

CONFINTEA Mid-term review 2003
Six years after CONFINTEA V: status and future prospects of adult learning

UK Report

The UK is committed to lifelong learning. It is at the heart of all our policies for education and training. We place emphasis on lifelong learning because of the benefits it brings to individuals, businesses of all sizes, communities and the nation. For individuals, it improves their chances of finding a job and of getting on. For business, it is an investment in the future. It helps them to be more successful by adding value, generating ideas and keeping them up to date. For communities it promotes social cohesion, and for the nation it means a strong economy in a global marketplace, and a fair and socially just society.

Chapter 1: Building up structures and institutional frameworks: Policies, legal provisions, delivery systems and innovations

UK Government's role is to help create a framework of opportunities for people to learn which lifts the barriers that might prevent them from taking up those opportunities. Our lifelong learning approach reflects the national, regional and local priorities of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and each part of the United Kingdom is responsible for adult learning as a devolved responsibility.

In the UK an adult learner is a person engaged in education and training outside the formal initial education system. Adult learning opportunities are generally targeted at those aged 19 and over. Programmes developed for adults include formal education and training, and a range of informal learning opportunities that can be significant sources of skill or knowledge development.

The UK strategy is based upon our particular national strengths and weakness in a global economy. Economic growth is generally strong and inflation is at a 25-year low; employment is at record levels, with over 70 per cent of the working age population (some 27 million people) in work and some 25 per cent now qualified to level 4 (that is, first degree level)¹. The UK also has one of the highest rates of female engagement in the labour market of anywhere in the world². We have many prosperous communities, where people enjoy a good lifestyle. However, our productivity lags behind other major economies and has done so for decades – the value of French, German and US workers' output is nearly one third more per hour than their British counterparts³. There are high levels of adults with poor literacy and numeracy and low – though improving – levels of intermediate technical skills. We have too many deprived communities - for example, over three million households have no member in work. Despite an expansion in learning opportunities over recent years, the UK faces a huge challenge in involving all of its people in the learning society, with a divide between the learning-rich and the learning-poor being consistently mapped in surveys over a long period of time.

¹ Department for Education and Skills (2003) *First release: the level of highest qualification held by young people and adults: England 2002* (SFR 03/2003) <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/statistics/DB/SFR>

² Walby, S. and Olsen, W. (2002) *The impact of women's position in the labour market on pay and implications for the UK productivity*, Report to the Women and Equality Unit

³ Office of National Statistics (2003) *International Comparisons of Productivity*

1.1 Policies and legal provisions

1.1.2 England

Adult learning has taken on a much higher profile in the past decade. In 1998, the Green Paper⁴ *The Learning Age*⁵ set out the economic rationale for lifelong learning, 'Learning is the key to prosperity – for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole,' the then Secretary of State said, 'Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century.' The paper also highlighted the wider contribution of learning – promoting active citizenship, strengthening families and the neighbourhood. It put an emphasis on getting people back into learning for all these reasons.

The White Paper⁶, *Learning to Succeed*⁷, which followed in 1999, talked of nurturing a love of learning. In particular, the paper set out a whole new framework for post-16 learning in England, including the proposed establishment of a new funding and regulatory body, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), to help foster and support a culture of lifelong learning, working in partnership with others. Established by the Learning and Skills Act in 2000, the LSC, with its 47 local councils, is responsible for strategic development, planning, funding management and quality assurance of post-16 education and training (excluding higher education). A key part of its strategy is to work with providers to open up access to a wider range of flexible learning opportunities, and through the more effective use of online learning. It is also working with employers to increase the range of opportunities for those in work to continuously upgrade their existing skills.

The LSC is working with Regional Development Agencies⁸ (RDAs) to look at ways of achieving a better link between regional strategies for economic development and the provision of skills training by pooling LSC budgets for adult skills with RDA funds linked to skills and business development. The approach builds on the existing *Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action* (FRESA) that RDAs, the LSC and other partners have developed to ensure that we achieve the greatest impact on skill levels and business development.

The 2000 Learning and Skills Act also established the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) to help create a system of post-16 learning, which is coherent, accessible and responsive to the needs of individuals, business and communities. ALI works with

⁴ A Green Paper is a consultative document issued by the Government and containing policy proposals for public discussion

⁵ Department for Education and Employment (1998) *The Learning Age: a renaissance for a new Britain*, London: The Stationary Office

⁶ A White Paper, may but does not have to follow a Green Paper, and is generally followed by legislation. The document is still consultative, although proposals are firmer than in a Green Paper with a stronger government commitment to them.

⁷ Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Learning to Succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning*, London: The Stationary Office

⁸ Regional Development Agencies became operational in 1998 with the purpose of co-ordinating regional economic development and regeneration

the LSC and with Jobcentre Plus⁹ to assist in the promotion of excellence of learning; raising public confidence in the standards of learning; raising the profile of lifelong learning; and improving the coherence and consistency of adult learning. ALI has responsibility for the inspection of further education for people aged 19 or over; training provided wholly or partly on employers' premises for people aged over 16; and training funded under the 1973 Employment and Training Act.

In 2001, the Government launched *Skills for Life, the national strategy to improve adult literacy and numeracy*¹⁰, which aims to help 1.5 million adults to improve their basic skills by 2007 (with an interim target of 750,000 adults by 2004).

Within higher education (HE), access policies and the Government's commitment to lifelong learning and widening participation have resulted in the majority of students (54%) in universities and other higher education institutions being adults, that is aged 21 and over¹¹. The White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*¹², published in January 2003 set out the Government's plans for radical reform and investment in universities and higher education colleges and restated its target of increasing participation in HE towards 50% of those aged 18-30 by the end of the decade. Participation in England currently stands at 43%. In Scotland participation is already above 50%.

In July 2003, the Government published its Skills Strategy White Paper *21st Century Skills*¹³ setting out the UK's skills challenge and how it will be met. The Strategy aims to strengthen the UK's position as one of the world's leading economies by ensuring that employers have the skills to support the success of their business, and that employees have the necessary skills to be both employable and personally fulfilled. The White Paper sets out a new understanding of how the Government, employers and individuals can create a demand-led education and training system, which will raise the skills of the nation. Key proposals in the paper include:

- a new entitlement for adults without 'level 2'¹⁴ qualifications to receive free education and training to help them reach this standard and the introduction of a new adult learning grant for learners studying full time up to this level;
- new opportunities for adults to gain qualifications in technician and higher craft and trade skills;
- offering basic ICT skills as a third area of adult basic skills alongside literacy and numeracy within the *Skills for Life* programme

⁹ An executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions created to assist people into work, to help employers fill vacancies, and to provide people of working age with they help and support to which they are entitled

¹⁰ Department for Education and Employment (2001) *Skills for Life: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills*, Nottingham., DfEE

¹¹ Paradoxically however, the design paradigm for higher education and the continuing perception of the typical HE student is still one of a young person completing an extended initial education with three years of full-time study away from the parental home resulting in an honours degree

¹² Department for Education and Skills (2003) *The Future of Higher Education*, London: The Stationary Office

¹³ Department for Education and Skills (2003) *21st Century Skills: realising our potential: individuals, employers, nation*, London: The Stationary Office

¹⁴ Regarded as the minimum level of skills for successful working in a modern society, a level 2 qualification is broadly comparable to NVQ Level 2, GNVQ Intermediate, and GCSE grades A* to C.

- lifting the age cap for Modern Apprenticeships¹⁵ so that people over the age of 25 can learn skilled trades;
- safeguarding leisure, culture and community learning; and
- reforming adult information, advice and guidance services to help adults into learning.

The Strategy maintains the UK's voluntarist approach to employer engagement in workforce development by pinning considerable faith in the ability of employer-led Sector Skills Councils¹⁶ to generate additional demand for skills and training. In addition it proposes the introduction of a stronger regional dimension into the planning of publicly funded provision.

1.1.3 National targets for England

A key driver in achieving the Government's lifelong learning policies is the adoption of national targets. The key targets relating to adult learning are:

- To improve the basic skills of 1.5 million adults, evidenced by passing a national certificate, between the launch of *Skills for Life* in 2001 and 2007, with a milestone of 750,000 by 2004.
- To reduce by at least 40% the number of adults in the workforce who lack NVQ level 2 or equivalent qualifications by 2010. Working towards this, one million adults in the workforce to achieve level 2 between 2003 and 2006.
- For 55% of adults to achieve a level 3 or equivalent qualification¹⁷ by 2004 (2000 base 47%).
- To increase participation in Higher Education towards 50% of those aged 18-30 by 2010. Also to make significant progress year-on-year towards fair access, and to bear down on rates of non-completion

1.1.4 Wales

Within Wales the National Council – ELWa (Education and Learning Wales) was established in April 2001 as a strategic body responsible for planning and funding all post-16 education and training in Wales, except Higher Education. The Council has been charged with delivering the post-16 element of the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for the development of education and training in Wales until 2010, as set out in its strategy document *The Learning Country*¹⁸. This strategy anticipates a substantial increase of learning participation and skills levels in Wales, through wider opportunities for learning, improved access (particularly for the socially disadvantaged) and better quality of provision across all sectors. The National Council – ELWa has four regional offices which draw up *Regional Statements of Needs and Priorities* highlighting the skills needs of learners. Each

¹⁵ Launched in 1993, Modern Apprenticeships were designed 'by employers for employers' to help address the decline in numbers in work-based training at level 3 NVQ and above

¹⁶ Sector Skills Councils are influential employer-led bodies with a strategic responsibility to identify and tackle skills, productivity and employability issues for the private, public and voluntary sectors they represent.

¹⁷ Involves the acquisition of a more complex range of competences, knowledge and understanding in contexts which develop autonomous, analytical and critical abilities that prepare the learner to progress to further independent achievements. Broadly comparable to NVQ Level 3, GNVQ Advanced, and A-level.

¹⁸ National Assembly for Wales (2001) *The Learning Country: a paving document: a comprehensive and lifelong learning programme to 2010 in Wales*, Cardiff: Welsh Office

region then works with partners, local authorities, further education (FE) colleges, work based learning providers, sixth form schools and the voluntary sector through local Community Consortia for Education and Training¹⁹ (CCETs) to identify and plan provision for learners. The Welsh Assembly Government and the National Council are supported by NIACE Dysgu Cymru (the Welsh arm of the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education) and DYSG (the Welsh arm of the Learning and Skills Development Agency) in the development of provision for post 16 learners. They are also working with the local authorities, higher and further education institutions and others to put in place a community learning network in those areas that have been hardest hit by steel plant closures in recent years as a springboard for community regeneration and economic development.

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training, undertakes inspection of adult learning in Wales. Estyn's aim is to raise standards and quality in education and training through inspection and advice in support of the vision and strategic direction set out by the Welsh Assembly Government. Estyn also plays a key role in the development of the evidence base used by the Welsh Assembly Government in the formulation and evaluation of education and training policy.

The Welsh Assembly Government's *Skills and Employment Action Plan 2002*²⁰ has identified a range of measures to increase the skills of the existing workforce and help more adults to become economically active. Key measures here include the Basic Skills Strategy and the introduction of flexible packages of public support to meet the differing needs of individual employers.

Wales is leading on the theme of Adult Education within the EARLALL network (European Association of Regional and Local Authorities on Lifelong Learning). It is comparing the scope of and funding of Adult Education across Europe as a basis for identifying common problems and solutions by mid 2004.

