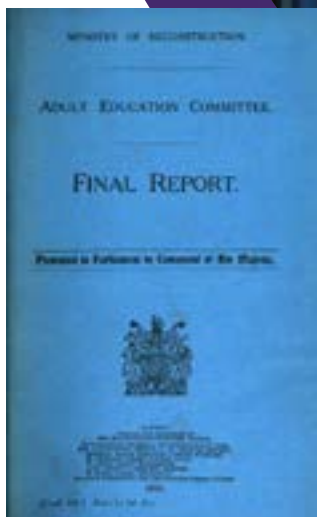




The Centenary Commission on Adult Education



“A Permanent National Necessity...”

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning
for 21st Century Britain

The Adult Education 100 campaign

#AdultEducation100

Early in 2018 a group of adult educators, recognising the historic importance of the 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee's *Final Report*, set up the Adult Education 100 campaign. We wished to encourage a programme of activities, centred on the centenary of the *1919 Report*, which would both recover and re-evaluate the twentieth-century history of adult education, and set out a vision for life-wide adult education for the century ahead.

The campaign has four interacting themes:

- i. **The ‘Centenary Commission’**, composed rather like the Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee, and with essentially the same brief.
- ii. **Research and educational projects** around the history and record of adult education, ranging from adult education classes and undergraduate student projects to research funded by research councils.
- iii. **Archival and curatorial projects** to preserve the records of adult education.
- iv. **‘Knowledge exchange’ activities** to build public discussion about the role and significance of adult education.

The campaign's Steering Group, chaired by John Holford (Robert Peers Professor of Adult Education, University of Nottingham), also consists of Sharon Clancy (Chair, Raymond Williams Foundation & Senior Research Fellow, University of Nottingham), Phil Coward (Regional Manager, Workers' Educational Association), Jonathan Michie (President, Kellogg College & Director of Continuing Education, University of Oxford), Cilla Ross (Vice Principal, Co-operative College), and Nigel Todd (Chair of Trustees, Co-operative College & WEA Ambassador).

We have been delighted that a number of leading public figures and adult educators agreed to be patrons of the campaign. They are:

- **Baroness Joan Bakewell**, President of Birkbeck University of London
- **Dame Mary Beard**, Professor of Classics, University of Cambridge
- **Lalage Bown**, Professor Emeritus of Adult & Continuing Education, University of Glasgow
- **Andy Haldane**, Chief Economist, Bank of England
- **Mel Lenehan**, Principal, Fircroft College
- **John Sentamu**, Archbishop of York
- **Sir John Hayes**, MP
- **Michael Sheen**, Actor
- **Ruby Wax**, Comedian and Mental Health Campaigner

Working closely with partners from across the adult education world, the **#AdultEducation100** campaign is co-ordinating a programme of events to communicate and discuss this Centenary Commission Report and its recommendations over the months following publication.

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Preface

The *1919 Report* was a clarion call. It suggested the UK make adult education a ‘permanent national necessity’. The reasons were in part economic – the need to rebuild and reskill after the first World War, to boost economic growth and prosperity. But they were also social – the need to repair and reweave the post-War social fabric, to build social cohesion and satisfaction.

In the century since, it is clear adult education has not been nurtured as a permanent national necessity. Indeed, numbers in adult education have shrunk materially over the past couple of decades. Adult education and vocational training in the UK lag, in some cases badly, our international competitors.

This is not because the case for adult education, economic and social, has weakened. To the contrary, those economic and social arguments have strengthened, significantly so, in the course of the past 100 years.

People born today can be expected to live 90 or 100-year lives and to spend the larger part of it – maybe, 60 years – in work. This means it is now an arithmetic fact of (longer) life that lifelong learning – for long a convenient slogan – needs to become a practical reality.

At the same time, the world of work is being up-ended by a new technological revolution, with widespread automation and artificial intelligence. This will see many, perhaps most, jobs disrupted and a large number destroyed. This too will make a necessity of reskilling those displaced and disrupted on a systematic and comprehensive basis.

For three centuries, the UK’s education system has had a singular – and very successful – focus: developing cognitive skills in the young. That model is not fit for tomorrow’s purpose. The education system of tomorrow needs to span the generational spectrum – young to old – and the skills spectrum – cognitive to vocational to interpersonal.

The economic benefits of doing so are crystal clear. Skill-building the workforce is a foundation stone for growth in the economy’s productive potential and in the pay packets of its citizens. With growth in the economy’s potential, and its citizens’ pay packets, having stalled for more than a decade, the timing could scarcely be better.

The social and civic benefits of reworking adult education are, for me, potentially greater still. Social problems of disadvantage, disconnection and division loom larger than for some time. An improved adult education and work offering is one means of tackling those three d’s at source.

Doing so will not be easy. It will require purposive action on a number of fronts and by a number of actors - not just governments, but companies and individuals. It will need a strategy set nationally, but executed locally.

This Report contains a sequence of powerful and compelling recommendations for transforming and embedding adult education, making it at last that ‘permanent national necessity’. It is an ambitious blueprint, but circumstances today and especially tomorrow call for no less.

I hope the Report can change the contours of the national debate on our educational system. As in the past, the UK could lead the world in creating an educational system that surfs (rather than is sunk by) the next technological wave, lifting the pay, prospects and potential of all its citizens.

Andy Haldane
Chief Economist, Bank of England



Foreword

A hundred years ago, as Britain recovered from a devastating World War, the Ministry of Reconstruction published an extraordinarily powerful report, visionary in its scope and practical in its detail, on the key role adult education had to play in fostering an active democracy, enriching communities, and nourishing curiosity and a love of learning. Adult education was it argued, ‘a permanent national necessity’.

The authors of the *1919 Report* were drawn from a spectrum of those with an interest in rejuvenating the economy and society after the devastation of world war, along with those with experience in delivering adult education. Members included the founder of the Workers’ Educational Association. The committee was chaired by the then Master of Balliol, A.L. Smith – given that the University of Oxford was at the forefront then of the ‘university extension movement’.

Our Report on Adult Education, published one hundred years on, like its predecessor comes at a critical time, as we face a series of social, political, economic, technological and demographic challenges. It aims to be equally visionary in scope and practical in its detail. Our members again included the Chief Executive of the Workers’ Educational Association, as well as the President elect of the CBI, a senior trade unionist, and leading voluntary and educational sector practitioners. Most of its members came from England but we had members from Wales and Scotland, too. As for the *1919 Report*, the Master of Balliol was the Commission Chair.

The full Commission met five times, three times at Balliol, once at the Institute of Education in London (where we heard evidence from Lord Kerslake, Chair of the Civic University commission), and once in Manchester at the Co-operative College (whose Vice-Principal was a member of our Commission). We are grateful to our hosts. At the London and

Manchester meetings we heard from adult education providers from Brent Council, trades unions, and local community groups.

The Centenary Commission on Adult Education was funded by the independent think tank, the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL), whose support we acknowledge. Their funding enabled us to undertake fascinating case study visits to groups and organisations across Britain, including the Welsh Government, the CBI and the TUC, and a range of community educational providers. We are grateful too, for the work of our joint secretaries, both distinguished Professors at Nottingham and Oxford, John Holford and Jonathan Michie, and our researcher, Dr Nick Mahony.

We have been struck by the strength of feeling across the country, and from the full range of organisations, that it is now vital and urgent to invest in adult education and lifelong learning – for the good of our democracy, society, and economy, and for the wellbeing of our citizens. This has been conveyed by representatives of all the main political parties, as well as the Welsh and Scottish governments, the CBI and TUC, local government, and an inspirational range of community organisations, including informal groups who have come together to try collectively to make sense of the world around us.

Surely it is time for this national consensus to be translated into policy, funding, and action.

