work, consume and use the environment if the planet and humanity are to survive and thrive. Education for sustainable development can play a powerful role in bringing about the cultural changes and attitudinal shifts needed to achieve this.

- ❖ Taking part in formal and informal learning activity influences attitudes and behaviour related to sustainability, including energy saving, travel patterns, consumerism, use of resources and management of local environments.<sup>10</sup>
- ❖ Learning supports the development of sustainable communities by fostering discussion, debate and collaborative action.<sup>11</sup>
- ❖ Workplace training results in reductions in energy use and carbon emissions.<sup>12</sup>



### What NIACE wants:

- ❖ The role of learning and skills to be made explicit in national, regional and local strategies addressing the challenge of climate change.
- ❖ A national framework of sustainability capabilities.
- ❖ Support for training and re-skilling in 'green collar' industries, including access routes for adult learners.
- ❖ Training programmes to equip workplaces to adapt to changing circumstances related to climate change.
- ❖ A strategy and a robust and imaginative programme of family and intergenerational learning to bring together social, economic and environmental factors leading to sustainable development.
- ❖ Development of resources to support whole-organisational approaches to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).
- ❖ Training and continuing professional development for leaders and managers to enable them to introduce whole-organisational approaches to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).
- ❖ More resources to be devoted to embedding learning for sustainability in initial teacher training and continuing professional development programmes.
- ❖ More research programmes into ESD and adult learning, including effective engagement of adults and identifying factors that result in action, attitudinal and/or behaviour change.

<sup>10</sup> CAG Consultants and Community Development Foundation (2007) *Every Action Counts: Year one activities and achievements*.

<sup>11</sup> CLG and Community Development Foundation (2006) *National Framework for Active Learning for Active Citizenship*.

<sup>12</sup> TUC (2009) *Changing Work in a Changing Climate*

### **Case study: NIACE's policy impact on Education for Sustainable Development**

In 2008 NIACE carried out research for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to investigate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) awareness, provision and practices in adult and community learning and voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations. The study also identified awareness and take up of the LSC web-based Education for Sustainable Development resource, SORTED, and sought views on this resource from the above sectors.

The research concluded that, in general, adult and community learning and voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations are at the early stages of developing ESD, although they recognise a need to do so. The prevailing view was that the SORTED resource is geared to FE colleges, and additional information and approaches were required to make it more relevant and accessible to the full range of organisations in the learning and skills sector.

This NIACE work raised awareness of ESD, and activity in the above sectors increased as a direct result. The subsequent revision of SORTED also took account of the research findings to make the resources more relevant and accessible to the full range of different sectors providing learning for adults. The LSC has recognised the development needs of adult and community learning and voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations and has commissioned a support programme to support organisations in these sectors to respond to the ESD related changes introduced to the Ofsted framework September 2009. This programme will identify and disseminate the features of effective ESD practices and support developments across the sectors.





# Making a difference for adult learners

## NIACE policy impact report 2009

This is a report on the wide range of areas that the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) covers in its work. It illustrates NIACE's main advocacy initiatives along with its more specific policy goals in the areas of health, social mobility, ageing demographics, employability and international development.

NIACE aims to encourage all adults to engage in learning of all kinds. It seeks to achieve this by:

- ❖ running high-profile campaigns such as Adult Learners' Week and Quick Reads
- ❖ delivering high-quality development and research work
- ❖ supplying expert consultancy, advice and support services
- ❖ engaging ministers and parliamentarians
- ❖ supporting networking with practitioners, policy-makers and researchers
- ❖ publishing books and journals
- ❖ offering a wide-ranging event management service
- ❖ disseminating specialist information
- ❖ providing flexible and personalised training courses

NIACE works with and for: adult learners, local authorities, Government departments and agencies, voluntary bodies, charitable trusts, adult education providers, trade unions, employers and European funders

**For more information on NIACE's advocacy and policy work, contact the Chief Executive's Office (tel. 0116 204 4200, or via our General Enquiry webpage [www.niace.org.uk/contact](http://www.niace.org.uk/contact)).**

ISBN 978 1 86201 445 9



[www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)