1.1.5 Scotland

In 2003 Scotland's new lifelong strategy, *Life through Learning: Learning through life*²¹, set a vision for a Scotland where people have the confidence, enterprise, knowledge, creativity and skills to participate in economic, social and civic life. It emphasised the role of informal and community learning in encouraging non-traditional learners into learning, as part of the process of ensuring that everyone has the chance to learn, irrespective of their background or current personal circumstances. As part of the implementation of this strategy, a study will be carried out on the current quality assurance landscape, drawing on other countries' approaches, reporting early in 2004. It will look at all those sectors collaborating on lifelong learning, including schools and higher education, taking account of the respective needs of the learner and the learning provider and both current and future requirements.

¹⁹ CCETs are charged with achieving more efficient delivery of education and training in Wales and promoting collaboration between schools, FE and training providers and others to meet the needs of individuals and employers more effectively and coherently.

²⁰ National Assembly for Wales (2001) *Skills and employment action plan for Wales 2002: a consultation document*, Cardiff: Welsh Office

²¹ Scottish Executive (2003) *Life through learning: learning through life: the lifelong learning strategy for Scotland*, Edinburgh: The Stationary Office

In Scotland, *learnirectscotland* has the key role at a national level in promoting a culture of lifelong learning, while local authorities are responsible for encouraging local co-ordination through the creation of community learning strategies and plans as part of a wider community planning process. There has been a greater emphasis in Scotland in recent years on seeing adult education as integral to community capacity building and the regeneration of communities. Scotland has recently been consulting on new guidance for practitioners and service managers on community learning and development – *Working and learning together to build stronger communities*²².

1.1.6 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the document *Lifelong Learning: A new learning culture for all*²³ details a package of measures and associated funding to fulfil the Government's strategic aim of developing and sustaining a culture of lifelong learning. For example, the 'Partnership Fund' assists FE colleges in establishing local partnerships inclusive of all major interests e.g. employers, District Councils, Chambers of Commerce, community organisations, trade unions, and providers of education and training at every level. The partnerships aim to take forward innovative approaches, to bring teaching and learning to those who would not ordinarily use further education. Funding is also provided to the non-statutory further education sector for adult education and training programmes which promote personal, social and community development, and address the needs of individuals. The Northern Ireland Economic Development Forum, a partnership body that brings together Government and the major social partner organisations has contributed to establishing priorities to be addressed to strengthen the Northern Ireland economy during the period to the year 2010.

The further education sector in Northern Ireland has a particularly significant role to play in providing individuals with the skills and knowledge required to gain employment and contribute to the social and economic fabric of the community. A comprehensive review of the statutory further education sector is underway to maximise its contribution to personal and economic development. The review will focus on four main areas – improving the quality of the education provided, enhancing the contribution the sector makes to economic development, ensuring that more people have access to further education and re-examining the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector in terms of its planning, management, governance and funding. It will also examine the relationships between further education and other relevant parties including universities, schools, training organisations, voluntary organisations and economic development bodies and the appropriateness of the current size and structure of the sector for the effective delivery of its role and aims.

The Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland is responsible for the inspection of all Government funded education and training. The Inspectorate carries out inspections in schools, Further Education Colleges and private Training Organisations and reports annually on standards and performance.

²² Scottish Executive (2003) *Working and learning together to build stronger communities: community learning and development working draft guidance*, Edinburgh: The Stationary Office

²³ Department for Education and Training (1998) *Lifelong Learning: a new learning culture for all*, Belfast: The Stationary Office

1.2 Delivery systems

The UK offers a range of post-19 education and training. Opportunities provided are dependent on the purpose of the learning but are often delivered, for example, through Further Education colleges, work-based training funded through employers, and a wide ranging package of adult and community learning run through Local Education Authorities and voluntary and community organisations. There is a range of delivery modes for adult education, which again is dependant on the type and intensity of the learning. Adult and community learning, for example, is evenly split for daytime and evening courses, although there has recently been a move towards day time courses.

The creation of the **Learning and Skills Council** in England in 2000 brought together for this first time the planning and funding of all post-compulsory learning, below higher education, incorporating both learning related to the development of vocational skills as well as community based learning. A national office with 47 local LSCs across England combines a system of creating policy and determining funding nationally, while managing provision and delivering programmes locally.

Since 1998 there has been a number of innovative measures to improve the supply of learning opportunities and widen adult participation in learning. One of the drivers of UK policy is to ensure that, through England's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy²⁴ and similar strategies adopted by the devolved Governments of Scotland and Wales, within 10 to 20 years, no-one is seriously disadvantaged by where they live. Part of this strategy is to encourage learning opportunities through **Neighbourhood Learning Centres**. These learning centres are not a new type of educational institution, or a new national brand programme. They are, rather, community venues where attractive learning opportunities are available in a sympathetic environment. Many good examples exist, from outreach centres operated by colleges, to libraries and community centres, funded from a variety of sources such as the European Social Fund and the Social Regeneration Budget.

Multi-functional community learning is similarly being encouraged in Scotland through the promotion of a network of *learndirectscotland* quality assured learning centres. There are also similar developments taking place in Wales linked to the roll out of broadband technology to provide fast access to internet and learning support centres, particularly for community learning facilities in rural parts of Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government also sees the 'Schools of the Future' as being at the centre of the communities that they serve. **Schools** will be integral to community capacity building, and will provide a base for delivering adult learning, out of school hours, with links to FE and HE institutions. Some adult education in Wales is delivered by the Workers' Educational Association and Coleg Harlech which forms part of the **Further Education (FE) sector**. They provide both community based education, education for personal development and education tailored to the needs of partner organisations and Coleg Harlech delivers courses suitable to the needs of adult in a residential setting.

²⁴ Social Exclusion Unit (1998) *Bringing Britain Together: a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal*, London: The Stationary Office

Ufi/learndirect also provides learning opportunities through a range of online courses and through almost 2,000 learning centres across the country, offering more than 900 courses. Courses cover a variety of areas including IT skills; business skills; the basics of reading, writing and numbers; retail and distribution; environmental services; automotive components; and multimedia. Centres are located in a range of organisations such as employers, trade unions, voluntary groups, universities, training providers, sports/shopping/community centres, football clubs, railway stations and libraries. In Northern Ireland, since the first centre opened in spring 2000, over 28,000 learners have registered with Ufi/learndirect and have undertaken more than 52,000 courses. To date over 22,000 callers have received learning advice and information about opportunities in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the UK through the Belfast based Ufi/learndirect National Learning Advice Line.

The University for Industry (Ufi) and the LSC currently provide a range of national and local **Information, Advice and Guidance** services for adults. The Ufi/learndirect information and advice service comprises a national advice helpline and web-based service. Services at the local level are provided through the LSC's Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) recently ran pilots of free in-depth guidance services to help the most disadvantaged communities through 19 local projects. *Learndirectscotland* provides a similar information service in Scotland, working alongside Careers Scotland which has an all age guidance remit. The aim in the new lifelong learning strategy is to ensure a seamless service between these two organisations in the support offered for the learner. In Wales, Careers Wales provides an all-age information, advice and guidance service. The seven Careers Wales companies operate under a common brand and to common standards, but contract individually with the National Assembly for Wales. Careers Wales services for adults include careers information and advice to all, including a database of learning opportunities which can be accessed via its website at www.careerswales.com. In addition, from April 2003, in-depth guidance is also available free of charge to those who need it - previously, this enhanced service was only on offer to specified priority groups. Careers Wales also operates the Ufi/learndirect national advice line in Wales.

In November 2000, the **Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE)** initiative was announced by the Secretary of State to enhance and develop excellent vocational provision focused on meeting the skills needs of employers locally, regionally and nationally. The objectives of the £240 million initiative are:

- to establish 400 Centres of Vocational Excellence in the further education and training sector by 2006, which, as a network, create a strategic distribution of high quality centres, taking account of local, regional, sectoral and national needs;
- to increase and strengthen active employer/college engagement to underpin and develop innovative and flexible approaches to meeting the nation's current and future skills needs;
- to secure enhanced vocational learning opportunities for all learners in Further Education, work based learning providers and 14-19 year olds in schools, with a key focus on developing employability and career prospects, particularly for those from disadvantaged groups; and
- to encourage collaboration amongst providers and promote the concept of excellence in economically important vocational specialisms.

By June 2003, 206 CoVEs had been established. An early evaluation²⁵ shows that excellent relationships exist between learners and tutors; learners have access to industry-standard facilities and equipment; and that learners feel that CoVEs offer a high standard of education from top quality teaching staff, that attending a CoVE improves their employment prospects and that they are proud to be involved in a CoVE programme. However, the policy of developing notion of specialist CoVEs has not been without its critics. In many areas of the country (particularly outside urban areas), a general further education college is often the only major provider of publicly funded post-school education and training in a locality. For colleges aspiring to offer excellence across a comprehensive curriculum (including languages and first-step return to learning for example) the pressure to seek CoVE status for a narrow range of vocational specialisms can be viewed as a distraction.

The Learning and Skills Council is currently leading a £40million **Employer Training Pilots** project to encourage a wide range of employers to give low-skilled workers paid time off work to take free education and training courses. The project aims to support an estimated 2,500-3,000 employers and up to 25,000 staff who lack basic skills or vocational qualifications at level 2. Pilots are testing a range of different incentives, including reimbursement of wage costs at up to 150%, among companies of varying size. The pilots are designed to evaluate whether employers can be encouraged to train employees if they are subsidised for the cost of giving them paid time off work to study and to examine whether people are more likely to train if they can study during working hours. The most significant feature of the pilots to date is the stunningly low dropout figures.

Due to launch in autumn of 2003, **NHSU** is a new kind of corporate university that will make training and development available for everyone at every level of the National Health Service (NHS), including those traditionally left out of workplace learning. The focus of NHSU is to deliver training and development for staff in healthcare, which benefits patients and service users through better patient care. It is being established to help modernise the NHS and deliver the NHS Plan²⁶. With over one million people working in healthcare, and a million plus more in social care, NHSU will be the world's largest corporate university.

1.3 Campaigns

Adult Learners' Week in the UK provides an opportunity to celebrate, promote and advance all forms of adult learning. Every year the Week offers over 5,000 local events and more than 100 awards for adult learners and organisations. The winners of the awards are celebrated at national and regional conferences, and in the media and have proved to be powerful advocates to motivate others. They show that learning does not stop with initial schooling and that, with determination, many barriers may be overcome. The Week is backed by a freephone helpline Ufi/learndirect, staffed by adult guidance specialists from all over the UK. The UK Government is a keen supporter and core funder of Adult Learners' Week, enabling the co-ordinators NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, to run national events, co-ordinate awards and regional work, and provide small pots of funding for local

²⁵ http://cove.lsc.gov.uk/news_10_12_02.cfm

²⁶ Department of Health (2000) *The NHS Plan: a plan for investment, a plan for reform*, London: Department of Health

organisers. In 1997, CONFINTEA V adopted the UK proposal to create a UN Week of Adult Learning. This proposal was taken up by UNESCO, which launched **International Adult Learners' Week** in September 2000.

In 2001, the Learning and Skills Council launch a nationwide '**Bite Size**' campaign to attract adults back into learning. Held over four weeks, Bite Size was one of the largest free adult learning initiatives ever seen in England, attracting learners in their thousands on 18,500 short courses, giving them a no commitment taste of learning. Almost a fifth of those taking part were new learners and a subsequent survey revealed that over 40% had gone on to further learning. A second campaign, featuring TV celebrity Carol Smilie, took place in 2003 when thousands on Bitesize 'Intros' were available in scores of accessible locations to encourage many more adults back into learning. The objective was to attract 50,000 adult learners, with 25% being new learners who have done little or no learning since leaving school. In total, more than 70,000 learners attended one of over 32,000 Intros held throughout the country with over 85% of learners going on to, or planning to enrol on, further courses.

