

Adult Learners' Week

Adult Learners' Week is the UK's largest and longest-running festival of learning. Co-ordinated by NIACE and held in May each year, Adult Learners' Week encourages thousands of adults – young, old, and in all their diversity – to give learning a go.

Adult Learners' Week is all about celebrating learners, and at its heart is the suite of awards, which recognise the learning achievements of individuals, groups, families and projects.

In Adult Learners' Week 2007:

- 1,368 nominations were received;
- 8,000 calls were made to learndirect;
- over 3,000 regional events were attended by nearly 18,000 people;
- £4 million of media coverage was generated.

'Learning has helped me overcome many barriers in my life... I hope to be running my own company in five years.'

João Mateus, Adult Learners' Week Award winner 2006

Whether you're an employer, a provider of learning or a potential partner, there are many benefits to getting involved.

Adult Learners' Week is co-ordinated by NIACE and supported by the European Social Fund, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the Learning and Skills Council, the learndirect national advice line and Ofcom, the Office of Communications.

To find out more about Adult Learners' Week and its sister campaign, Sign Up Now, please visit www.alw.org.uk

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Registration no. 2603322 Registered charity no. 1002775

Advocacy and Public Policy

Advancing the case for adult continuing education in public policy and debate lies at the heart of NIACE's purpose.

Members and staff share a concern to influence and persuade others that improving, increasing and extending opportunities for adults to learn throughout their lives has real public as well as private benefits.

We work with politicians of all parties, journalists and opinion formers to secure an informed analysis of how adult learning can best contribute to the UK economic prosperity, social inclusion and cohesion.

This involves work at European level and transnationally, as well as in Westminster, Whitehall and the devolved administrations. NIACE also has deep roots in local government.

In all activities NIACE builds alliances and partnerships to achieve its objectives and to make its case in the most compelling way, using whatever communication channels and techniques are most cost-effective. Sometimes we take a lead and at other times we will support and contribute to work led by our members or other stakeholders. Techniques range from private meetings with ministers and public servants to public seminars and media stories.

To find out more information about our Advocacy and Public Policy work please visit www.niace.org.uk/advocacy or contact

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The Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning

The NIACE-led Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning was established in March 2007 to investigate and report on current practices in the employment of disabled people in the lifelong learning sector and to make recommendations for improvement.

The report – *From Compliance to Culture Change* – illustrates how many disabled staff members are reluctant to disclose impairments because they fear discrimination. 20 per cent of the adult population have a disability; however, the disclosure rate among staff in lifelong learning is only four per cent.

Overall, the Commission found a lack of consistency in the lifelong learning sector – in terms of recruitment, induction, employment and promotion of disabled staff – that amounts to institutional discrimination. The Commission's report made 47 recommendations to lifelong learning and infrastructure organisations to ensure disabled staff are treated as fairly as students in lifelong learning.

The Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning

NIACE welcomes and fully supports a Disability Equality Implementation Group (DEIG) set up by Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) to take the work of the Commission forward.

For further information please visit www.niace.org.uk/commissionfordisabledstaff or contact

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Conferences, Seminars and Training Courses

NIACE assists its funders, stakeholders and partners to raise awareness, promote and publicise key messages and best practice in the field. It offers events organisation and management of events for adult learners, providers of adult learning and those advocating on behalf of adult learners.

The range of events include policy and information briefing days, provider and learner consultation events, knowledge cafés, topical seminars, focus groups, disseminations and training courses for professional development.

The events provide a forum for lively debate and an exchange of views and knowledge from expert speakers in the field, which include NIACE's professional officers. Feedback from our participants consistently validates our track record of providing:

- high-quality standards;
- attention to detail;
- a flexible and personalised service;
- an evaluation and monitoring service;
- a commitment to robust business ethics.

Over a recent 12-month period, 90 per cent of participants attending more than 230 NIACE events rated the overall event as 'excellent' or 'good'.

For a full list of current conferences, seminars and training courses please visit www.niace.org.uk/Conferences

To enquire about NIACE's event management service, please contact

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NIACE in the English Regions

NIACE has a well-established regional team with dedicated lead officers and literacy, language and numeracy specialists as well as a Mental Health Project Officer in each of the nine English regions. To further NIACE's aims and promote adult learning, the team also support the national Adult Learners' Week campaign on a regional level in May each year.