Dame Helen Ghosh
Chair

Our Vision

'Adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there... it is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong.'



We have taken these words from the *1919 Report* as the vision for our Centenary Report. We believe that ‘universal and lifelong’ access to adult education and learning is as necessary now as it was in rebuilding our society in the aftermath of the War to End All Wars. A generation later, William Beveridge identified ‘ignorance’ as one of the ‘five giants on the road to reconstruction’.

What do we mean by ‘adult education and learning’? The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation UNESCO defines lifelong learning like this:

The integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (at home, at school, in the workplace, in the community, etc.) through formal, non-formal and informal modalities, which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands.

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 clarified its focus as:

to complement and supplement formal schooling, broad and flexible lifelong learning opportunities should be provided through non-formal pathways with adequate resources and mechanisms and through stimulating informal learning, including through use of ICT.

In one sense, educational opportunities in this country have expanded dramatically over the last hundred years. Since the mid-twentieth century, a succession of educational reforms have created a system of full-time, compulsory education for all, from the ages of 5 to 18, and 50% of our young people now go on to university. Much of the provision is outstanding. For many, the route to the learning they want or need is clear, as they move through formal, compulsory schooling into post-18 learning in Further Education colleges, universities, apprenticeships or employment.

There are others for whom the route is less clear, whose formal education has been disrupted, or who go through some transition in their lives or careers that calls for new skills or understanding. Young people leaving school without basic skills, new arrivals in the country who need support in becoming fully integrated citizens, those whose jobs are insecure or disappearing, those leaving prison or care – all should have their needs met. There are all too many who, for whatever reason, fall through the gaps or whose needs at work or at home are not met as they face new challenges or opportunities in life.

But adult education and lifelong learning means a great deal more than the acquisition of skills. The *1919 Report* argued that the demand for adult education ‘originates in a desire among individuals for adequate opportunities for self-expression and the cultivation of their personal powers and interests’. In other words, a desire for what we would now call social and cultural capital, and greater self-realisation.

Neither in 1919 nor 1942 could people have imagined that by 2019, life expectancy at birth would have risen from 56 years for men and 60 years for women, to 79 years and 83 years. Lives are longer and should be richer in every sense. Lifelong learning has a vital role to play in making this a reality.

It has always been a challenge to most effectively balance provision for adult education and lifelong learning in support of economic prosperity, on the one hand, and for individual flourishing, social and community development and democratic engagement on the other. Over the last 20 years at least, we have got that balance wrong, focusing resources on the former and running down support for the latter. This has had damaging consequences for personal development, social fulfilment, community engagement, and the health of democracy.

The rejuvenated provision of adult education and lifelong learning – formal and informal – will take various forms, many of which are extraordinary, innovative and creative – and include digital developments, to reflect contemporary contexts. It will involve broadening and deepening our understanding and experiences of learning, to include self-organised, peer-to-peer, and networked models, alongside more orthodox forms of education.

Our economy, our communities, our democracy, all need people with the practical and thinking skills to face up to today’s challenges. We have identified six areas for our focus which we explore in this Report:

- i. framing and delivering a national ambition;
- ii. ensuring basic skills;
- iii. fostering community, democracy and dialogue;
- iv. promoting creativity, innovation and informal learning;
- v. securing individual learning and wellbeing; and
- vi. attending to the world of work.

The challenge

The *1919 Report* identified the contemporary challenges in a way that resonates today.

- In the midst of war, people sought peace and international cooperation to secure it. Today, the most pressing global issue is climate crisis – which requires citizens to understand how they, wider society and their elected leaders can act effectively to combat and deal with this threat.
- In 1919, the Commission were concerned about the demands of women for equality in the workplace and society. While gender equality is still a persistent issue, the challenge of social and economic inequality in the UK in 2019 extends far beyond gender, into race, disability, sexuality and social origin.
- The belief in the *1919 Report* that adult education can heal fractured communities and foster a healthy democracy is a powerful message. The analysis of the 2016 Referendum vote suggests that communities are more divided than in living memory, many feeling ‘left behind’ by – or excluded altogether from – today’s politics and public debates. As people grow tired of the failure of representative politics to achieve change, adult education can help them find confidence and a voice to participate in local, regional and national debate and action.
- Artificial Intelligence is now threatening the number and quality of jobs – as ‘the tyranny of machinery’ was doing then. Most jobs will be affected in some way by current economic and technological developments – estimates of occupations that will disappear entirely range between 9% and 44%. If people are to adapt, they will need flexible and generic capabilities.



The failure of policy

Given these challenges, and the potential of adult education to help meet them, it is a serious concern that the funding for – and infrastructure of – adult education has been cut to the bone in recent decades.

There has never been a ‘golden age’ of provision. However, there was steady progress until the beginning of this century. Around 11% of working age adults participated in ‘learning’ in the early 1990s; ten years later, it was over 20%. That put the UK clearly at the top of the European league – outstripping even the Scandinavian countries, with their long traditions of adult education.

But by 2018 we were back down to under 15% participation. While the number of *full-time* entrants into Higher Education rose by 9% between 2009/10 and 2017/28, the number of *part-time* entrants fell from 470,000 to below 240,000 – a drop of 49%.

When it comes to the basic but essential skills of literacy and numeracy, the UK compares poorly internationally, with 9 million adults of working age with low basic skills, and shockingly, with those aged between 16 and 29 having on average worse literacy and numeracy skills than those aged 30 to 45. Things are going backwards.

So, what needs to be done?

Our recommendations

With our belief in universal and lifelong provision, we present 18 recommendations focused around our six key themes:



Focus 1

Framing and delivering a national ambition

Recommendation 1

Given the profound importance of adult education and lifelong learning to democratic life, social cohesion, economic prosperity, and individual wellbeing, Government should lead in developing a national **Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy** that secures the engagement of the whole of Government while recognising the importance of devolved decision making. The Strategy should include a commitment to a participation target which seeks to reduce the gap between the most and least educationally active.

Recommendation 2

A **Minister with specific responsibility for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning** should be appointed, and should report annually to Parliament on progress. They should be responsible for collecting and reporting the data on what is currently spent on lifelong learning, including in the informal sector.

Recommendation 3

Adult Learning Partnerships should be established at regional and sub-regional levels, bringing together local and regional government, universities and colleges, community and educational groups, and local employers (broadly defined) to deliver the Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy through collaborative working.

Recommendation 4

Funding of £250m pa to provide adult education should be restored to local authorities – working as appropriate with devolved regional authorities – enabling them to provide adult education, which should **once more become one of their statutory responsibilities**.

Recommendation 5

Funding for Adult community education services and Further Education Colleges should be increased by £1bn pa, and rebalanced towards those who have previously missed out – to provide literacy, numeracy and digital skills; retraining; social prescribing; and education for adults of all ages, ensuring that in each case there is a pathway for the student to progress to the next level, with a widely based curriculum offer.

Recommendation 6

Public funding of adult education and lifelong learning should ensure and protect a diversity in topics studied, including how and where study takes place. Government should **provide an additional £50m pa funding for organisations – such as the WEA and other Institutes of Adult Learning – that make a contribution of national significance** to adult education.

Recommendation 7

The regulator for the Higher Education sector, currently the Office for Students in England, should require **any organisation that wishes to describe itself as a University to provide adult education and lifelong learning, of types appropriate to their role in the local community, compensating for past disadvantages, and utilising radical and engaged forms of education.**

Recommendation 8

There should be **national information campaigns, motivating people to engage in lifelong learning** – working in partnership with local providers and guidance services, and with the media.

Focus 2

Ensuring basic skills

Recommendation 9

An **Adult Basic Skills Strategy** should form part of the national Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy. Such a strategy would build on the success of the Skills for Life Programme of the early 2000s. This would address the basic skills needed for the changing nature of the workplace, and help close the gap in terms of prior educational attainment – thereby addressing issues of area and neighbourhood social exclusion.