1.4 Policy priorities

1.4.1 Literacy and Numeracy

Millions of adults in England cannot read and write at the level we would expect of an 11-year-old and even more have problems with numbers²⁷. The Government launched *Skills for Life*, the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, in 2001. The strategy aims to help create a society where adults have the basic skills they need to find and keep work and participate fully in society, thereby increasing the economic performance of the country. The Strategy has a Public Service Agreement target to help 1.5 million adults improve their literacy, language or numeracy skills by 2007, with an interim target of 750,000 adults by 2004. The strategy has four key objectives:

- to boost the demand for literacy and numeracy learning via a high profile promotional campaign and by engaging employers and all partners across government in identifying and addressing the literacy and numeracy needs of their clients and employees to help change the country's culture of learning;
- to ensure the capacity of the skills supply chain so that the planning and funding of literacy and numeracy provision is effective and well-co-ordinated;
- to raise standards and quality in teaching and learning; and
- to increase learner achievement and the numbers of adults and young people succeeding in national qualifications.

Good progress is being made. Well over a million learners have engaged in literacy, language and numeracy courses since the launch of the strategy and over 300,000 adults have achieved a national certificate.

In Scotland it is estimated that 800,000 have low levels of literacy and numeracy and over £50m is being invested over 5 years to assist 80,000 by 2004 and 150,000 by 2006. The majority of funding is going to community learning strategy partnerships,

²⁷ Working Group on Post-School Basic Skills and Moser, C. (1999) *Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start*, London: DfEE

where all sectors can access the funding. The Scottish strategy aims to ensure that all learning is geared around the learner's personal goals in the context of lifelong learning, work, family and community life. It seeks to ensure all distance travelled by the learner is measured, along with its impact on the individual's life.

In Northern Ireland the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey indicated that 24% of those aged between 16 and 65 (approximately a quarter of a million people) performed at the lowest level of literacy. The Essential Skills for Living Strategy was launched in Northern Ireland in October 2002. The Strategy adopts a radical new approach to literacy and numeracy issues which includes the introduction of a regional curriculum, accreditation for adult learners and improved tutor qualifications. It contains targets for building capacity (including providers of literacy and numeracy and new avenues such as work-based and family learning), engaging new learners and suggests ways in which these might be achieved. A key target is to support 25,000 learners by March 2005.

1.4.2 Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

ICT has always featured in the UK's policy for adult education, and will continue to feature in future policy. For example, UK online centres, which were set up as part of the drive to provide access to the Internet for all by 2005. The 6,000 UK online centres range from voluntary and community centres, to libraries, colleges and high street cyber-cafes. They are located in a variety of places throughout England, including the 2000 most deprived local authority wards; rural areas with significant transport and deprivation problems; and small areas of deprivation within more prosperous areas. More recently, in *Success for All*²⁸, the Department for Education and Skills highlighted the growing importance of e-learning in widening post-16 participation and in improving learner retention and achievement. The Department's aim now is to improve quality, raise standards and increase coherence in e-learning across all post-16 delivery routes. Most recently, the *Skills Strategy* announced that basic ICT skills will now be offered as a third area of adult basic skills alongside literacy and numeracy within the *Skills for Life* programme.

In Scotland an e-learning Public Sector Group will co-ordinate public sector investment in e-learning and the number of Public Internet Access Points in *learnirectscotland* branded learning centres will be further expanded. The focus will be on areas of social exclusion or the effects of isolation, with a particular focus on the provision of learning opportunities.

In Northern Ireland the implementation of the Information Communications Technology strategy for the further education sector was completed in September 2002. Four key operational objectives have been achieved in infrastructure, staff development, curriculum development and networking. A new strategy to take forward Information and Learning Technology will begin to be implemented from September 2004. This will focus primarily on leadership and pedagogical issues.

²⁸ Department for Education and Skills (2002) *Success for All: reforming further education and training: our vision for the future*, London: The Stationary Office

1.4.3 Increasing the number of adults with level 2 qualifications

Over 7 million adults in the workforce do not have a level 2 qualification. Those people are more likely to lack a skills foundation for employability and lifelong learning, and are less likely to get a secure, well-paid job. In contrast, the higher wages paid to people with qualifications above level 2 offer more incentive to individuals and employers to invest in learning. The Government's aim is to narrow the gap between the proportion of the UK population who possess high level qualifications and what has been described as the 'long tail of underachievement'. Historically employers and individuals have not invested in qualifications at level 2, as there is no immediate measurable benefit in terms of increased productivity, pay or job security. However skills at this level are seen as being an essential platform for future skills development. In order to address this market failure and to help fulfil their aim of creating a high-skill economy, the Government has therefore decided to focus the investment of public funds in helping people achieve a first level 2 qualification²⁹.

1.4.4 Neighbourhood Renewal and a focus on the poorest communities

In January 2001, the UK Prime Minister launched a national strategy action plan for neighbourhood renewal, with the aims of narrowing the gap between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country, so that within 10 to 20 years no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. At present compared to the rest of the country, deprived areas in England have twice as many people dependent on means tested benefits, 30% higher mortality rates, three times more child poverty, and 70% of all ethnic minority residents. As well as improving existing services in deprived areas, a number of initiatives have been introduced to support and stimulate change. These include a £900m Neighbourhood Renewal Fund; New Deal for Communities partnerships investing around £2 billion over 10 years in 39 of the poorest neighbourhoods; support for community groups; a neighbourhood wardens programme; neighbourhood management schemes; a business brokers pilot programme; and a skills and knowledge programme to provide training, advice and networking opportunities, and to promote good practice.

As part of its *Welfare to Work* strategy and as a means of reducing poverty, the Government has also introduced a range of New Deal initiatives to help unemployed people into work by closing the gap between the skills employers want and the skills people can offer. The service is tailored to the needs of individuals, supporting them while they prepare for work and find a job, and delivering skills and training that are relevant to local jobs. Since its start, New Deal has helped over 600,000 people to find work. New Deals are aimed at young unemployed people aged 18-24, but other elements are focussed on older adults including unemployed people aged 25+ and people aged 50+. There are also specific programmes for lone parents, partners of unemployed people and people with disabilities. Common elements of New Deal include the provision of tailored career information and advice, financial support, and education and training opportunities to help people secure employment

²⁹ Department for Education and Skills (2003) *21st Century Skills: realising our potential: individuals, employers, nation*, London: The Stationary Office

1.4.5 The HE/FE boundary

The HE/FE boundary has increasingly become regarded as the new ‘binary divide’ – separating the two sectors in ways which do not facilitate smooth progression, and which inadvertently fosters dropout from a lifelong learning trajectory at the point of FE qualifications. The divide has increasingly become a policy focus, especially given the 50% higher education participation target for the 18-30 age range, with its accompanying social inclusion criteria. The Government has sought to address these boundary issues through policy to assist progression from further to higher education, and through provision of higher education in FE colleges.

Progression from further to higher education has focused on the HEFCE³⁰ funded Widening Participation (WP) projects (1997-2002), and on the requirement for Higher Education Institutions to produce Widening Participation Strategic Statements and to set targets for recruitment and retention. Analysis of this process identified inconsistencies and weaknesses, but these were largely redressed by the 2001 round of Strategic Statements, which indicated a much more robust trajectory for progression and social equity. Nevertheless the issue of FE/HE progression remains significant. A major policy development is the *Partnerships for Progression* initiative (now rebranded *Aimhigher*) equally funded by both HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council. By incorporating *Excellence Challenge* this ambitious project aims to achieve the 50% participation target by raising aspiration and attainment from school as well as further education.

Provision of higher education in FE colleges is intended to expand significantly with the introduction of two-year Foundation Degrees, with the defining characteristics of being located in FE colleges, the curriculum jointly planned with employers, and the possibility of a ‘top-up’ third year to honours in a HE Institution. It is hoped this new award will be a major contributor to the 50% higher education target. It is as yet too early to tell how successful the pilot projects have been – the most effective have been the programmes developed with local employers for their workforce. Recruitment and retention have in these examples been good, but often the students are above the target age of 30.

Policy initiatives continue, with for example FE/HE collaboration in the 2003 White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* ranging from harmonising quality assurance and data collection systems of the two funding regimes, the easing of difficulties for ‘mixed economy’ FE colleges (funded by both funding councils) to fundamental reviews of the ‘administrative and legislative barriers that exist to improve greater integration of systems.’ Other boundary issues include the staff development needs of FE staff delivering HE courses, and bridging studies for student progressing to HE. A *HE in FE Development Fund* has been allocated to FE colleges with significant HE provision to ensure that the student experience in FE colleges is comparable to that in HE Institutions.

³⁰ Higher Education Funding Council for England – the national funding agency for higher education

1.4.6 Stimulating demand for learning

The UK faces a continuing challenge to increase participation in learning, especially among those who are most hard to reach and the most resistant non-learners. The National Adult Learning Survey shows that in 2002, 76% of adults aged 16-69 (outside continuous full-time education) had taken part in learning over the last three years an increase from 74% in 1997. However, despite this increase in learning, participation levels are considerably lower than average among certain groups, including: people aged 70 and over (28%), those with no qualifications (29%), those with basic skills difficulties (52%), and adults living in the most deprived areas (67%).

In order to meet the challenge of stimulating demand the Government funds a number of campaigns and activities including Adult Learners' Week and Sign Up Now campaigns; Family Learning Weekend; the Skills for life 'Gremlins' media campaign; and the LSC Bitesize campaign offering adults the chance to enrol on one a free short course. In addition, The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the independent broadcasters play a world-leading role in using the media as a stimulus to new learning. For example, the BBC *Computers Don't Bite* and *Webwise* courses, and the resurgence of history as a major cultural concern in part resulting from a focus on history programmes.

1.5 Future Challenges

The UK Government faces a number of future challenges in creating a learning society that involves everyone. These include

- Closing the learning divide between the learning-rich and the learning-poor;
- Creating more equal access to employer training for groups who currently miss out;
- Tackling the persistence of the academic-vocational divide;
- Demographic change in an ageing society;
- Finding an effective and applicable means of identifying and assessing the outcomes of non-accredited learning;
- Responding to the challenge of increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees; and
- Joining up government departments and initiatives.

Chapter 2: Increasing investment in adult learning

Since the publication of the Green Paper *The Learning Age* in 1998 the Government has seen investment in adult learning as underpinning its policies for both economic success and social inclusion and there have been some substantial increases in funding for those parts of the system where adults commonly learn as well as some increases specifically targeted at adult learners. Alongside this picture of increasing investment has been a refocusing of funding and investment to contribute towards the Government's key targets.

The Learning Age announced the introduction of two small funds specifically targeted at Adult Learners who did not currently use the system – the Adult and Community Learning Fund and the Union Learning Fund. At the same time funding for Further Education increased from £3,154 million in 1996/97 to £3,544 million in 2000/01.