The NIACE Regions team aims to:

- liaise with and advise regional strategic bodies on national and regional policies in adult learning;
- sit on regional strategic bodies;
- disseminate research findings;
- undertake research, development and consultancy;
- undertake capacity building initiatives;
- support providers of adult learning in the regions;
- organise seminars, conferences and networks to promote and disseminate excellent practice across all aspects of adult learning;
- maintain a database of regional organisations and contacts.

We work closely with strategic agencies, funding bodies, other regional and sub-regional organisations and local learning providers.

For more information please visit www.niace.org.uk/regions or contact

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ESOL at NIACE

NIACE plays an important role nationally in research, development and advocacy in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). We have a small team of specialist ESOL staff working in policy and with practitioners, developing learning materials and supporting good practice. We have considerable experience in all aspects of advice, teaching and learning for asylum seekers and refugees, migrant workers and settled communities.

As consultants and advisors we have worked with a variety of organisations to offer specialist support. Our work has included:

- practitioner and learner consultation;
- lobbying for equal access to provision for all learners;
- developing contextualised learning materials for ESOL learners both in the UK and nationally;
- partnership work with a variety of organisations to help learners develop their English language;
- helping migrant workers develop their English language skills at work.

NIACE is proud to have supported the Independent National ESOL Inquiry, whose report *More than a Language* made a profound impact on ESOL policy and practice in Britain. We also led the ESOL and Citizenship project, in partnership

with LLU+, to develop the learning materials for ESOL learners wishing to apply for UK citizenship. The materials are now part of the legislation on applying for naturalisation.

We work with and for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), voluntary sector organisations, refugee community organisations, employers, the Association of Accounting Technicians, the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and LLU+.

For further information please visit www.niace.org.uk/In or contact

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Faith Leaders

In 2007, with funding from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), NIACE developed and piloted a qualification for faith leaders, workers and volunteers. The aim of the programme is to help faith leaders build relations and engage with their local communities.

The course aims to equip the participants with skills in leadership, negotiation and team building, particularly in their work with young people and the wider community.

We have delivered:

- a new qualification, available through the National Open College Network (NOCN);
- a team of trainers ready to roll out this new course;
- a course which was developed in consultation with learners from a wide range of faiths in different parts of the country.

“...it was brilliant that we have different faiths sat round the table accruing information from each other that would enhance how the needs of community members can be addressed”.

Quote from a participant.

We work in partnership with a variety of providers, including educational institutions, local authorities, community adult education providers and community training organisations.

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www.niace.org.uk/leadwithfaith or contact

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Family Learning

NIACE believes that the family unit has a crucial role to play in achieving many of the Government's policy agendas. NIACE's vision for family learning is the development of a broad range of intergenerational learning opportunities for all families. We define family learning in its widest sense and believe that it is often the catalyst to many wide-ranging changes, not just in relation to individual skills and qualifications but also to community cohesion and well being.

To achieve our aims we provide:

- expert consultancy, advice and support services;
- high-quality research and development projects;
- leading publications and practitioner guides;
- cutting-edge conferences and seminars;
- advocacy services to engage ministers and parliamentarians;
- opportunities to network with practitioners, policy-makers and researchers;
- specialist information; for example, free topic papers.

We work with and for Individual Family Learning Practitioners, ECOTEC, Manchester City Galleries, as well as funders such as the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the Children's Workforce Network (CWN) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA).

For more information or to find out how to make use of our services please visit www.niace.org.uk/familylearning or contact

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Further Education

NIACE believes lifelong learning should be a basic human right in twenty-first century Europe. Our aim is to be the principal advocate for adult learners in further education.

To achieve our aim we provide:

- expert consultancy, advice and support services;
- high-quality development and research projects;
- leading publications;
- cutting-edge conferences and seminars;
- advocacy services to engage ministers and parliamentarians;
- opportunities to network with practitioners, policy-makers and researchers.

We work with and for the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Unionlearn, Sector Skills Councils (including Lifelong Learning UK), the National Union of Students (NUS) and funders such as Cedefop (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training).

For more information or to find out how to make use of our services please visit www.niace.org.uk or contact

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Health and Disability Equality

NIACE aims to promote inclusion, widen participation and improve learning provision for adults with disabilities or learning difficulties. We take a social model approach to disability that promotes social inclusion and inclusive learning and we work with a number of learning providers, agencies and organisations to achieve our aims.

We provide:

- expert consultancy, advice and support services;
- high-quality research and development projects;
- leading publications and practitioner guides;
- cutting-edge conferences and seminars;
- advocacy services to engage ministers and parliamentarians;
- opportunities to network with practitioners, policy-makers and researchers.