Focus 3

Fostering community, democracy and dialogue

Recommendation 10

We support the proposal from the commission chaired by Sir Vince Cable for Individual Learning Accounts. In addition we believe there should be a **Community Learning Account of £50m pa, rising to £100m over three years, administered by the Adult Learning Partnerships, which will ensure that funding is made available to informal, community-based learning initiatives led by local groups.** In administering the Community Learning Accounts, the Adult Learning Partnerships should develop mechanisms that recognise community organisations' need for administratively light-touch, stable and long-term funding systems.



Recommendation 11

To strengthen the democratic accountability of Further Education colleges to their local communities, **further education colleges should be mandated to have representation on their Boards from the local authority, community organisations, and trades unions.**

Focus 4

Promoting creativity, innovation and informal learning

Recommendation 12

Establish an Innovation and Development Fund of £50m pa, rising over three years to £100m pa, to support innovation in community and informal education, and to ensure the spread of best practice.

Recommendation 13

A non-profit institution (possibly the Open University) should be funded to provide **a trusted digital platform** accessible to all publicly supported providers of adult education – to prioritise the interests of the individual learner and community-based learning initiatives.

Focus 5

Securing individual learning and wellbeing

Individual learning and wellbeing should be the responsibility of the Adult Learning Partnerships, and would benefit from local authorities having a statutory duty to provide adult education, and from our Recommendation 10 for the introduction of Individual and Community Learning Accounts.

Focus 6

Attending to the world of work

Recommendation 14

The Apprenticeship Levy should be broadened and made more flexible.

Recommendation 15

As part of enriching the learning dimension of working life for all, **employers should provide paid time off work for learning.** Many employees cannot afford to take unpaid leave, so it is important that paid leave provision is available to undertake lifelong learning. Where practicable, employers should provide learning spaces within the workplace.

Recommendation 16

Employers should facilitate the presence and work of learning representatives in all workplaces. The introduction and operation of ‘union learning representatives’ has generally been regarded as a success – by employers, employees, and governments alike – in delivering vital learning opportunities; however, this applies only to places of employment with trade union organisation, and needs to be extended to all workplaces.

Recommendation 17

Employers should be required to report annually on their spending on employee education and training; these figures should be broken down in order to show spending on the top 20% of earners and the bottom 20% within their organisation.

Recommendation 18

In many large workplaces the primary employer makes good provision for adult learning, but much of the workforce may be employed by subcontractors: **‘contract compliance’** should be used to ensure the same opportunities are available to all. And funding is needed for those in the **‘gig economy’** to access education and training with no loss of earnings; if this cannot be covered by the Individual and Community Learning Accounts, then an education maintenance allowance should be made available.

The 1919 Report concluded that ‘adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong’. Our Report proposes a wide spectrum of ways in which the lives of people in Britain, and the life of Britain itself, could be enriched through a greater provision of opportunities for adult education and lifelong learning. These range from the national and long-term transformations that the times we live in call for, through to detailed suggestions that could be introduced quickly and at little cost.

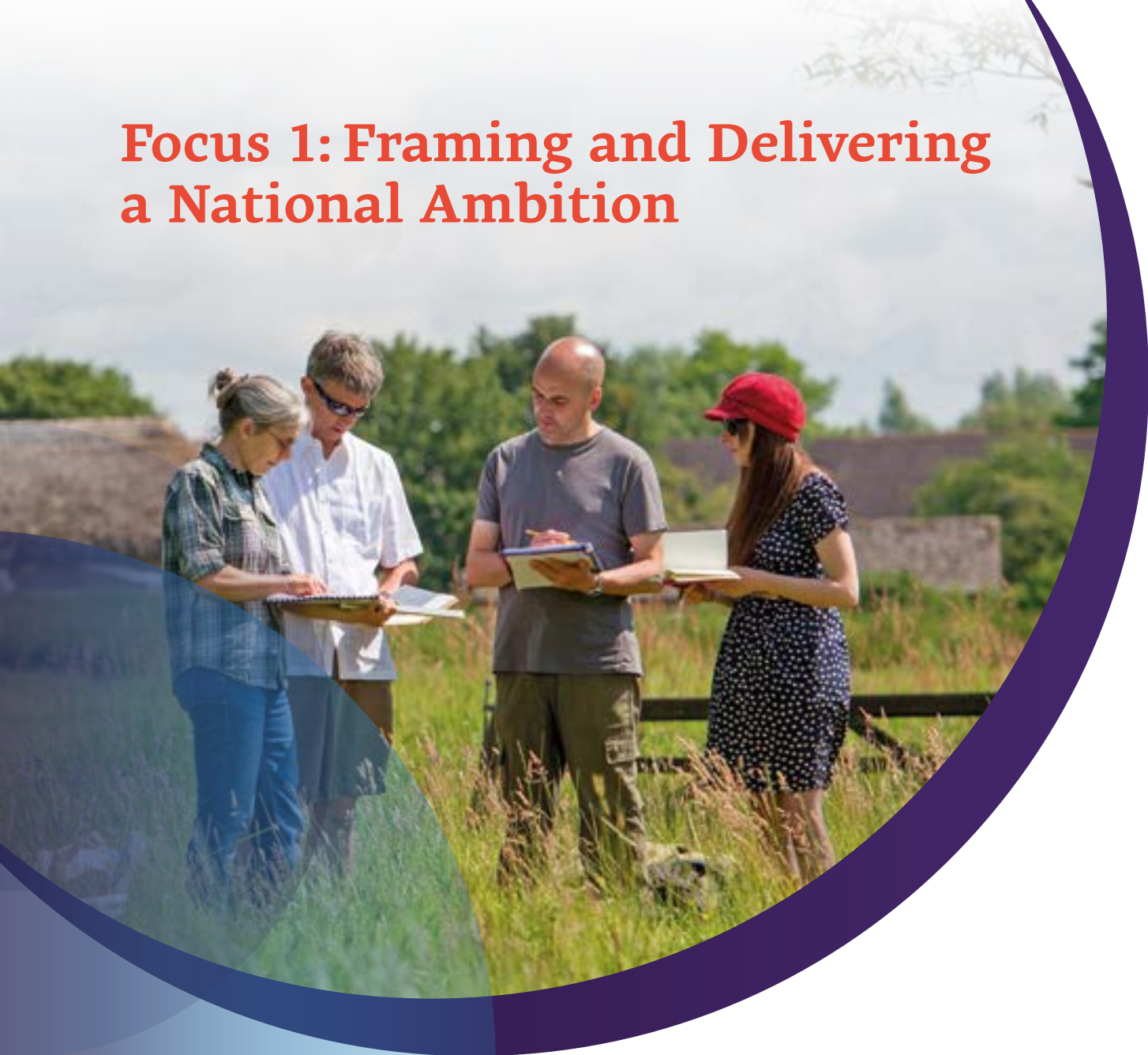
The increased funding proposed in Recommendation 5 of £1bn pa would cover the amounts referred to in Recommendations 4 and 6, so the total cost of our proposals would amount to £1.1bn pa, rising over three years to £1.2bn. We also support the calls made by others for the ‘Equivalent and Lower Qualification’ (ELQ) policy to be scrapped, which was brought in to cut £100m from adult education. And we support the proposal from the Commission chaired by Sir Vince Cable to introduce Individual Learning Accounts, which that report costed at £1.3bn pa.

As described in the following pages, we would expect the above investments to be matched by contributions through the Adult Learning Partnerships from universities and colleges, and businesses and other organisations.

And we should stress that we regard our £1.1bn rising to £1.2bn proposals as an investment in the future of our people, democracy, communities, society, and economy. The case study of adult education in Rochdale reports a return on the sort of initiative we would be encouraging of £4.50 saved on other service costs for every £1.00 spend on adult education and lifelong learning.