- The **Adult and Community Learning Fund** – some £5 million per year – was designed to demonstrate how new and disadvantaged learners could be attracted into learning through innovative approaches and through working through voluntary and community agencies. The Fund supports the Government's aim of widening participation in learning and strengthening the capacity of neighbourhood self-help groups to provide services for local people, and is based on the belief in the vital role of learning in regenerating disadvantaged areas
- The **Union Learning Fund** was designed to look at how Trades Unions could operate to attract workers into learning and training. During the last 5 years over 350 innovative and imaginative programmes have been developed to deliver a wide range of learning opportunities, from basic skills to continuous professional development. The Fund has also paved the way for the Union Learning Representative (ULR). It has helped to establish, train and receive statutory recognition for a national network of over 4,000 ULR's to help and encourage their members to sharpen their skills, particularly low skilled workers and those with basic skills needs. The Fund has proved to be so successful that it has been considerably expanded.

In 2000, the Government established a national framework of Individual Learning Accounts to encourage individuals to invest and plan for their learning, enabling them to take greater control over their career and personal development. By late 2001, the programme had been suspended. Although it succeeded in stimulating significant levels of demand for learning, there was insufficient targeting on reaching the least motivated and least well-educated. In its initial form, the controls normal to supply side provision were not sufficiently in place to avoid abuse, however the principles underpinning the programme have been carried forward into the *Skills Strategy* in the form of a level 2 entitlement. In Wales, the first phase of a bespoke Individual Learner Account, ILA Wales was launched in February 2003 and will be open to individuals later this year. The programme aims to assist in widening participation in learning by encouraging take-up from those with no or low qualifications and to help those who face financial barriers to engaging in learning by offering a higher financial incentive for those on low incomes.

The transfer of powers from the Further Education Funding Council³¹ (FEFC) and the Training and Enterprise Councils³² (TECs) to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2001 was carried out in an environment of increasing budgets for provision and the drawing into the system of reserves from the former TECs added to the investment available during the period of transition. New money was also found for Adult and Community Learning – traditionally the least well funded sector with £9 million being added to this sector's very modest funding over a three-year period.

Almost as important as the amounts invested are the ways in which investment has been channelled. Individual Learning Accounts £1 million in the first year of operation were a clear attempt to attach funding to demand. The need to increase learning in the new technologies has resulted in £1.6 billion being invested during the three-year period 1999 to 2002 in UKonline centres and other forms of investment in ICT based learning, with further funding planned for the future.

Since the setting up of the Learning and Skills Council and the drawing up of the Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets, spending has been targeted increasingly at certain priority areas. *Skills for Life*, the strategy for reducing numbers of adults without basic skills, has attracted additional funds invested in provision, staff development, curriculum development, promotions and the development of a government unit devoted to the achieving of the target. Investment in these budgets has amounted to £1.5 billion and at the same time changes to the funding methodology to privilege basic skills provision have meant that a larger proportion of Further Education budgets will have been invested in basic skills provision.

In 2002 *Success for All* was published setting out the efforts of the Government to produce a more responsive and effective learning and skills sector. A major investment of over a billion pounds is planned over the period between 2002/3 and 2005/6 representing an increase of 19% in real terms. Of course much of this investment will be for the benefit of young people aged 16-19 but adult learners will also be recipients. Additional capital funding of 60% in real terms over the same period will also be invested.

Again the process for allocating this resource is of as much interest as the money itself. It is closely tied to the success of institutions and to their planning. Thus a proportion of the funding is to be paid on submission of an appropriate plan with targets and funding is also to be tied to institutional success with those Colleges that are judged excellent being as much as 3.5% better funded than those judged unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory institutions will be targeted by development funding to deal with their inadequacies.

The funding proposals in *Success for All* are also harnessed to the development of the Government's Skills Strategy, *21st Century Skills*. This Strategy published on 9th July 2003 is intended to target the skills element of the productivity gap that exists between the United Kingdom's workforce and that of other developed economies. The investment that the Government intends to make in Skills will be focused on

31 The national funding agency for further education, 1992-2001

32 Independent companies set up throughout England and Wales to organise training at a local level, 1988-2001

those with the lowest qualifications i.e. those with basic skills needs and those who have not attained a full level 2 – regarded as the minimum level of skills for successful working in a modern society. At other levels it is expected that employers and individuals will see sufficient return on the investment in learning to invest more of their own funds.

A key strand in Government policy is a drive to increase the investment as well as the commitment that employers make with regard to learning. A longstanding initiative in this area has been Investors in People, which badges employers who commit and perform in terms of investing in their employees. It is recognised, however, that more is needed, particularly to engage small and medium enterprises. A series of ‘Employer Pilots’ looking at different models of employer engagement and targeted at small enterprises are therefore being used to investigate what investment of government funding will bring the best results and not displace private investment. The Skills Strategy has chosen not to impose levies or compulsory training arrangements on employers but rather to encourage voluntary agreements between employers and ‘licence to practice initiatives’.

Chapter 3: Increasing participation

The UK has a continuing challenge to increase participation in learning, especially among those who are most hard to reach and the most resistant non-learners. Since 1997, the UK Government has funded and developed a range of programmes, initiatives and activities to both increase and widen participation. For examples of good practice and innovative approaches in relation to the ten CONFINTEA V themes, see section 1.2 and chapter 7.

3.1 Measuring participation – the National Adult Learning Survey

Over recent years, increasing efforts have also been made to measure adult participation in learning in the UK, partly as a result of the establishment of national education and training targets. Determining an exact measure of participation however has proved to be difficult as it is strongly influenced by the methodology and definition of learning used and the age cohort surveyed³³.

In 1997 the first National Adult Learning Survey³⁴ (NALS) was commissioned to explore participation in a wide range of learning activities among adults in England. This baseline study, covering a representative sample of 5,500 adults was followed by repeat surveys in 2000, 2001³⁵ and 2002³⁶. The samples for NALS 1997 and 2000 were selected from all adults aged 16-69 (in England and Wales), with the age cap lifted in 2001. The Department uses the NALS series for Education and Skills (DfES) to evaluate the effectiveness of their adult learning policies. It is also used to monitor progress in meeting the National Learning Target for adult participation, which aimed to reduce the proportion of non-learners found in 1997 by 7%, that is, to reduce this group from 26% to 24% by 2002.

The NALS surveys ask a series of questions about different forms of taught learning and self-directed learning, with respondents being identified as a 'learner' if they have participated in any of these activities during the last three years. Taught learning includes courses meant to lead to qualifications or to develop skills for a job; tuition in driving, music-making, art, crafts, sport any practical skill; evening classes; working from a package provided by an employer or learning provider; and any other taught course, instruction or tuition. Self-directed or non-taught learning includes studying for qualifications without taking part in a taught course; supervised training while doing specific tasks at work; keeping up to date with developments in one's field of work - for example, by reading books, manuals or journals or attending seminars; and any other attempt to improve knowledge or skill without taking part in a taught course.

Since 1997, NALS has shown small rises in participation in all types of learning, other than non-vocational, with the national target set by the Government for adult learning having been achieved (table 1).

³³ McGivney, V. (2001) Fixing or changing the pattern: reflections on widening adult participation in learning, Leicester: NIACE

³⁴ Beinart, S. and Smith, P. (1998) National Adult Learning Survey 1997, Sheffield: DfEE

³⁵ Blake, M. and La Valle, I. (2001) National Adult Learning Survey 2001 Sheffield: DFES

³⁶ Fitzgerald R., La Valle I. and Taylor R. (2003) National Adult Learning Survey 2002 Sheffield: DfES

Table 1: Participation in different types of learning, NALS 1997 and 2002 compared		
	1997	2002
Base: all respondents = 100%	5,245	5,654
Any learning	74%	76%
Taught learning	58%	61%
Self-directed learning	57%	61%
Vocational learning	67%	69%
Non-vocational learning	30%	26%

While NALS reports that three-quarters of all adults in England are learners (76%), this is not evenly distributed across all groups of the population. The older people are, the less likely they are to participate in learning. The decline in participation is particularly steep for those aged 60 and over (table 2).

Table 2: Participation in any learning by age groups, NALS 1997 and 2002 compared							
	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
1997	82%	85%	82%	78%	67%	47%	NA
2002	82%	85%	83%	81%	74%	54%	28%

Men participate more than women although this gap is narrowing. Men are thought to participate more in vocational learning and women in non-vocational learning (table 3)/

Table 3: Participation in any learning by gender, NALS 1997 and 2002 compared		
	Men	Women
1997	78%	70%
2002	79%	74%

Occupational status is a key determinant of adult participation in learning. Those in managerial or professional occupations are far more likely to be learning than those in lower socio-economic groups (table 4).

Table 4: Participation in any learning by socio-economic group, NALS 1997 and 2002 compared					
	Professional /managerial	Other non-manual	Skilled manual	Semi-skilled manual	Unskilled manual
1997	90%	86%	70%	69%	50%
2002	88%	87%	74%	71%	47%

The workplace is not only a major location of learning, but also provides information about learning opportunities and the finance and motivation to take them up. Those in employment are much more likely than the unemployed and others outside of the labour market to participate in learning (table 5).

Table 5: Participation in any learning by economic activity, NALS 1997 and 2002 compared

	Full-time employee	Part-time employee	Self-employed	Unemployed	Looking after the family	Retired	Incapable of work
1997	88%	78%	77%	72%	47%	43%	41%
2002	89%	81%	86%	68%	52%	51%	50%

There is a key divide in participation rates between those who leave school at the earliest opportunity and those who stay on even for a short while (table 6).

Table 6: Participation in any learning by age left continuous full-time education, NALS 1997 and 2002 compared

	16 or younger	17-18	19-20	21 or older
1997	64%	84%	86%	93%
2002	66%	85%	87%	93%

In 2002, NALS also collected additional data on disabilities, caring responsibilities, and difficulties with basic skills. The survey showed that:

- Participation in learning is lower than average among people with a disability (64%) than those without (81%).
- Parents living as a couple are most likely to report some learning (82%), compared with 75% of those with no dependent children and just 70% of lone parents.
- 59% of people responsible for looking after a sick or disabled family member are learning compared with 79% of the rest of the sample.
- 52% of those with a basic skills difficulty reported some learning compared to 83% of those without.

3.2 Participation in learning among minority ethnic adults

In 2002, NIACE in partnership with the DfES produced a briefing on participation in learning by minority ethnic adults, based upon data from the 2000/2001 English Local Labour Force Survey.

The survey³⁷ showed that when comparing participation rates for adults aged 16-64, minority ethnic groups are less likely to participate in learning (73%) than the adult

³⁷ Aldridge, F. and Tuckett, A. (2003) *Light and Shade: a NIACE briefing on participation in adult learning by ethnic minorities*, Leicester: NIACE

population as a whole (78%), although this masks marked differences between different minority ethnic groups. While African communities and those with mixed ethnic origins outperform the national average for participation, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are under-represented. Only 45% of Bangladeshis aged 16 and over took part in learning in 2001/2002, compared with 82% of Africans and the national average of 68% (76% for the 16-69 age range). Overall, 69% of all minority ethnic groups took part in adult learning in the period 2001/2002.

A higher proportion of men than women from minority ethnic communities are learning. Bangladeshi and Pakistani men in particular, are much more likely than their female counterparts to be learning. In contrast, Caribbean and Chinese women and more likely to be learners than men.

Among Africans, Caribbean's, people of mixed ethnic origin and 'other' minority ethnic groups there is a gentle decline in participation among adults of working age. In contrast, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis start from a lower level of participation than other groups and experience a much more severe decline among the working age population.

The greatest difference in participation rates between those in employment and the unemployed are seen among Indians (81% compared with 69%), while three-quarters of both employed and unemployed Pakistanis and two-thirds of both employed and unemployed Bangladeshis are learning.