We work in partnership with organisations such as Valuing People, the National Social Inclusion Programme, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

For more information or to find out how to make use of our services please visit www.niace.org.uk or contact

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ICT and Learning

NIACE works to further the interests of adult learning through information and communication technology (ICT).

Our main focus is on engaging learners who are disadvantaged in work and life as a result of having low levels of ICT skills. We also promote the appropriate use of technology to support effective learning.

To achieve our aims we:

- develop and deliver online and blended learning courses with full online support for adult learners, tutors and practitioners;
- raise awareness of embedding ICT with other Skills for Life subjects;
- create e-learning resources relevant to adult learners and practitioners;
- publish books and practitioner guides on e-learning;
- deliver training courses and development programmes;
- provide expert consultancy, advice and support services;
- support the development of e-learning strategies for a range of organisations;
- undertake high-quality development and research projects.

We work with and for government departments and agencies as well as a range of learning providers across various sectors, including voluntary and community, work-based learning, adult community learning and offender learning and skills.

For more information or to make use of our services please visit www.niace.org.uk/ict or contact

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Information Services

NIACE provides a range of services for people working and studying in the field of adult learning.

Specialised Reference Library

The specialised reference library contains over 35,000 items, including books, reports, circulars, videos, CD-ROMs and DVD materials. Over 12,000 of these items relate to adult learning. We also subscribe to and stock over 175 journals and magazines covering adult learning and related subject areas.

The reference library is available for anyone with an interest in or working in the field of adult learning.

Briefing Sheets

The NIACE Briefing Sheet series consists of 80 titles providing an introduction to a variety of lifelong learning issues. The series is updated with new titles each year. All NIACE Briefing Sheets are available in hard copy from the Information Services team and on the NIACE web site at www.niace.org.uk/briefingsheets

Enquiry Service

We offer an enquiry service to respond to questions about the work of NIACE, government policy and other adult learning matters.

For more information or to find out how to make use of our services please visit www.niace.org.uk or contact

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promoting adult learning

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International and European Work

NIACE has been involved in international aspects of adult learning for many years. We believe that learning in and for a global context can help develop critical thinking, awareness of international development issues, understanding of global power relationships and action and hope for a better world.

We also believe that adult learning, in relation to international development and aid, can enhance and develop policies and practices in developing countries. We advocate that such approaches can be shared, developed and changed through co-operation, dialogue, exchange and learning together.

We work across Europe and the wider world in networks and developmental projects to foster our aims. We offer:

- experience to help develop and promote adult global skills;
- experience to help add value to international development programmes;
- advocacy experience to engage politicians and policy makers;
- networking opportunities for practitioners, researchers and policy-makers;
- specialist information and insight to encourage debate, dialogue and development;
- experience of transnational partnership working;
- European research expertise.

We work in partnership with a wide range of organisations to further our purposes.

We actively support, and are members of, the UNESCO UK Commission Education Committee, the International Council for Adult Education, the European Association for the Education of Adults, the European Research and Development Institute, and all networks of organisations which have adult learning at their centre.

For more information or to find out how to make use of our services please visit www.niace.org.uk/international or contact

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Literacy

NIACE is the national leader for adult literacy with expertise in development, research, project management and teaching and learning, particularly since our merger with the Basic Skills Agency. We believe that literacy skills are critical to every aspect of life and work and we advocate engagement of, and opportunities for, all learners including people who may be low-skilled, low-paid and unemployed, and adults with few or no qualifications.

With a proven track record in this field, we offer a unique combination of knowledge, skills and expertise in supporting the development, management and delivery of national programmes. We are also experienced in delivering regional and local development programmes and contracts, including continuing professional development (CPD), and are in close contact with providers, practitioners and managers who deliver literacy learning opportunities. NIACE facilitates a national learners' network and we believe that by building the capacity of providers and practitioners and listening to learners' views we can create exciting and successful opportunities for all.

NIACE's support can be tailored to address the needs of individual organisations, and our range of expertise includes specialists in areas such as dyslexia, literacy in the workplace and working with offenders. We can provide a wide range of development and support services, including:

- surveys;
- management and delivery of projects and programmes;
- project evaluation;
- identification and sharing of interesting and effective practice;
- service reviews and consultancy;
- staff training and CPD;
- innovative models of delivery and approaches;
- supporting materials and publications.