Focus 1: Framing and Delivering a National Ambition



A good deal needs to change if we are to achieve the vision of this Report, and create the conditions for a learning society for all. For this to happen will require effective support for work related learning, complemented by accessible and affordable life-wide and life-long opportunities to fulfil individual curiosity and to support community development. The *1919 Report* saw responsibility for the development of adult education resting on a fourfold partnership between universities, local authorities, voluntary bodies, and the State – and recommended remits for each.

Today things are more complex, with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland responsible for education policy in the national regions, and devolution of budgets and responsibility in some regions of

England for adult education and skills. Most schools and all colleges are now institutionally separate from local government. There has been a growth of for-profit providers in terrestrial and online further and higher education. Broadcasting and social media play a key role in shaping a national conversation.

Education is now a key component of active labour market policies, and its role is recognised in the maintenance of health and wellbeing in an ageing society, and in the effective rehabilitation of offenders. As the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals make clear, few of the major challenges facing our society in the twenty-first century can be effectively addressed without adults' learning and engagement, or without robust partnerships across the social policy agenda.

What is needed above all is the active collaboration of all the key partners – universities and colleges; companies and other organisations; local government, along with City, regional and national bodies; the WEA and other educational and community organisations; and national government to facilitate, regulate, and fund as appropriate. To deliver the change we need will require infrastructure and funding at national and local level, as follows:

Recommendation 1

Given the profound importance of adult education and lifelong learning to democratic life, social cohesion, economic prosperity, and individual wellbeing, Government should lead in developing a national **Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy** that secures the engagement of the whole of Government while recognising the importance of devolved decision making. The Strategy should include a commitment to a participation target which seeks to reduce the gap between the most and least educationally active.

The Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy must commit to achieving the goals detailed in this Report – a right to literacy, numeracy, and digital skills; fostering community education; encouraging innovative ways of engaging citizens in learning; and promoting education for work accessible to all, including those in the gig economy.

Government should report annually on progress, in a format that enables Select Committees and others to question and challenge. Those annual reports should include data on what is being spent on lifelong learning.

This strategy needs to be on a par with the Government’s Industrial Strategy, including the way it links government departments – and engages with business and other organisations, universities and colleges, and all levels of local, regional and national government.

Recommendation 2

A **Minister with specific responsibility for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning** should be appointed, and should report annually to Parliament on progress. They should be responsible for collecting and reporting the data on what is currently spent on lifelong learning, including in the informal sector.

Adult education is currently one of the many responsibilities of a Junior Minister in the Department for Education. This issue is far too important to the future of the nation to languish at the bottom of a Ministerial in-tray. The Minister would take the lead in developing – and monitoring the delivery of – the Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy.

A key role for the Minister would be to ensure collaboration across departments. For example, at present, whenever a major employer closes, it’s generally for the local authority to draw up an action plan, that will include the provision of learning opportunities for those being made redundant. Rather than reinventing the wheel each time, there should be a national scheme to cover such eventualities, which we know occur on a regular basis, across the country. The national retraining scheme – currently being piloted – may come to play this role. However, without conscious effort in this regard, it may fail to be sufficiently universal in its coverage. The National Retraining Partnership should be tasked with bringing this about, as part of the proposed Adult Learning Partnerships.

Recommendation 3

Adult Learning Partnerships should be established at regional and sub-regional levels, bringing together local and regional government, universities and colleges, community and educational groups, and local employers (broadly defined) to deliver the Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy through collaborative working.

Progress will be made only through a mobilisation of talent and enthusiasm across the country — from community groups to employer initiatives, with co-production of educational provision whereby colleges and local authorities facilitate and support new initiatives and ideas.

The Adult Learning Partnerships need to stimulate and encourage community engagement and foster the participation of all in their areas, ensuring that all the local and regional actors are contributing fully and appropriately. There are three crucial areas of any Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy which the Adult Learning Partnerships should have specific responsibility for delivering:

- i. Firstly, the provision of information, advice, guidance and mentoring. All members of the Adult Learning Partnerships – universities and colleges, local employers and others – would be expected to be involved in some way. Public Libraries might be the go-to venue for such a service nationally (including mobile libraries in rural areas). But the Partnership would have the duty to ensure that a sufficient level and quality of information, advice, guidance and mentoring is being provided;
- ii. Secondly, taking steps to deal with regional and local inequality in provision and outcomes. Ensuring that the Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy delivers to all members of our society will require sustained work from community organisers and local facilitators commissioned by the Adult Learning Partnerships to work in these communities to identify needs, and engage with them to co-produce the required activities. Such organisers could also play a crucial role in providing the necessary information, advice, guidance and mentoring; and
- iii. Thirdly, supporting national media campaigns to encourage and signpost opportunities and pathways, at a local level.

Recommendation 4

Funding of £250m pa to provide adult education should be restored to local authorities – working as appropriate with devolved regional authorities – enabling them to provide adult education, which should **once more become one of their statutory responsibilities.**

Local authorities used to do a tremendous job in Britain, both in providing facilities such as local libraries, and for delivering a range of courses available to all members of the local community. Indeed, it used to be a statutory responsibility to provide such courses, with funding provided for their delivery.

Local authorities should be enabled to provide lifelong learning opportunities to their communities, collaborating through the Adult Learning Partnership with local universities and colleges, businesses and other organisations, and with community and educational groups as appropriate, with their activities forming part of the annual report to parliament on the Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy. Local authorities used to receive around £250m pa for community learning, and this much at a minimum should be restored.



Local authorities would also then be able to make the connections between social prescribing – where patients are encouraged to improve their health and wellbeing using local services and activities – to adult social care, to the provision of parks and libraries, to provide joined up services. This would enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of the population, and deliver benefits to employers in terms of the wellbeing of their workforce, and to government in terms of savings to the NHS and other services.

Recommendation 5

Funding for Adult community education services and Further Education Colleges should be increased by £1bn pa, and rebalanced towards those who have previously missed out – to provide literacy, numeracy and digital skills; retraining; social prescribing; and education for adults of all ages, ensuring that in each case there is a pathway for the student to progress to the next level, with a widely based curriculum offer.

Provision should include pathways, from open access courses to accredited and award-bearing qualifications and through to part-time degree provision. The Augar Review pointed to the huge underfunding of FE colleges, recommending major investment, which we would support.

Recommendation 6

Public funding of adult education and lifelong learning should ensure and protect a diversity in topics studied, including how and where study takes place. Government should **provide an additional £50m pa funding for organisations – such as the WEA and other Institutes of Adult Learning – that make a contribution of national significance to adult education.**

The *1919 Report* argued that, in a democracy, ‘freedom of teaching and freedom of expression’ was an essential principle in the public funding of courses and educational bodies. This should remain a fundamental principle. Public policy, and funding, should ensure provision that addresses all areas of personal, organisational and community life – ‘lifewide’ learning. This implies a broad curriculum, and support for institutions, such as the WEA and other Institutes of Adult Learning, that play a key developmental role in the national system of adult education.



Recommendation 7

The regulator for the Higher Education sector, currently the Office for Students in England, should require **any organisation that wishes to describe itself as a University to provide adult education and lifelong learning, of types appropriate to their role in the local community, compensating for past disadvantages, and utilising radical and engaged forms of education.**

All universities and colleges should be required to participate in and support their local Adult Learning Partnership, and to include in their Annual Reports details of the collaborations they have engaged in to deliver adult education and lifelong learning, and with what outcomes and impact.

Access and Participation Plans should include appropriate targets reflecting a progressive increase in the provision of adult education and lifelong learning. Reference to the diversity of the student body must include age diversity, to ensure 'second chance' provision is being made by all universities.