3.3 Participation rates across the UK

Although NALS covers England only, the parallel Adult Participation in Learning Survey, conducted annually by NIACE, covers all four countries of the UK. In Wales, the National Council-ELWa uses the results to track the impact of its policies upon adult learning³⁸. The NIACE and NALS series have a stable and consistent relationship although differences in the methods of data collections used and the age cohorts surveyed result in the findings of the NIACE survey being consistently markedly lower than those generated by NALS. However, the NIACE survey is particularly useful in capturing the proportion of the population who see themselves as learners.

	UK	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
1996	40%	42%	37%	38%	28%
2002	42%	42%	39%	44%	40%

³⁸ Aldridge, F. and Horrocks N. (2002) *Towards a Learning Future: the NIACE Dysgu Cymru survey on adult participation in learning in Wales 2002*, Cardiff: ELWa

³⁹ Sargant, N. with Field, J., Francis, H., Schuller, T. and Tuckett, A. (1997) *The Learning Divide: a study of participation in adult learning in the United Kingdom*, Leicester: NIACE

⁴⁰ Sargant, N. and Aldridge, F. (2002) *Adult Learning and Social Division – A Persistent Pattern: a report of the findings of a UK-wide survey on adult participation in education and training*, Leicester: NIACE

3.4 Increasing and Widening Participation (also see section 1.3.6)

Engaging more people in learning is seen as a means of creating a culture of lifelong learning – a key Government objective. Since 1997 there has been a rapid succession of developments and initiatives in post-compulsory learning, many of which have had the aim of increasing demand for learning among the groups most resistant to it including⁴¹:

- postcode premiums in further and higher education;
- the introduction of Individual Learning Accounts (ILA's) and the University for Industry (Ufi);
- the establishment of learndirect centres and UKonline;
- finance for information, advice and guidance partnerships and the national lifelong learning helpline;
- the launch of the national adult literacy and numeracy strategy;
- the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill;
- the extension of the Disability Act for education providers;
- the piloting of educational maintenance allowances for young people staying on in education; and
- a range of funding measures designed to assist communities including a Community Group ILA project which aims to reach people in disadvantaged areas by working with credit unions and local schools and targeting both lone parents and carers.

In 2003, the Learning and Skills Council, who are required to make meeting the needs of socially disadvantaged groups and derived communities a priority, and to ensure that a range of 'first-rung' courses is available locally, developed their widening participation strategy, *Successful Participation for All: widening adult participation strategy for consultation*⁴². The Strategy contains a set of proposals concerned with developing a partnership approach, ensuring appropriate provision, conducting and applying research, setting specific adult participation targets, ensuring equality and access for all, and reviewing funding to support widening participation.

Within Higher Education there have been a number of initiatives to widen participation – widening participation funding, Action for Access, 'Aim Higher' and Partnerships for Progression – which have all involved collaboration between Higher Education Institutions and institutions in other sectors (See section 1.4.5).

⁴¹ In McGivney V. (2001) *Fixing or changing the pattern: reflections on widening adult participation in learning*, Leicester, NIACE

⁴² Learning and Skills Council (2003) *Successful Participation for All: widening adult participation strategy for consultation*, Coventry: LSC

Chapter 4: Research studies in adult learning

The UK Government undertakes research⁴³ to help it achieve its strategic priorities. Within England, the Department for Education and Skills has a research budget of £9.1 million in 2003-04 with which it seeks to:

- Develop a better, well founded evidence base for future policy development and practice – through studies, developing capacity and through partnership with others;
- Ensure that the research commissioned is accessible to policy makers and practitioners, and that they are able to understand and draw upon the key lessons – by using the database of Current Education Research in the UK, through seminars, through the DfES research conference, and by funding the centre for Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice in Education (EPPI centre); and
- Encourage more researchers, from a range of disciplines, to engage in key policy issues and questions through communicating research and information interests to the research community.

In 2002-03 24% of the research budget was devoted to encouraging and enabling adults to learn, improve their skills and enrich their lives, 15% to developing a world class workforce for education and skills and 29% to research centres and other strategic programmes to push forward knowledge and understanding in key areas of policy. For example:

- In 1999, the Department established the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning (www.learningbenefits.net/) to investigate the broader health and social benefits to be gained from investment in lifelong learning. The Centre's primary goal is to investigate the links between learning and outcomes that cannot be easily described or evaluated in monetary terms but that are nonetheless important both to individuals and to society as a whole. The main objectives of the Centre are:
 - to produce and apply models for measuring and analysing the contribution that learning makes to quality of life and wider society;
 - to devise and apply improved methods for measuring the value and contribution of forms of learning, including (but not limited to) community-based adult learning, where the outcomes are not necessarily standard ones such as qualifications; and
 - to provide and evaluate evidence on the quantifiable benefits of learning for the purposes of future spending reviews and to meet other cost-benefit requirements.
- In March 2000, the Centre for the Economics of Education (<http://cee.lse.ac.uk/>) was set up to undertake systematic and innovative research in the field of the economics of education and build a knowledge base on the cost-effectiveness of various forms of educational interventions and investments. Adopting a multi-disciplinary approach, the CEE investigates a broad range of policy questions and address issues which have previously only been tackled in a more piecemeal fashion by individual researchers. The Centre's research programme is divided into five distinct, but closely related, research areas: methodological

⁴³ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/prospectus/index.cfm>

development; the production of education and skills; the supply of education and skills; the demand for education and skills; and the returns to education.

- The National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (www.nrdc.org.uk) was established in 2002 as part of the Adult Basic Skills Strategy, *Skills for Life*, to develop a knowledge base on how to improve adult literacy and numeracy and the impact of this on individuals and the economy. The Centre aims to improve practice and inform policy through by ensuring that implementation and future policy development are based firmly on evidence.
- The National ICT Research Centre for Education, Training and Employment (www.learninglab.org.uk/researchcentre/) was created to provide evidence to help Government address digital divisions and to understand the impact of Information Communications Technology (ICT) on education and training. The Centre's initial focus is on the link between technology, skills and employment, and on access issues. This includes:
 - investigating how new technology can promote social inclusion.
 - analysing how the possession of IT skills impacts on an individual's employability prospects.
 - analysing the benefits to business of having increased levels of ICT skills in the workforce; and
 - assessing the extent and range of access to new technologies available to different population groups, differentiating between community and educational opportunities.
- The Learning and Skills Research Centre (www.lsrc.ac.uk) based at the Learning and Skills Development Agency has commissioned research in key areas of post-16 education and training. Its key tasks are to encourage innovation, explore new research methods, engage with new ideas and ensure that research findings are firmly embedded in policy and practice. The aims of the Centre are to:
 - increase research capacity in the learning and skills sector;
 - maximise the impact of research on the learning and skills sector, enabling the outcomes of research to effect change;
 - create a strong evidence base for the development of policy and practice;
 - improve the linkage between research and policy by supporting and improving policy development;
 - ensure that research and practice are effectively linked to support higher standards and increased participation;
 - set up and maintain effective networks for all activities in the field; and
 - encourage innovation and vision in the development of policy and practice in learning and skills.

The DfES is also developing the strategic evidence base for education and skills by investing more resources in collecting and using longitudinal data. This provides a powerful means for understanding the factors affecting achievement and opportunity, as well as assessing the long-run impact of policy interventions. This includes international collaborations. A number of studies have been set up to look at changes over time, including:

- National Adult Learning Survey (NALS)
- Learning and Training at Work

- National Survey of Adult Basic Skills Needs - to provide an up-to-date assessment of the scale of literacy and numeracy need in England. The final results will be available in autumn 2003.

In addition, over 100 separate studies are commissioned every year to meet shorter-term information, evaluation and planning needs.

Key research questions currently being addressed as a means of encouraging and enabling adults to learn, improve their skills and enrich their lives include:

- For adult learners:
 - The impact of improvement in basic skills on people's working and family lives and their subsequent attainment. Which types of basic skills learning are the most effective and with which groups?
 - The impact of learning on people's lives: modelling participation in various kinds of learning and training through tracking studies of learning journeys, generating evidence of impact, progression and rates of return;
 - The decision making processes that affect participation, demand for adult learning and better understanding of segments of the market;
 - Assessing the impact of a new workforce development strategy; whether arrangements for involving employers work, and the returns to individuals, employers and the economy;
 - The impact of different forms of HE and FE on employability and earnings.
- For those in or aiming for higher education:
 - Understanding the factors that determine participation rates for higher education: why there are variations by region, social background and ethnicity. What are the decision making processes which people go through and what informs their decisions;
 - How people make choices throughout lifelong learning and higher education;
 - How funding arrangements drive organisational forms in HE and FE;
 - Understanding the impact of HE expansion on quality, learning effectiveness and employability;
 - Exploring the effectiveness of alternative ways of increasing access to higher education— e.g. access through FE, Access courses.

The Department is not the only funder of education and skills research, and has been working towards better co-ordination with other departments, non-departmental public bodies and independent research funders. Other significant public funders of education research are the Economic and Social Research Council⁴⁴ (ESRC) and the Higher Education Funding Council, which provide funds to universities and other bodies. The Department has also encouraged the establishment of a National Educational Research Forum to help identify what education research is being undertaken and the priorities for further work, as well as providing greater co-ordination between the perspectives of funders, researchers and practitioners, such as teachers.

⁴⁴ The Economic and Social Research Council is the UK's leading research funding and training agency addressing economic and social concerns.

Chapter 5: Adult educators'/facilitators' status and training

Learners should be taught by those with appropriate skills and qualifications. In England, the Department for Education and Skills recently proposed to set a new target that by 2005/06 the vast majority of full-time and the majority of part-time college teachers and lecturers should be appropriately qualified.

In a recently published document, *Success for All*, the Department announced that it will look to extend this approach to other providers in the sector. It outlined the importance for the sector to take the lead in shaping the development of the professional standards for its workforce. It also highlighted the need to increase the attractiveness of a career in lecturing, training and management in the sector, and to strengthen the reward and career structures linked to performance.

The Department, together with its partners, are therefore launching a new leadership college for the sector from 2003, and improve mentoring for managers. The Department is also developing a succession planning strategy that will bring leaders with a wide range of experience into the sector and also increase the diversity of senior staff. The Departments' new Standards and Effectiveness Unit will focus on post-compulsory education and takes key responsibilities for leading on quality improvement in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council, including the Leadership College.

In Scotland a review of training for community learning and development practitioners was carried out in 2000 and a major consultation exercise carried out in 2002. The Scottish Executive recognises that there is a shortage of trained practitioners and wishes to encourage more specialised continuing professional development in a part time or work based context, while retaining the generic community learning and development degree. Enhancing specialised training is seen as crucial, for example, to the goal of raising levels of adult literacy and numeracy.

In Northern Ireland all full time teachers in further education complete a postgraduate certificate in Further and Higher Education (PGC(FH)E) within three years of their appointment. From September 2002 the course has included a module that incorporates adult literacy and numeracy matters. This programme is currently under review with a view to introducing a programme for all new teachers both full and part-time and a precursor to the PGC(FH)E. In the case of Essential Skills, a new professional career structure is currently under development and by March 2005, one third of the tutors will have enrolled on a Diploma course developed by Queen's University Belfast.

From April 2004 a new UK-wide Sector Skills Council for lifelong learning is likely to be in existence, representing the employers and staff side of all those working in the post-compulsory sector (further education colleges, higher education institutions, community-based learning and development, work-based training). It will be a standard setting body and aimed at securing qualifications frameworks for all staff and managers involved.