For more information or to find out how to make use of our services please visit www.niace.org.uk/lln or contact

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NIACE's work with Local Authorities

NIACE works with local authorities, and in particular local authority adult learning services, in a variety of ways. We are involved in many activities, including:

- the Local Education Authorities Forum for the Education of Adults (LEAFEA) – the network for heads of local authority adult learning services in England;
- consultancy, information and advice to local authority adult learning services and local authority elected members on adult learning issues.

Our recent work includes Sustaining Adult Learning, Learning and Skills Council-funded research into making the funding adult learning providers receive for personal and community development go further. We are also involved in the Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) Impacts Framework guidance, a framework to demonstrate the wide range of benefits deriving from PCDL.

We have contributed to the development of the National Improvement Strategy and since August 2007 have supported the development of the Support for Excellence programme of the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) – for example, representing NIACE on the Innovation and Development Group for this national programme, which is helping prepare the sector for self-regulation.

We also lead on, or contribute to, smaller-scale projects such as reviews of adult learning provision and we are committed to engaging local authorities with wider policy agendas.

For further information please visit www.niace.org.uk or contact

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Mental Health

NIACE works to promote inclusion, widen participation and improve the learning provision for people with mental health difficulties.

One in four of us experience some form of mental health difficulty in our life. Participation in learning can be an important way to overcome social exclusion and be a vital part of a person's recovery. Learners with mental health difficulties describe positive changes in themselves and their circumstances as a result of taking part in learning.

We aim to:

- improve access to, and success in, learning for people experiencing mental health difficulties;
- support practitioners and managers to develop their provision;
- challenge the low expectations held about people with mental health problems;
- boost demand for learning and skills amongst people with mental health difficulties;
- ensure quality of learning and skills provision across the sectors;
- tackle stigma and discrimination.

We can offer organisations many services, including expert consultancy, advice and support services, as well as networking, training courses and seminars to help improve the learning provision for people with mental health difficulties.

We work in partnership with organisations such as Valuing People, the National Social Inclusion Programme, Lifelong Learning UK, the Quality Improvement Agency and the Learning and Skills Council.

For further information please visit our website www.niace.org.uk/mentalhealth or contact

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Publications

NIACE seeks to influence policy-making and professional development in adult education. One way in which this is achieved is through the publication of research and good practice.

NIACE is an internationally respected publisher of scholarly studies, research reports, policy discussion papers, books on good practice in adult education, practical teacher and learner resources, and much more. A large part of our published output also derives from research and development work NIACE has been commissioned to carry out.

Our experienced Publications team works closely with authors to ensure excellence in editing, design and production. We are accomplished in efficiently producing high-quality, cost-effective publications tailored to the needs of our customers.

We have a catalogue of more than 400 titles and publish six journals. Key publications include:

- *Adult Learning Yearbook*;
- our monthly magazine, *Adults Learning*;
- annual surveys on adult participation in learning.

We have co-published with Zed Books, Open University Press, NRDC and the International Council for Adult Education.

"I'm really glad to have my book with NIACE: as a publisher, you are excellent."

Professor Kathryn Ecclestone, Oxford Brookes University

To browse and buy our publications online and find out more please visit www.niace.org.uk/publications

To find out how to publish with NIACE, contact

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Quality Improvement

NIACE supports quality improvement in adult and community learning, working predominantly with local authority providers.

Our work has involved creating resources, which are available through the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) Excellence Gateway, including publications, briefings and training resources on matters including:

- quality systems;
- curriculum management;
- working in partnership;
- improving systems for observing teaching and learning;
- becoming a 'learning organisation'.

We also contribute to leadership and management development programmes for leaders and managers in provider organisations who deliver adult learning. We have contributed to the development of the National Improvement Strategy, supported the development of the QIA's Support for Excellence programme and contributed to reports on quality in the Local Education Authorities Forum for the Education of Adults (LEAFEA) network and other projects.

We work with and for the Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programme (ACLQSP). Partners include the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) and sponsors include Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL).

For further information please visit www.niace.org.uk or contact

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Quick Reads

Quick Reads are short, exciting books written by bestselling authors and celebrities. The books are designed for adults who are new to reading, have lost the reading habit or just enjoy a quick read. The Quick Reads initiative started in 2006 and is a collaboration between NIACE, authors, publishers, government bodies, educationalists and many more. The campaign promotes reading for pleasure and has significantly increased the literacy levels of thousands of adults.