The Civic University report, from the commission chaired by Lord Kerslake, contains excellent recommendations on how universities could and should engage more imaginatively and productively with their local communities. We would support the recommendations of that report, which the Adult Learning Partnerships could help to deliver.

Recommendation 8

There should be **national information campaigns, motivating people to engage in lifelong learning** – working in partnership with local providers and guidance services, and with the media.

The evidence from past practice is that such campaigns can be hugely successful in raising awareness of provision and encouraging engagement. As indicated above, whilst the campaigns need to be initiated and funded nationally, the Adult Learning Partnerships need to be involved to tailor them to their localities.



Focus 2: Ensuring Basic Skills

UK literacy levels are far higher compared with 100 years ago. However, even with the launch of new initiatives during each of the World Wars, and almost one every decade since the 1970s, literacy and numeracy levels in the UK today compare poorly internationally. There is also considerable variation in proficiency across the nations and regions of the UK. This poses risks to future prosperity and wellbeing, particularly for adults with the fewest skills, and reinforces the marginalisation and exclusion of a significant proportion of the population.

In the UK today, more than a quarter of adults aged 16-65 having low literacy or numeracy skills or both. The UK is the only OECD country where school leavers have on average no greater skill than those leaving the labour force at 65. Literacy and numeracy are also subject to regional variation, with London and the South East achieving the highest scores in GCSE maths and English. The UK has one of the strongest associations between socio-economic background and literacy and numeracy levels among OECD countries.

Literacy and numeracy skills bring a range of benefits to the individual, employers and society. These include better job prospects and higher wages; greater workplace efficiency and productivity; and increased economic growth and improved wellbeing across society. Having poor basic skills creates problems for individuals and communities alike. If you can't read the label on a packet of aspirin, if you can't help your children to read, and if you can't estimate how much a supermarket shop or a round of drinks will cost, life can be a struggle.

As well as having a devastating impact on the individual, it also creates difficulties for employers as it can lead to expensive errors. Poor language skills damage citizenship and create isolation and a fragmented society, leading to a loss of equality and social exclusion. It fosters an environment in which many people feel they have been 'left behind', and that their country doesn't value them and is not willing to invest in them.

Recommendation 9

An **Adult Basic Skills Strategy** should form part of the national Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy. Such a strategy would build on the success of the Skills for Life Programme of the early 2000s. This would address the basic skills needed for the changing nature of the workplace, and help close the gap in terms of prior educational attainment – thereby addressing issues of area and neighbourhood social exclusion.

Our recommendation is that there should be a renewed national commitment to eradicate illiteracy.



Case 1

Rochdale citizens' curriculum

The Citizens' Curriculum in Rochdale is an innovative project, helping socially excluded people. Helen Chicot, who has worked in Rochdale for 26 years, explains the background:

'In the mid 2000s, the culture around adult education completely changed. Education became all about skills and employment, a kind of target driven, qualification led service that wasn't serving peoples' needs. People were saying they were sick of being put on courses, as they didn't really address the context that they were in.'

Rochdale decided to do things differently. There were Chicot says, 'hundreds of really motivated and skilled adults floating around the system, Community Champions helping each other and providing support to others in the neighbourhoods.' Their willingness, and informal work, gave shape to, and now underpins, the Citizens' Curriculum.

In 2014 Rochdale council launched a scheme on Kirkholt, a large social housing estate with high levels of crisis, its residents regularly calling on the emergency, health and social services. The scheme

brought services together to make things work better from the bottom up. As Chicot explains:

'We brought a multi-agency team of people together and they were given the freedom to engage with people as if they were normal and not be treated as if they were a problem. The idea was to give them the opportunity both to learn how to do things for themselves, setting their own priorities and to be amongst those who are learning just like them.'

Team workers include police officers, housing officers, health workers, and social workers, as well as teachers and ex-teachers. Chicot emphasises that 'most of the workforce see themselves as both educators and learners.'

For every £1 spent on the project, £4.50 is now saved in terms of less police call outs, and fewer people going into care, and using ambulance and doctors' services.

Every young person and adult should be provided with the communication skills necessary both for the rapidly changing world of work, and to be in a position to contribute as active citizens in shaping their communities and our wider society.

This commitment, like that made in 2001 should include a focus on learner and employer engagement, ensuring capacity, securing high-quality provision, and improving achievement and progression – as well as having targeted strategies for unemployed, low-waged and under-represented groups such as those working in the gig economy. It should build on the Skills for Life media strategy to combine national broadcasts with effective social media campaigns. For a renewed initiative to be effective, we endorse the Augar review proposal that education to a first full 'Level 3' (A-level) qualification should be free.

There is currently a major imbalance in funding and investment which means that those who do well at school tend to be further invested in, while those that didn't do well don't really get a second chance. Of the £20 billion available for post-19 education

and skills training in this country, only 7% goes on those without a Level 3 qualification. This breeds resentment and a feeling of being left behind.

A commitment to literacy and numeracy, supported across government – and engaging devolved city and local government, third sector agencies, teachers, and learners – needs to be at the core of the national Strategy for Adult Education & Lifelong Learning that we propose. It needs to be skills focused, inclusive and imaginative, and imbued with the best of liberal education, remembering that not everything that counts can always be counted.

By far the most impressive and successful government response to the challenge was launched in response to the 1999 Moser Report, Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start. The inter-departmental 'Skills for Life' Strategy in England was developed, published and launched by the Prime Minister in 2001. It secured a network of trained providers and intermediaries, which covered most communities in England. Between 2001 and 2011 some 14 million participated in adult literacy and

numeracy activities with over 8 million qualifications being achieved and, as a result, a 13% improvement in measurable literacy skills in the adult population.

As part of the long-term evaluation of the strategy’s success, base line assessments of adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills were undertaken in 2003 and again in 2010. The report showed that, for literacy, the investment proved successful in helping significant numbers of adults over the threshold of a ‘Level 2’ qualification (GCSE level), but was less effective in helping improve the skills of adults with the lowest levels of proficiency (those at the so-called ‘Entry Levels’). In the case of numeracy, most progress was seen at Entry Levels compared with smaller numbers of people attaining Level 2. This highlighted one of the challenges facing any target-driven initiative – over time, funding shifted away from those with fewest skills, towards those with the shortest journey to qualification.

Skills for Life was effective because it enjoyed endorsement from the highest levels of government; effective media campaigns; the establishment of national staff training, standards, and curriculum materials; and the adoption of clear measurable targets embedded in Public Service Agreements to provide evidence of progression. The initiative demonstrated the benefits of family literacy and numeracy, and the merits of vocational study that combined literacy and numeracy work with the strengthening of vocational skills. For all its strengths, this inevitably meant that skills of reading – which are measurable – were more central to the

programme than writing skills (much harder to assess).

Nevertheless, the programme was overall an impressive success, working effectively with delivery partners, stakeholders, teachers, and learners — and making a marked contribution to reducing social inequality. However, that was twenty years ago, and participation in literacy and numeracy provision has plummeted over the last few years, for a range of reasons:

- i. The funding made available for courses no longer covers the cost of providing them, so colleges have cut back on provision;
- ii. The removal of the entitlement to free vocational courses at ‘Level 2’ has reduced participation; and
- iii. The absence of any national or regional promotion has inevitably led to a decline in take-up.

Given the scale of the continuing challenge we have as a society, this is a decline that cannot continue. Our proposals would turn this decline around through the Adult Basic Skills Strategy as well as through our proposals for additional funding for Adult and Further Education Colleges and the WEA, for Individual and Collective Learning Accounts, our Innovation and Development Fund, our proposals to enable those in the gig economy to access educational opportunities, and the restoration of the statutory requirement on local authorities to deliver adult education.