A major programme to establish professional development and qualifications for all teachers, trainers and facilitators working in adult literacy, numeracy or English language has been developed by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit. It is expected

that before long, all those teaching basic skills will be qualified to do so. To date over 5,000 teachers working with adult learners with learning difficulties or disabilities have received 3-day training on the Access for All and Adult pre-entry Curriculum Framework documents and 4,700 ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers have received 2-day training to use the Adult Core Curriculum document.

5.1 Available data on adult educators

	FE	HE	Total
Senior Management	1,905	(2,374)*	1,905
Administration	18,920	32,804	51,724
Clerical and secretarial	30,776	62,739	93,515
Teaching	166,967	159,213	326,180
Security, catering, cleaning etc	27,627	46,470	74,097
Research	4,922	52,153	57,075
Skilled Trade	22,624	30,214	52,838
Science Technicians	2,534	13,560	16,094
Computing and IT	1,096	6,548	7,644
Other	2,296	4,662	6,958
Librarians, archivists and curators	1,171	4,675	5,846
Total	280,838	413,038	693,876

Source: Labour Force Survey 2000

*Due to recent changes in socio-economic group codes, it was not possible to identify the number of senior managers in HE. Previous analysis identified 2,400 senior managers in HE

	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time equivalents
Teaching staff	46,769	87,547	134,316	48,309
Support staff	11,936	12,508	24,444	12,322
Other support	37,477	31,600	69,077	38,382
Total	96,182	131,655	227,837	99,123

Source: http://www.fento.org/e-library/lsc_stats_2000-2001.xls

In addition, it has also been estimated that approximately 49,000 staff are involved in local authority adult and community learning provision, with just under 46,000 of those working part-time.

Chapter 6: Empowering Adult Learners

The Secretary of States remit letter to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) setting out the strategic vision and priorities for the first years of operation, urged the Council to listen and give weight to the views and experiences of adult learners. *“I also expect local Learning and Skills Councils to consult the Learning Partnerships on their plans, and to work with them to develop mechanisms for taking account of the views of learners and potential learners... The planning and funding system must respond to the customers of education and training. It must be driven by need, not by central design or existing routes, and it must promote equality of opportunity for all to learn and acquire recognised skills and qualifications. Plans should also take account of feedback from individual learners, findings from area inspections, and provider inspection reports about standards of provision.”*⁴⁵

In response to this charge, the LSC have in partnership with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) involved learners in inspections of adult and community learning provision through the inclusion of a learner nominee on the inspection panel, through interviews with individual learners, and through the use of learner focus groups to help build a picture of the learners’ role and how provision reflects their needs. The LSC have also commissioned and funded a number of research and development projects on listening to learners. For example, the national learner survey will systematically, over five years, collect the views of around 110,000 learners in further education, work-based learning and adult and community learning. The survey is designed to help the LSC and its partners understand and respond better to learners’ needs. Its main aims are to measure learners’ levels of satisfaction with LSC provision across England and to establish benchmarks against which to monitor trends in learners’ levels of satisfaction. The first two waves of the survey⁴⁶, conducted in 2002 and interviewing 13,000 learners showed that with 92% of learners in FE said they were fairly satisfied, very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the learning experience they receive. A similar picture emerged for both adult and community learning and work based learning provision. The quality of teaching and training was also very highly rated across all three sectors, with none achieving less than 89%. A similar exercise is being undertaken in Wales.

Within Higher Education, the introduction of fees is aimed in part at providing learners with funding ‘power’ to choose a Higher Education Institution that they believe offers good value. Proposals are also being considered for higher education students to evaluate tutor performance.

The Government also provides core funding to a number of NGOs concerned with the education and training of adults including NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning in England and Wales. NIACE aims to represent the interests of all adult learners and potential learners through:

- advocacy to national and local government, funding bodies, industry and providers of education and training;

⁴⁵ Blunkett, D. (2000) *The Learning and Skills Council remit letter from the Secretary of State for Education and Employment*, DfEE

⁴⁶ NOP Research Group (2002) *Seeking the views of learners: findings from the LSCs first national learner satisfaction survey 2001/02*, London: LSC

- collaboration with providers across all sectors of post-compulsory education and training; and through fostering progression routes for adults seeking to develop pathways as learners;
- a commitment to supporting evaluation and monitoring and to high quality service;
- securing informed debate - through research, enquiry, publication and through arranging seminars and conferences;
- effective networking - to ensure that lessons learned in one part of the system can be drawn on elsewhere;
- ensuring that the best of international practice is available to its members and users;
- a commitment to being itself a well-managed learning organisation.

In 1999 NIACE created a National Adult Learners' Forum, with the objectives of giving a voice to the adult learner, creating a channel of communication between the adult learner and those who are responsible for making decisions, providing a model which could be duplicated across the country, and shaping and steering an event for learners where learners can discuss issues that affect them in their learning.

A Learners Forum is a meeting of adult learners who are currently involved in education. They meet together to identify issues and concerns about their education which they want to discuss. The purpose of the forum is to talk over their experiences, give each other mutual support and to identify causes for celebration or concern that will benefit from some collective attention. Working together it is more possible to support and celebrate good developments but also to work on strategies for bringing about changes where these are necessary. Getting together helps to generate a collective and authentic voice on behalf of adult learners. It is a means by which adult learners - from the standpoint of experience and reflection – can join in the discussion with professionals, providers and decision-makers at a range of levels in a range of settings.

Since 1999, with the support of NIACE, the Forum has organised a number of adult learners' seminars, at which local forums across the UK are represented.

Chapter 7: Examples of best practice and innovation

7.1 Adult learning: democracy, peace and critical citizenship

The National Issues Forum is a US-based collective of organisations that have made an active decision to come together and discuss critical issues (not solely national) in an effort to stimulate democratic participation. Those involved include a wide variety of groups such as educational institutions, leadership groups, civic groups, churches, libraries, senior centres, community groups and youth groups. The forum model has enjoyed significant success in the US and has now been adopted by Bournemouth and Poole College who have undergone a series of training events; which they are now in turn offering to interested parties in return for their participation in the forums.

The role of the forum is to create a deliberative space and a safe environment. For their part, the moderators skilfully facilitate this process in order to help participants to form an opinion on a pre-determined issue and assist their arrival at a sort of 'public judgement'. The issue (in this case the then impending war with Iraq) is 'framed' from three differing perspectives and each perspective is allocated a finite and equal time in terms of presentation and address. The participants are asked to speak, listen and deliberate and the group is self-policing so as not to allow individual control of the discussion (this process is managed by the facilitator). If any of the participants feel that another party has spoken for too long, they are free to gesture and the speaker must swiftly conclude; an action that is reinforced by the moderator.

The organisers' hope is that this model leads to deeper independent thought surrounding the issues under debate and allows individuals to consider the drawbacks and consequences of their opinions. The ultimate aim is for the individual to come to public judgment, a process that has been broken down by Daniel Yankelovich; the founding father of public opinion research:

- awareness – people become aware of the issue
- urgency – people feel a sense of urgency about the issue
- choicework – people begin to explore choices for a solution
- resistance – they resist facing the trade-off and become wishful
- deliberation – they begin to weigh the pros and cons
- interpret – they take a stand intellectually
- judgement – they reach a moral and emotional decision

7.2 Improving conditions and quality of adult learning

In 2001 the Department for Education and Skills put in place in England a national programme to support local education authority (LEA) providers of adult and community learning in improving the quality of learning programmes and services for adults – the Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programme. The programme is delivered by NIACE and the Learning and Skills Development Agency, working in partnership. There are several strands. A series of publications on relevant topics provide guidance and good practice examples for managers and practitioners. Workshops are offered to disseminate the key messages of the publications. LEAs who attend are entitled to free consultancy support in relation to publication topics and quality improvement planning. Further subsidised consultancy can be purchased.

Quality Improvement Networks take place three times a year in each of the English regions, to foster the sharing of good practice and raise awareness of quality

improvement issues. Each year a small number of action research projects are commissioned from the field, and provided with consultancy support. Reports of these, other case studies and exemplars are available through a dedicated website. There is a moderated email group, and an electronic advice service. During 2002-3 97% of LEAs participated in one or more strand of the programme. Satisfaction levels are high at 98% average across the programme.

7.3 Literacy and basic education

Developing Embedded Basic Skills (DEBS) is an action research programme, funded by the Learning and Skills Council and the Governments Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit. The aims of the programme are to identify, analyse and evaluate effective models of embedded basic literacy, numeracy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), to determine key success factors to enable learning to take place, and to support the development of effective models to bring literacy, language and numeracy provision to learners not accessing primary basic skills provision. The following examples illustrate a number of the models identified:

- The Learning Freeways massage and aromatherapy course runs for 20 hours and has a simple subject specific aim – to introduce the skills and knowledge required to be able to carry out a simple fluent massage. The literacy skills taught in the embedded programme are: listening and responding to spoken language, speaking to communicate, engaging in discussion, reading and understanding relevant pieces of text, comparing text types, and writing to convey information. The eight learners, most of whom would not have considered joining a course to improve any of the literacy skills listed, were strongly attracted to the subject of massage technique and safe use of oils. They are working at entry level 3 in the National Standards for adult literacy and all express interest in further courses once the current one ends in December.
- How does a teacher motivate a group of young, aspiring chefs to improve their basic skills when their over-riding passion is food - to cook and to create? At Westminster Kingsway College, the answer lies in the food itself and assignments have been devised around various food related topics with basic skills as an essential ingredient. Year 1 learners have been working on an assignment investigating fish. This has involved them in a variety of tasks such as describing classic cuts of fish, calculating portion weights, researching information about fish from different species and presenting their findings orally, in writing and also as bar charts, pie charts and graphs. As well as having practical demonstrations from chef lecturers, the learners have worked on various related tasks such as reading and summarising articles on fish by Sophie Grigson, learning how to calculate wastage when cleaning and preparing fish, and devising a quiz to test other learners on their knowledge of fish. This is the first year that Westminster Kingsway has integrated basic skills into this vocational area and initial feedback is very positive. Learners are enthusiastic about the work and attendance has increased by 20% from last year.

7.4 Promoting the empowerment of women

Calderdale Women's Centre is funded through the Adult and Community Learning Fund to offer women the opportunity, through real and relevant learning, to build a community infrastructure of shared experience, skills and support. The Centre works

with women in an area of industrial decline who have care responsibilities and/or mental and physical health difficulties. They are trained to develop self-help and community management in their own localities to research and assess learning interest through focus groups. A menu of learning opportunities is available to respond to identified interest and needs. Individual learning reviews and advice and guidance are also offered to each participant.

Aspects of the project identified particularly as being good practice included:

- Crèche workers use the crèche as a teaching and nurturing environment for the mothers who have a few personal experiences of child care;
- The centre is totally open, accessible and a safe environment for the women;
- There is a strong emphasis on individual tutorials and individual learner needs;
- The mixed cultural groups work well with groups forming their own objectives, and developing a strong sense of ownership; and
- The models for the learning groups are being adapted to take out into other communities.

The Adult and Community Development Project (Project 99) was a £2m Government funded programme to distribute one-off development grants to local authorities and voluntary and community organisations to put in place short-term activity in the adult and community education field. As part of the programme, the Angelou Centre, a training centre for the educational and vocational needs of black women received funding to run 'Speaking Tongues', a creative reading and writing course, to introduce black women learners to culturally diverse women writers, particularly those from Africa and South East Asia.