Quick Reads engages adults through a network of 9,000 organisations including learning providers, employers, community centres and prisons. There are over 30 book titles, a comprehensive website, various learning resources and free promotional items.

The books have made a huge difference to users' attitudes to reading, skills and their personal confidence. Our impact evaluation found that:

- 93 per cent of learning providers feel Quick Reads have been useful with learner progression;
- 83 per cent of tutors say Quick Reads have improved their learners' communication skills;
- 90 per cent of adults using Quick Reads say that improving their reading has made them feel better about themselves.

The Quick Reads campaign has achieved high-profile press coverage, including features in *The Observer* and *The Guardian*, as well as interviews on GMTV and BBC News 24. It was described in March 2008 by the Prime Minister as a 'great success story of the English language'.

For more information or to find out how you can get involved, please visit www.quickreads.org.uk or contact

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Research

Research is a key part of NIACE's development and advocacy work. We have experience and expertise in all aspects of research management, design, analysis and dissemination. We also have considerable knowledge and experience in both quantitative and qualitative methods of research.

As a professional and innovative team we believe that attention to detail is key. With our wealth of experience in research across the different fields of adult learning policy and practice, we can deliver high quality research for many organisations.

We conduct the annual national survey of adult participation in learning, and a survey of fees charged to part-time adult learners by local education authorities and colleges of further education. In connection with our various Commissions of Inquiry we have designed and implemented major programmes of research, including for the current Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning.

We have worked with and are regularly commissioned to provide research services by many organisations including: the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills; the Learning and Skills Council; the Department of Health; local government; regional development agencies; and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

For more information or to find out how to make use of our services please visit www.niace.org.uk/research or contact

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Website: www.niace.org.uk

Voluntary and Community Sector

NIACE works within the Voluntary and Community Sector acting as a key channel of communication between third sector organisations and providers and key government agencies and departments. We believe that our role is to help the third sector in its drive for improvement and to respond to its needs.

We:

- conduct research into third sector issues and perspectives;
- advise the Government on policy about the third sector;
- arrange and support the delivery of staff learning and teaching in the third sector;
- liaise with third sector organisations and providers.

We aim to develop peer coaching programmes, give a steer to the National Learning Alliance (NLA) and work to support third sector engagement within new commissioning environments.

We work with, and for, the Consortia+ network, the National Learning Alliance for the voluntary and community sector, employers, private sector organisations, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), government departments and regional and local infrastructure bodies.

For more information or to find out how to make use of our services, please visit www.niace.org.uk or contact

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Workplace Learning

We know that the biggest cost to a business is usually its workforce and that there is a clear relationship between workforce skills and productivity. The NIACE Workplace Learning team works with employers to ensure that individuals get the right skills for their working environments and are equipped to adapt to changing business demands and priorities.

Low skills, including literacy, language and numeracy, are high on the government's agenda. Prosperity for All in the Global Economy: World Class Skills, the report by Lord Leitch, has led to ambitious national targets for improving literacy and numeracy:

“For England, it means by 2020 we would need 95 per cent of adults to have the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy.”

Our services are tailored to meet the specific needs of workplace organisations. We can work with employers to:

- develop a business plan to underpin the implementation of a strategy for workplace learning;
- undertake research including the use of surveys and focus groups;
- design and deliver training courses;
- produce resources to support staff development.

We have worked with a number of organisations including Local Authorities, Learning and Skills Councils, NHS Trusts, Trade Unions, First Group, Sector Skills Councils, the British Army and the Prison Service.

For further information please visit
www.niace.org.uk/workplacelearning or contact

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Young Adults

NIACE researches, develops, manages and disseminates effective approaches to learning and personal development with young adults aged 16–25. We work within the areas of education, training and employment to support young adults in recognising their abilities as young workers, parents and citizens.

We run regular conferences and training events and are particularly experienced in research methods and consultation with young adults, as well as facilitating and leading training for youth sector organisations. We have expertise in a number of areas, including:

- work with young offenders;
- literacy, language and numeracy learning;
- informal and community based provision;
- mental health;
- financial education;
- supporting young parents;
- youth arts.

We work closely with practitioners, in partnership with service providers and agencies and, most importantly, with young adults themselves. NIACE has an established and successful relationship with The National Youth Agency – The Young Adults Learning Partnership (YALP) – through which a wide range of research and development projects have been delivered.

For further information please visit www.niace.org.uk/yalp or contact

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