Focus 3: Fostering Community, Democracy and Dialogue

‘An uneducated democracy cannot be other than a failure.’ 1919 Report

Britain faces serious economic and social challenges. Our nation is deeply divided. We are among the world’s richest countries, yet we suffer from economic, social and regional inequalities. The share of income going to the top 1 per cent in Britain has been rising, reaching 13% in 2015 – compared to 9% in Australia, 8% in both Norway and Sweden, and 7% in Belgium.

The gap between the richest and poorest UK regions is almost twice as large as in France and three-quarters larger than in Germany. There is also enormous wealth inequality within regions.¹ According to the Social Mobility Commission, there is ‘a new geography of disadvantage, with coastal areas such as Blackpool, Great Yarmouth and Minehead, and older industrial towns such as Mansfield and Stoke, facing high levels of disadvantage’.²



Case 2

Adult Education and climate change

The 1919 Report contemplated a better post-war world, achieved using adult education. That was the challenge in the aftermath of war on an epic industrial scale. The imperative of our time is no less epochal. It is to ensure we retain a livable planet for our children and their children. Whereas the 1919 Report looked forward from a dreadful event, our dragons are at the gates.

WEA national conferences have explored environmental education, and action is in train to construct a ‘green network’ linking all WEA English Regions and Scotland.

The WEA’s enthusiasm owes a lot to a branch and localised democratic structure with the flexibility to project fresh departures utilising the framework of a national organisation. A different kind of WEA members’ branch was formed in North East England in 2011 following three annual and popular UN World Development Day regional conferences partnered with UNISON, the Co-op and the Open University. The WEA North East Green Branch attracts a younger range of activists – just as WEA’s Women’s Education Branches had brought in younger women in the 1970s-80s – and became a vehicle for new frontiers in curriculum development and programmes. ‘Back to the Land’ conferences probed alternative uses of natural resources, community centre volunteers were trained in managing low carbon buildings, Green Question Times and quizzes were devised as discussion prompts at festivals and meetings, and Union Learning Representatives helped devise a Green Thinking Skills exercise. Reflecting a belief that learning should be fun, the Five Acres and a Cow theatre duo enlivened a hugely attended day school on land rights.

The Green Branch won the support of the WEA nationally to enlist colleagues across the Association, and was involved in hosting a test-bed for mitigating climate change funded by the Big Lottery’s Communities Living Sustainably scheme. As a result, the WEA successfully managed a £1 million investment to identify how multi-racial neighbourhoods in Newcastle upon Tyne might prepare for climate incidents, and strengthen environmental preparedness. This WEA Greening Wingrove project created voluntary activity embedded in a learning culture – including revitalising a neglected park, recycling rainwater, planting an orchard, and building neighbourliness. It was adult education inspired ‘civic ecology’ in action.

To mobilise the creative power of adult education to tackle the climate emergency requires:

- i. Funding for adult education’s role in the climate emergency;
- ii. A wide definition of adult education in supporting active citizenship, explicitly including responses to climate change;
- iii. Funding systems open to a wide range of providers;
- iv. Funding regimes accommodating flexibility and freedom to experiment;
- v. A national convention of adult education providers to co-ordinate the sector’s responses to climate emergency.

‘It’s what type of education people have a right to, and what type of education is enshrined in European human rights. It’s implied that it’s the kind of education that makes you a functioning democratic citizen in some ways. It implies developing critical skills, and class function and historical knowledge, but ... education doesn’t really seem to mean that anymore.’

Neil Griffiths - Director and campaigner, Arts Emergency

The challenges of the climate crisis and inequality, of divisions real and imagined, are profound. We must face them as a democracy. For our predecessors a century ago, democracy – a glittering prize that had only recently been secured – was not to be taken for granted. Adult education, the *1919 Report* argued, was key to making democracy strong – an ‘intelligent public opinion’ could ‘only be created gradually by a long, thorough, universal process of education continued into and throughout the life of the adult’.

We need that ‘intelligent public opinion’ more than ever as we face unprecedented crises and deep divisions with a fragile political system. We must work out how to overcome the challenges we face. This means citizens engaging in informed dialogue, playing an effective part in solving problems, changing society for the better, and building trust and understanding – despite the differences between them.

Democratic structures – institutions, organisations and groups that encourage free and informed dialogue and participation by all – can be profoundly educational.

But an effective democracy also requires institutions of lifelong adult education, a public infrastructure of libraries, cultural institutions and public spaces, and a thriving civil society in which citizens can co-operate informally and organise their learning, places in which people can study together, discuss, argue, and challenge one another’s views, in open and measured ways. In the *1919 Report*’s words, it helps us develop ‘an open habit of mind, clear-sighted and truth-loving, proof against sophisms, shibboleths, claptrap phrases and cant’.³ We cannot afford to ‘subcontract’ informed debate to an elite few, albeit elected, however intelligent: citizens in general must be sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled to hold them to informed account.





Case 3

Museums, learning and cultural democracy

Interview with David Anderson, Director General
Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales

‘Museum learning has been my whole career. I was the Director of Learning at the V&A for twenty years, and wrote the first Government report on museum learning. I’ve learned a lot from Stephen Brookfield’s work on informal adult learning. He talks about the “hidden universe” of voluntary learning, which he says operates according to different frameworks and structures than more formal learning. Whether you’re an adult or a child, you can come into a museum and there’s no deadline or imperative for learning to have pre-specified outcomes.

‘I’ve been influenced by Jonathan Rose’s book, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, in which he shows that roughly a quarter of working-class adults were lifelong, committed and driven learners in different fields. I don’t believe this impulse has disappeared, although much of the infrastructure that formerly supported this kind of informal life-long adult learning in working class communities has. The key question is what, in the 21st Century, needs to be put in its place?

‘There’s a symbiotic relationship between formal and informal learning. Of course, adult education institutions and classes are still needed as much as ever, but local cultural institutions including museums, galleries and libraries continue to have a vital role in learning too. Despite budget reductions, much of this cultural infrastructure has survived and in some communities, these institutions are pretty much the only public centres for adult learning that remain. And they support learning styles – experiential, self-directed, intergenerational and often family or friendship based – that may be different from those usually found in traditional classroom settings.

‘What we at Amgueddfa Cymru call cultural democracy - providing everyone with an opportunity to participate in the cultural life of their community - should be our core work and our primary responsibility. Informal learning at all stages of life from childhood onwards is essential for participation in culture as an adult. Over the last 5 to 10 years we have learnt to bring in communities early on in projects. Some will have a pre-existing interest, others won’t. We’ve done interesting work here to collect, curate and exhibit culture through community participation. We still need a wider revolution in the museum and libraries sector, based on principles of cultural democracy. This would mean museums and libraries being required to operate as one of the central services in society for learning – conceived as a process that’s about exchange and equality, and is intergenerational, inter-cultural and multidisciplinary.’

The role of voluntary associations

A hundred years ago, the electorate in Britain was being extended. Adult education had a vital role in building the attitudes, knowledge and practices needed to make democracy work: ‘The successful working of a democratic society, implies a wide diffusion of a sense of responsibility and the intelligent participation in public affairs by the rank and file of the population.’ Education was inspired by ‘social purpose’: it enabled people to become ‘better fitted for the responsibilities of membership in political, social and industrial organisations’.⁴

The *1919 Report* saw that voluntary organisation was essential to the fabric of a democracy. This was a claim many had made before, and one strongly supported by

research since.⁵ But the *1919 Report* also saw voluntary organisation and democracy as symbiotically related to adult education. Voluntary organisations are places where adults learn.

Research has highlighted something approaching a crisis in the voluntary sector, caused by a combination of factors including cuts to public funding, changing labour markets and disruptive working patterns meaning people have less time for voluntary activities, regulatory pressures, and a decline in localism.⁶ We need to support the voluntary sector – and from the perspective of our report, particularly its capacity to be educational.