The course aimed to increase the confidence of the women to express themselves individually and collectively, break down the fears they have about writing, and encourage reading of black women's literature. Many of the women targeted had no up-to-date qualifications, were long-term unemployed, need English language support and had childcare responsibilities. The project took positive action to overcome some of the internal and external barriers through confidence building and assertiveness training, a flexible timetable, childcare and travel support, job search assistance, and the use of female black staff to build relationships with the women and to provide positive role models. As a result, all of the students decided to return to the Centre in the autumn to design and produce a booklet of all their creative writing work.

7.5 Adult learning and the changing world of work

There are many programmes impacting on work based learning, including: Investors in People, Modern Apprenticeships, Small Business Service, National Vocational Qualifications, Learning and Skills Council (and in particular their workforce development programmes) all the Learning Centre and UK on-line options, Education Business Partnerships, New Deal and its various spin-offs, National Training Organisations (NTOS), Workplace Basic Skills.

There is also the involvement of trade unions in various ways, including through a Trade Union Learning Fund. The Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF) for example was set up in 2000 to fund union initiated learning projects. The fund was £1.6m over 4 years and funded by the Scottish Executive. Whilst most of the projects are about developing capacity within unions to deal with learning, mainly through training

Learning Reps, some projects do more skills type training- for example, EQUITY (the Actors' Union) runs a "Screen Acting Training Programme".

The fund is now approaching the fourth round and some 30 projects (some continuation projects) have been funded with 21 Unions involved. The fund has been doubled for the next three years with funding of £2.4m. An evaluation of the first round projects showed the following:

- 131 Learning Representatives trained
- 5,400 Training Needs Assessments carried out
- 1,100 supported Individual Learning Accounts
- 15 Learning Centres established
- 321 Qualifications achieved
- 9 accredited courses (including on-line) developed.

The Scottish Trade Union Council has also received Pathfinder funding for three years for an Adult Literacy project and has established a post of STUC Adult Literacy Co-ordinator, responsible for developing capacity within unions to deal with Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) in the workplace.

Due to launch in autumn of 2003, NHSU is a new kind of corporate university that will make training and development available for everyone at every level of the National Health Service (NHS), including those traditionally left out of workplace learning. The sole focus of NHSU is to deliver training and development for staff in healthcare, which benefits patients and service users through better patient care. It is being established to help modernise the NHS and deliver the NHS Plan. With over one million people working in healthcare, and a million plus more in social care, NHSU will be the world's largest corporate university.

The NHS believes that the quality of healthcare offered to patients depends first and foremost on the availability of well-qualified staff. NHSU aims to improve patient care by providing staff with the skills and experience, which they need to deliver the best service at every level. This can improve career opportunities, retain and motivate good staff within the service and encourage more people to consider careers in healthcare. Within the NHS, there are large numbers of staff with little or no experience of education and training since leaving school. NHSU aims to realise their potential to raise standards across the whole service and make learning a part of everyday life throughout the NHS.

“By 2010 the NHSU will have played a major role in improving patient care, contributed to the beginnings of a UK learning revolution, and helped to make the NHS [National Health Service] one of the best places to work anywhere in the world. We will also have become one of the world's first chartered corporate universities.”⁴⁷

One of the key elements of NHSU's initial portfolio of learning opportunities, and one of its highest priorities is *Skills for life and health* – the NHSU programme to develop the skills of literacy, numeracy and spoken English used by people employed in a health and social care context and by patients and the wider community when they

⁴⁷ NHSU (2002) *Learning for Everyone: a development plan for NHSU*, London: Department of Health

come into contact with health services. The programme aims to complement and reinforce existing activity by improving the supply and quality of learning opportunities available to NHS staff, offering them relevant information and support and raising awareness of the issue among potential learners and managers.

7.6. Adult learning, environment, health and population

There is increasing evidence that years in education and highest qualification have positive effects upon physical and mental health in later life. Research conducted by the Wider Benefits of Learning Research Centre has shown that:

- Among a British cohort born in 1958, 35% of 40 year olds with the highest qualification reported good health compared to only 17% of 40 year olds with no qualifications.⁴⁸
- 36% of women and 18% of men at age 37 with low literacy skills experienced depression compared to 7% of women and 6% of men with good literacy skills.⁴⁹

Further research has also shown that returning to learning also has positive impacts. In 1999 the Institute of Employment Studies produced a report *Learning in Later Life: Motivation and Impact*⁵⁰ which explored the nature and participation in learning of people aged 50-71. The research found that 80% reported a positive impact of learning on self-confidence, how they feel about themselves, satisfaction with other aspects of life and ability to cope.

In 2000, NIACE piloted a project entitled '*Prescriptions for Learning*'. The idea of the project is simple. A learning adviser is based in a doctors surgery, so that healthcare staff can refer individuals to discuss whether they want to access learning, what learning they want to do, and what support they might need to enable them to be successful in their learning. The aims of the project are to widen participation in learning among people who do not traditionally access learning, and to research the impact of learning on health and well being. '*Prescriptions for Learning*' has shown that returning to learning has an impact on individual's health and well being on one or several of these indicators. Individuals report increased confidence and self-esteem, lifted mood, improved sleeping, increased activity, wider social networks, feeling more in control, greater sense of hope and optimism and improved health behaviours.⁵¹

The project has attracted a great deal of national media attention which has resulted in hundreds of enquiries from learning providers, learning partnerships, Information, Advice and Guidance networks and primary care trusts. In July 2002 the Department for Education and Skills funded NIACE to facilitate a Consortium of 'Prescriptions for Learning' projects. By March 2003 some 60 providers have become members of the consortium.

⁴⁸ Feinstein, L. (2002) *Wider Benefits of Learning* DfES Research Digest 2002 Research Report RD2002, DfES

⁴⁹ cited in Hammond, C. (2002) *Learning to be Healthy*. Wider Benefits of Learning papers No 3, London: Institute of Education

⁵⁰ Dench, S and Regan, J. (2000) *Learning in Later Life: motivation and impact*, DfEE

⁵¹ James, K. *ibid* and Evaluation of the St. Austell Prescriptions for Learning 2001 NIACE (unpublished)

In 2001, the Department for Education and Skills funded the *'Celebrating Older Learners Campaign'* which aimed to celebrate the considerable and varied learning achievements of people aged 50 and above in England. Adult education providers were invited to submit proposals for events to celebrate the achievement of older learners and one organisation from each of the nine English regions was finally selected to receive an award of £2,000 to support their celebrations. Examples of the event which were funded include:

- 'Dance for Life' - a one day event to celebrate the life and achievements of older first generation Italians in the town of Bedford. Members of the Club Prima Generazione Italiani had been learning traditional Italian dances for two years and now wanted to share their skills with other elderly people.
- The organisation Equal Arts, organised a 'Celebrating Age' carnival, involving 300 older people. The carnival set out to celebrate the lives of the older people and to provide an opportunity for learning new creative skills including dance and banner making.
- Cheshire College chose the United Nations Day of Older People to celebrate the achievements and raise the profile of older learners. It exhibited the work of the colleges older learners, presented them with awards, provided information stands on learning opportunities and had performances by older learners

The Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) is the national agency for health education in Scotland and is a Special Health Board within the National Health Service in Scotland. HEBS is 'sponsored' by the Directorate of Health Policy of the Scottish Executive Health Department. A key theme identified for the work of HEBS is to promote a 'lifetime of health' with additional support through the Health Improvement Fund.

A core objective for HEBS is identified as being "...to support and enable individuals, professionals, communities and organisations to take action throughout Scottish life to improve health with a particular focus on reducing inequalities in health. This is reflected in activities identified in the operational plan working at the action levels of life circumstances, lifestyle topics and health topics"⁵²

The HEBS approach, centred on settings and sectors for health promotion, contributes to the process of improving the life circumstances in which people live, and is a core element of HEBS's role in tackling health inequalities. Such activities involve promoting social inclusion and strengthening communities and this requires partnership working with a wide range of agencies.

Tackling the health promotion needs of vulnerable groups is also identified as a priority during the period of this plan and beyond. In addition, forward planning for new priorities will be undertaken in relation to such areas as cancer awareness, injecting drug misuse, mental health and alcohol misuse.

⁵² Health Education Board for Scotland (2002) *Strategic Plan*, Edinburgh: HEBS

7.7 Adult learning, media, culture and ICTs

In March 1999 a budget of £252 million was made available through the Capital Modernisation Fund to set up around 700 Learning Centres across England. The aim was to give adults who have limited or no access to ICT, the opportunity to access and learn ICT skills to help them make the most of themselves in all aspects of their lives. In parallel to this, the Government initiated a branding programme designed to run for three years in order to create a comprehensive network of access points throughout England, the target being 6,000 UK online centres open by the end of 2002.

The centres are intended to be located in places people visit every day, with convenient opening hours to offer easy access. The key success criteria are the extent to which the centres increase ICT awareness, ICT skills and people's participation in local communities. For the early users the UK online centres appear to be providing a positive and constructive experience:

- 43% strongly agree that their time at the centre has helped increase their confidence, and this is the most significant result;
- over 90% agree that they are learning new skills;
- 27% and 16% respectively, are certain that attending the centres has helped them progress onto further learndirect courses and FE/HE; and
- 90% indicate that they will tell others about the centre and 97% agree that staff were friendly and helpful.

A literacy storyline was woven into Brookside, a popular UK drama. The programme was backed up with free information packs and local learning centres where people could go to improve their reading and writing. Over 10,000 people enquired about literacy courses in response to the programme.

Nottingham is a diverse city, with, for example, one of the oldest black communities in Britain. The varied communities of the city each have their own unique heritage that is reflected in objects in the collections of the Nottingham Museums Service, based at Nottingham Castle. The CAMEO Heritage project took this resource, and used it for the benefit of the community. The culturally diverse CAMEO group (a group of elders) uses a day centre at the Christian Centre in Nottingham, and it worked with the Museum to explore the heritage of its members. Reminiscence sessions were held with Museum objects. The group also developed an exhibition of their lives using the results of craft activities, a video, and personal projects. The project aims were to engage the elders, encouraging the forging of new friendships to combat isolation, but also the raise awareness of the museum and its collections. The project encouraged the elders to 'have a go' at activities they had never tried before, and by allowing the project to be led by the group the resulting exhibition was a rich reflection of the lives of the participants.

7.8 adult learning and groups with special needs

In May 2000, NIACE launched the Charter for Learning⁵³ for and by people with learning difficulties. Up until as recently as 1971, people with learning difficulties

⁵³ Jacobsen, Y. (ed) (2000) *Our right to learn: a pack for people with learning difficulties and staff who work with them based on the Charter for Learning*, Leicester: NIACE

were described as ‘ineducable’ by government legislation and their right to education was not recognised. Developing the charter provided the first ever opportunity for people with learning difficulties in the UK to say what is important about learning and being students for them.

The project co-ordinator and a group of students with learning difficulties at a London college, worked together on the contents of a leaflet that was sent out nationally to people with learning difficulties in colleges, adult education, day centres and self-advocacy organisations. The leaflet asked people with learning difficulties what they thought about different aspects of learning. It was written in clear, accessible language and taped version was available on request. A covering letter to staff was sent out with the leaflet, outlining the purpose of the consultation and asking for information on any examples of provision that might be useful to inform the project.

Over 100 replies to the consultation were received from all over the UK, in variety of formats and styles: videos, tapes, pictures, photographs and poems. The most useful and informative material contained direct quotes from students, examples of good/bad provision for students with learning difficulties, ideas from students on how to make things better for students with learning difficulties and case studies.