 Case 4

A ‘Community canvas’ of adult learning

Barton Hill Settlement in Bristol enables the local community to participate in positive, life-affirming activities. Annie Oliver, its Community Inclusion Manager, told us:

‘For us, community organising, community development skills and the provision of adult learning are indivisible and go hand in hand. People must know you are trustworthy and have a sense that you’re advocating for them and on their side. You can engage with people in communities once they’re being supported in terms of what they want to do, but people find it difficult to study if they have these other major stresses in their lives. Once you deal with the things that are the most pressing, people can then think about other things such as study or work. So we deal with informal learning and the precursors to formal study by providing services that help change people’s conditions and enable them to think about personal progression. The emphasis is on people finding solutions themselves.

‘We have a “community canvass” where we talk to everyone. If people ask for arts provision, we try either to provide this ourselves or make it happen by working with another agency. Adult education in our context could be ESOL, sewing, or community organiser training. These can give people agency, enabling them to change their lives. It could lead to them taking a course at a local college. It’s not necessarily one size fits all.

‘For example, a local Somali mum came to us because she understood that Somali parents didn’t always value the kind of education that happens through play. So we worked with her about learning through play. This resulted in us setting up an arts and crafts play and stay activity in the flats. The woman went on to a “strengthening families and communities” programme. Recently we redesigned a 6 week “setting up a community group” course. We design workshops on “keeping kids out of gangs”, “crime, drugs and alcohol” and on other topics people want. “Improving self-confidence” is a workshop focusing on work we do on positive thinking and becoming your own teacher. Informal adult education has a positive impact on community

cohesion – we need more solidarity in communities, and you can create that by bringing people together to learn and work on issues of common cause. People can only realise these commonalities when they have the chance to get together. This needs support; and without this support people lose the impetus to make demands of institutions and this in turn further breaks down communities.

‘People learn in different ways. For example, the diaspora use new technologies to keep in touch with people globally. But there’s still nothing like getting people together in a room. You need to do this to build trust and create a safe, warm, friendly place. It’s important not to judge people negatively, your approach has to be spot on – otherwise people won’t open up and learn. The people we work with already feel like they are on the margins and displaced and have often not had much formal education. This is why a community-centred approach is so vital and why staff who understand how to work with communities is so important too – so the community feels like we are on their side and are their people.

‘We’re a social action hub – part of the Community Organisers network. We’re also part of “The Network” which is funded by Bristol City Council which is about supporting communities. We will struggle without social action hub finance, due to end next year. We were founded by the University of Bristol and we’re working with them to develop a “micro-settlement” – a set of shipping containers for community groups – “The Centre for Social Justice Innovation”, to be run as a partnership and be funded by Power to Change and others. What’s important is to have a menu that suits different people – some value more formal routes to learning, others need less formal forms of support. One isn’t necessarily better than the other. People need different things at different times. In terms of policy, we need longer-term investment – we’d like a 20-year plan.’

Recommendation 10

We support the proposal from the commission chaired by Sir Vince Cable for Individual Learning Accounts. In addition we believe there should be a **Community Learning Account of £50m pa, rising to £100m over three years, administered by the Adult Learning Partnerships, which will ensure that funding is made available to informal, community-based learning initiatives led by local groups.** In administering the Community Learning Accounts, the Adult Learning Partnerships should develop mechanisms that recognise community organisations’ need for administratively light-touch, stable and long-term funding systems.

The *1919 Report* recommended that organisations should be able to secure public funding for adult education even if they had ‘a particular “atmosphere” or appeal to students of this type or that’. The concern at the time was around funding movements with ‘sectarian’ religious or political aims. The report was adamant that the basis for support should be the quality of the educational work. ‘In our view, the only sound principle is that the State should be willing to help all serious educational work, including the educational work of institutions and organisations which are recruited predominantly from students with,

say, a particular religious or political philosophy.’

This remains the right approach. We need an adult learning system that supports citizens to play an active role in society. This means providing educational support for the voluntary associations which constitute the fabric of our communities, and supporting people so they can contribute collectively, reflectively, and effectively to shaping priorities for public policy. It means facilitating citizens – of all backgrounds, identities and perspectives – to contribute to constructive and critical democratic discussion. In this way, adult learning can strengthen citizenship, and support communities and organisations in addressing the great issues of our time.

In the words of the *1919 Report*: ‘The real danger to the national welfare is not from students pursuing their studies animated with a particular view of things, but rather from the far larger number of those who pursue no intellectual interests and have made no efforts to equip themselves for the duties of citizenship and the organised activities of the community.’ With today’s challenges of ‘fake news’ and misinformation, stoking prejudice and side taking, this is as true now as ever.

The introduction of Community Learning Accounts, overseen and managed by Adult Learning Partnerships with community and stakeholder membership will provide an important channel for funding educational



work with voluntary organisations, charities and similar bodies. We believe, as a general rule, that funds should be allocated on a medium-term basis (three years or more), in order to generate a stable base for groups and organisations, and that evaluations should take account of long-term benefit to education and civil society, and should not take an overly narrow-minded interpretation of ‘value for money’. Adult Learning Partnerships will, we hope and expect, strengthen the democratic character of the adult education system, by co-ordinating discussions and debates both locally and regionally.

Reshaping the model

At the same time, adult education needs to be radically reshaped. We recognise, for instance, that provision in the past has not always been as good at overcoming inequality as we would like. But with a century of effort, experimentation and achievement in building inclusive forms of adult education to engage marginalised communities, there is a mass of experience to learn from.

This shows:

- Engaging with ‘marginalised’ communities involves time-consuming, resource-intensive groundwork, building up networks and trust. Activities that prove most successful with people who access formal learning least are those that engage closely with their – and their communities’ – immediate concerns and interests

- It is always a struggle for agencies of the state (or independent agencies, including philanthropically-motivated providers) to engage marginalised communities. Most attempts will be only partially successful. But the effort must continue: when publicly-funded institutions make no effort, the exclusion such communities, and the individuals within them, experience and feel is deepened.
- Adult education is not a matter of clever people transmitting knowledge to the ignorant: it involves sharing different knowledges, and finding ways of interpreting what one person or community knows in ways that will make sense to others. That means finding ways of understanding each other.
- Educational agencies must cede important aspects of control of programmes and courses to communities and community organisations. People in communities must be able to shape what happens, what they learn, and how they learn. Sustained outreach, peer support, community support and access to resources are key.
- Digital resources are important. However, longstanding tensions between elitist and more democratic approaches to adult education are being recreated in the digital realm: corporate digital platforms are seldom responsive to excluded people and communities, or to pressure for more ‘common’ forms of digital ownership or more inclusive and democratic approaches.

Formal, non-formal and informal modes of adult learning are not alternatives. Each provides ‘progression routes’ of various kinds: individual and collective. These routes need to work together and interact, particularly for the benefit of excluded communities and individuals.



Spaces for learning, dialogue and reflection

Research shows that we learn a lot just from taking part in forms of voluntary and civic activity. But we can't leave learning to accident alone. What we learn is shaped by our environment: by whom we mix with, by the books we read, by the films, videos and television we watch, by how we spend our spare time. This has been demonstrated by studies of learning at work: some workplaces are learning-rich; others offer very limited opportunities.⁷ The same applies outside work. What we learn through our day-to-day activities is shaped by the environments we live in.

We need to make learning environments richer for all, not just the lucky and already well-resourced minority, by

investing in the educational and cultural infrastructure of society. This includes formal educational opportunities, with conveniently-located adult education centres available to all – and school, college and university premises opened up as places of adult and lifelong learning. It includes making books easily available, to borrow and buy. It includes broadcasting: it's no accident that when the BBC was first set up under royal charter in the 1920s, it was to educate, as well as inform and entertain. Today, it makes sense to think of information technologies in more general terms: not just print, radio and television, but also our access to the web. Those who can't use these – who have limited literacy, or can't understand English, or aren't competent users of an important technology – are clearly disadvantaged.