Some of the respondents to the charter consultation took the opportunity to develop their ideas about learning in practical ways. One college produced a photo prospectus accessible for students with learning difficulties who don’t read. Students with learning difficulties at another college designed a handbook for staff about how they want to be supported to learn. At an adult education college, students with learning difficulties designed an accessible college handbook with clear language, large print, photos and illustrations.

Early drafts of the charter and the pack were commented on by the project steering group which included two students with learning difficulties. As well as bringing their own experiences of being students to the project, the two students advised and support the project co-ordinator throughout. They were also involved in fieldwork visits, project workshops and relevant conferences and meetings during the project.

Students who had sent in particularly interesting responses to the charter consultation, met together with the project co-ordinator and the designer/illustrator of the charter poster and pack. The group discussed in practical workshops how the language, illustrations, layout and design of the poster and pack could be made accessible for people with learning difficulties. Subsequent drafts were sent to the meeting participants for further comments.

Twelve key themes emerged from the replies to the consultation. These then became the twelve charter points with each point accompanied by a quote from a person with learning difficulties:

- *The right to choose to go to classes* – “We should have a say in what we learn”
 - *The right to have support* – “Someone you can rely on to help”
 - *The right to speak up* – “We are adults with a voice; we want to be heard”
-

- *The right to have the chance to make friends* – “To mix with the crowd a little and make new friends”
- *The right to have fun learning* – “The more you enjoy it the more you learn”
- *The right to good access* – “Lifts, ramps, more room for wheelchairs”
- *The right not to be bullied* – “Cut out bullying – Everybody equal”
- *The right to be treated as adults with respect* – “Talk to us like adults”
- *The right to have clear information that we can understand* – “The information needs to be easy to understand – it is too complicated”
- *The right to have good teaching* – “You need a good teacher to help you learn”
- *The right to be able to do a course to get a job* – “To give us the skills to maybe get a job”
- *The right to learn in a nice place* – “A place where you feel comfortable”

The charter poster is illustrated and written in large clear print. A credit card size mini-charter unfolds to reveal six illustrated charter points on each side of the piece of paper. The project also produced the “Our Right to Learn” pack, for students with learning difficulties and staff who work with them. The aim of the pack is to support staff and students to discuss the charter points and the issues they raise. Hopefully, they can then work together to change provision for the better where they are learning and teaching.

7.9 Economics and adult learning seen as an investment

In 2002, the Government published its major report *Skills for Life: the National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills*. In the Foreword, David Blunkett, Secretary for State for Education and Employment pointed to some of the implications of low basic skill levels for many adults in England. “*A shocking 7 million adults in England cannot read and write at the level we would expect of an 11-year-old. Even more have problems with numbers. The cost to the country as a whole could be as high as £10 billion a year. The cost to people’s personal lives is incalculable. People with low basic skills earn an average £50,000 less over their working lives, are more likely to have health problems, or to turn to crime. These people, and their children, risk being cut off from the advantages of a world increasingly linked through information and technology. A fair and prosperous society cannot be built on such insecure foundations.*”

In December 2000, The Department for Education and Employments’ Adult Financial Literacy Group (AdFlag) produced a report⁵⁴ on ways to improve the financial literacy of adults. The report highlighted the need for work to be done to set out what financial literacy means for all adults, especially those at risk of financial exclusion, and recommended that initial research be undertaken into the financial literacy needs of older people. In the same year, research undertaken by NIACE revealed that nearly 30% of those over the age of 50 experienced some or extreme difficulty understanding their finances; 31% experienced some level of difficulty with banking; 38% with credit cards; 26% with shopping and 29% with gas bills. Following the recommendations of the AdFlag report, a number of pieces of work have been undertaken by organisations involved with adult learning:

⁵⁴ http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adflag/Adflag_-_Final_Report_.rtf

- The Basic Skills Agency (BSA) and the Financial Services Authority are developing a framework to assist those engaged in education or advice and guidance concerning financial matters. The framework covers a range of financial issues and considers the skills, knowledge and understanding required as well as adult numeracy skills at three levels.
- City of London Adult Education Service has made an ICT package available to help in the completion of wills.
- Bath & North East Somerset Adult Education Service runs a 'Benefits Buster' short course, covering benefits take-up and budgeting, working through the network of wardens of sheltered housing for older people.
- Stephenson College, Leicester, designs its learning sessions around individual need and includes issues such as budgeting, form filling, shopping, dealing with bank accounts.
- NIACE in partnership with a range of organisations including the Basic Skills Agency, Help the Aged and the Pre-retirement Association of Great Britain, has produced and disseminated a set of learning materials to help older adults and those who work with them to make better sense of the financial world around them. This covers not only making decisions about financial matters of immediate importance, but also around forward planning, budgeting, saving and understanding some of the factors and concerns behind the issues being faced.

7.10 Enhancing international co-operation, solidarity and networking for and through adult learning

Adult Learners' Week was established as a UK-wide initiative in 1992, extending to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with the goal of raising the profile of adult learning. Bringing together learners, policy makers, broadcasters and providers of education and training, the week aims to widen access to learning opportunities and to encourage more people to seek advice and guidance about returning to learn. The objectives are equally to raise the public awareness of the rich variety of learning opportunities for adults, and to celebrate the most deserving success of individuals and groups, as well as the most innovative approaches of organizations to reach to marginalized parts of the population. The UK has not only been the first country in Europe which has developed an adult learners' week, but has also achieved the widest scope in terms of organizations involved and activities invented and added each year - it is the country considered by a large consensus to be the cradle of the leaning festivals movement, and has been one of the main actors in the process of creating International Adult Learners' Week. In particular, the UK Government supports Adult Learners' Week through ministerial attendance at events during the Week, and with financial support for regional work, learners' awards, publicity and training.

In 2000, the Department for Education and Employment funded the production of *The Learning Festivals Guide*⁵⁵, a collective product of coordinators of adult learners' weeks from all continents. It was conceived as a handbook to provide guidance to those who wish to organize and mobilize for a learning festival in their country.

⁵⁵ Martinez, F., Weil, M. and Medel-Anonuevo, C. (2000) *The Learning Festivals Guide: an internationally-produced communication tool in support of the launch of International Adult Learners' Week*, Leicester: NIACE

Following a workshop in May 2000 in which the groundwork for the publication was laid, it grew and was finalized through the input from a large group of individuals either already having sound experiences with the setting up of learning festivals, or posing the right questions as to what kind of information is needed to set up such a festival. Apart from UK involvement through NIACE, the Swiss Federation for Adult Education and the Latin American Network of Popular Education for Women (REPEM) had a significant share in producing the Guide through the translation into German, French and Spanish. Finally, Adult Learning Australia hosted an email discussion forum facilitating cross-national communication. The *Learning Festivals Guide* has since been translated into Estonian and Dutch.

Following on from the Learning Festivals Guide, a group of adult educators from 10 different countries met in March 2002 to develop *Securing the Right to Learn*⁵⁶, a guide to advocacy for use by adult educators in increasing demand for adult learning at local, national and global levels and in a variety of geographical and societal contexts. The Guide, was designed as a tool to help in planning strategies and developing arguments on behalf of adult learners and adult learning. Partners, in liaison with their own networks, contributed case study material and developed the content of the Guide which includes arenas for advocacy, a synthesis of strategies, ways of working and relevant initiatives, movements, organisations, policy documents and other resources. The Guide was produced in English and translated into French, German and Spanish.

⁵⁶ Aldridge, F. (ed) (2002) *Securing the Right to Learn: an internationally-produced guide to advocacy*, Leicester: NIACE

Chapter 8: Future actions and Concrete targets for 2009

The UK currently has two Public Service Agreements (PSA) against which progress is evaluated. There is a PSA and manifesto target to improve the basic skills of 750,000 adults by 2004 in England. In July 2002, the Chancellor announced a new, longer-term target to help a further 750,000 adults improve their skills. This means that by 2007, 1.5 million adults in England will have improved their literacy, language or numeracy skills. The second PSA target is to reduce by 40 per cent the number of adults who lack National Vocational Qualification Level 2 by 2010, with an interim target of helping 1 million adults in the workforce to achieve level 2 between 2003 and 2006.

Other Government targets related to adult learning in England are:

- For 55% of adults to achieve a level 3 or equivalent qualification by 2004
- To increase participation in Higher Education towards 50% of those aged 18-30 by 2010. Also to make significant progress year-on-year towards fair access, and to bear down on rates of non-completion

In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic document *The Learning Country* has set the following targets for adult learning:

- the proportion of adults of working age without qualifications to reduce to fewer than 1 in 8 by 2004; 1 in 9 by 2007; and 1 in 10 by 2010;
- the proportion of adults of working age with an NVQ level 2 or equivalent to increase to over 7 in 10 by 2004; 8 in 10 by 2007; and over 8 in 10 by 2010;
- the proportion of adults of working age with an NVQ level 3 or equivalent to increase to over 5 in 10 by 2004; to 6 in 10 by 2007 and over 6 in 10 by 2010;
- the proportion of adults of working age with an NVQ level 4 or equivalent to approach 3 in 10 by 2004; to at least 3 in 10 by 2007; and over 3 in 10 by 2010;
- the proportion of working age adults with functional basic skills in literacy to increase to above 9 in 10 by 2004 and to maintain this level thereafter;
- the proportion of adults with functional basic skills in numeracy to increase to above 6 in 10 by 2004; to 8 in 10 by 2007; and to 9 in 10 by 2010;

Performance Indicators for the National Council – ELWa's performance in adult education are currently being reviewed and suitable international benchmarks are also being identified using measures such as the International Adult Literacy Survey.

Scotland's target is to help 150,000 people improve their literacy and numeracy skills by 2006. Their strategy is focussed around measuring all distance travelled by the learner and the impact on the learner's life through an action research approach, recognising the practical limitations at present in being able to provide robust, quantitative data. A contract has been let for the development of new tools for measuring learner progress, and further evidence will be obtained from a national survey of literacy and numeracy learners to supplement the information collated locally by the community learning strategy partnerships.

In Northern Ireland key targets set for March 2005 include, to have supported 25,000 learners and to have in place Essential Skills qualifications ranging from entry level to level 2 and a system for tracking the progression of learners against the Essential Skills qualifications.

8.1 Education For All targets and Millennium Development Goals

In April 2000, 1,100 participants from 164 countries met at UNESCO's *Education for All* (EFA) conference, held in Dakar, where the *Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments*⁵⁷ was adopted. They reaffirmed their commitment to achieve education for all by the year 2015. Three of the 6 major goals identified at Dakar particularly relate to adult education and learning:

- ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes
- achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing *Education for All* adults
- improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The Millennium Development Goals summarize the development goals agreed on at international conferences and world summits during the 1990s and include 8 goals, 18 targets and over 40 indicators. The UN General Assembly has approved these as part of the Secretary-General's Millennium Roadmap. The Millennium Development Goals, to be achieved between 1990 and 2015, include:

- halving extreme poverty and hunger
- achieving universal primary education
- promoting gender equality
- reducing under-five mortality by two-thirds
- reducing maternal mortality by three-quarters
- reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB
- ensuring environmental sustainability
- developing a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade and debt relief

As with the majority of developed countries, the UK government did not adopt specific targets around EFA and the Millennium Development Goals, although it has sought to develop policies which are compatible with these international objectives.

Final note

A close partnership exists between NGOs and government in the development and delivery of adult learning in the UK. NIACE enjoys a critical friend relationship with the state and will make an active contribution to the UK's input into the Confintea review.

⁵⁷ UNESCO, (2000). *Dakar Framework for Action*.

http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/dakfram_