‘A university’s job is not just teaching the elite, it’s the job of the universities to share its knowledge with everybody. And the knowledge should be relevant to what people themselves are interested in... the knowledge is in the university but people of all kinds want and can use it... it seems to me they have the right to use it’.

Lalage Bown, Emeritus Professor at the University of Glasgow, who led adult education departments at universities in Nigeria, the UK and Zambia



Of course, to be information-rich is not necessarily to be knowledgeable or educated. We must also understand, which involves engaging critically with information, through study, reflection, and discussion. This means high-quality public facilities, including libraries, museums, art galleries, theatres, music venues, parks, and community centres. However, particularly during the past decade of 'austerity', the country's educational and cultural infrastructure has deteriorated. With the end of austerity, local authorities need to be properly funded to provide high-quality library services and local amenities.

Recommendation 11


To strengthen the democratic accountability of Further Education colleges to their local communities, **further education colleges should be mandated to have representation on their Boards from the local authority, community organisations, and trades unions.**

To enable adult education to cultivate citizenship and community self-organisation, it will be necessary for the Adult Learning Partnerships to network the various organisations involved in informal adult learning today – and to invest in informal community-based and civil-society led adult learning initiatives.

We believe that a key element of this process will involve strengthening the democratic element in how the agencies that provide and organise adult education are governed.

A wide range of voices must be involved in shaping what educational agencies and providers see as important. This ensures that adult education organisations are properly connected with, and responsive and accountable to, their communities. Some organisations, such as local authorities and the WEA, already have democratic structures at their core. Adult Learning Partnerships will strengthen this, by encouraging discussion among stakeholders about local and regional priorities and provision. However, we believe this needs to be underpinned by changes to the governance of the largest providers of education and learning for adults, the further education colleges. Official guidance for further education colleges should be amended to require representation on their Boards from the local authority, local community organisations, and trades unions.

In summary, there have long been many semi-structured ways people have come together for informal purposes: reading groups, community groups, faith groups, activist projects. In these and other informal settings, people meet and share ideas, identifying common interests or concerns: they socialise, and they learn to discuss their own views and to adjust them in the light of what other people think and believe. Such collective processes are essential for healthy communities and civil society, enabling people to work out responses to issues that matter to them.



‘I think we’ve also got a ... model and a theory what’s missing within educational practice at the moment, or with the broader educational offer, is simple, low commitment ways for people to engage with new ideas.’

**Jonny Gordon-Farleigh
Director, Stir to Action**

Focus 4: Promoting Creativity, Innovation and Informal Learning

Innovation has been a continual feature of adult education. People, usually gathered together in groups – often informally – have found new and creative ways of learning from, and teaching, each other. Tutors, course planners, and student groups, have designed new courses and techniques. This creative dimension of adult education was recognised by the *1919 Report*: ‘We need to think out educational methods and possibilities from the new point of view, that of the adult learning to be a citizen.’

As the *1919 Report* recognised, voluntary organisations and newly emerging social movements often have the closest connection with the pressing issues of the time, and are most creative in developing new ideas and strategies for learning. This proved to be the case through the last century, for instance in trade union education, in women’s studies, in community development, in ‘role education’ for groups – from lay magistrates to playgroup leaders. Since the 1970s, trades unions (working with FE colleges, the WEA and universities) have educated hundreds of thousands of safety representatives – who themselves then spread

the word among their members and employers. Workplaces have become far safer as a result.

The vital role of social movements in shaping innovation in adult education is well recognised internationally. For the past seventy years UNESCO has convened a periodic International Conference on Adult Education, inviting representatives not only of governments but of NGOs and social movements. While the views expressed can be challenging, UNESCO has discovered from experience that the risks of excluding diverse voices are far greater.

Recommendation 12

Establish an Innovation and Development Fund of £50m pa, rising over three years to £100m pa, to support innovation in community and informal education, and to ensure the spread of best practice.



Case 5

‘Experts by experience’: adult learning with offenders

The experience of User Voice

With reconviction rates at between 60-70%, violence and self-harm in prisons rising, and the prison population increasing year-on-year, User Voice is a government funded charity that’s been run for the last 10 years predominantly by ex-offenders with the aim of reducing offending through peer-to-peer learning. User Voice views offenders as ‘experts by experience’, who know more than most about the complex situations they are in, whether it’s disability, mental health, poverty, debt or drugs.

Mark Johnson, User Voice’s CEO, told us:

‘The criminal justice system is currently based on the political priority of being tough on crime and doesn’t consider the complexities and psychology of these people. The assumptions are all wrong. I’ve never met a thick ex-offender. It’s about redefining what the basics are. And what’s absolutely missing now is a focus on human wellbeing. If fundamental needs aren’t met, then you might as well forget about formal learning. It’s only when basic needs are met that people can start to fly.

‘We’ve now got lots of kids and adults in communities who can’t navigate a formal thought or a feeling, let alone the academic system, or even what it takes to live in a community. These people have an inherent mistrust of authority and are not used to being listened to. Formal learning doesn’t work for these people if it doesn’t address any of their formal problems.

‘User Voice is set up for people who are out of the cycle of crime to work together with people still in it. One group is of ex-offenders who had a ‘teachable moment’ – these people have removed themselves from the cycle of re-offending, made their lives manageable and are passionate about wanting to go and help other people. User Voice develops structures in which these people can

work together with more trust and where there is more understanding of these people’s complex circumstances and behaviours.

‘User Voice negotiates access to prisons, which can be risky for everyone involved, but which then allows the work to start. The work is usually one-to-one and involves working with as high a volume of people as possible. Surveys are used as a conversation-starter, the community then self-selects and goes to work in groups. The groups then prioritise what the most important issues are for them and then we also plug into senior managers to start to co-produce better services too.

‘It’s a rehabilitative learning experience for all concerned – it’s a kind of affirmative action. Enabling people and believing in them. User Voice does not try to colonise what education and learning is and what it’s not. At the heart of what User Voice does is peer-to-peer learning, which is so valuable because it gives the approach real hope.

‘English and maths is not fundamental in this environment, basic skills can only be addressed after the other vital issues have been tackled. Once you address people’s self-esteem and self-worth issues you don’t have to force people into learning – because they want to better themselves naturally.

‘The User Voice approach works to re-define the fundamental and basic learning needs of offenders to take the psychological and social complexity of their situations into account. The approach thereby works to build people’s resilience so they can have a voice and work to make things better. User Voice offers structure in which people can start their own journeys. A high proportion of people who’ve gone through User Voice over the years go on to do better jobs and enter formal education. One person, for example, is now a senior lecturer in Leicester University, after doing a criminology degree.’

We need to learn from new forms of adult education emerging today, often outside formal institutions. These include initiatives that have arisen in response to the great challenges that concern people – and which cultivate citizenship and democratic participation, and promote new forms of learning. Particularly important are informal learning spaces and approaches that help foster active citizenship, address inequalities and exclusions, and encourage democratic participation.

The *1919 Report* praised the ‘tutorial class’, where working-class adults learned, in groups of around 20, with a tutor, investigating topics in depth. Inspired

by the WEA, this form of learning was replacing the extension lecture as the dominant method of university adult education – partly because it allowed class members to decide, democratically, what they would study; partly because discussion was central to it.

As the 20th century advanced, adult education developed and embraced other approaches: role playing as a method of learning; residential courses, both short and long; fieldwork studies in subjects such as archaeology and biology; using original documents in history; study circles; small group discussion and projects. Most are now standard fare in further and



Case 6

Creating a federated Co-operative University

“The co-operative movement is the one working class body which continuously and persistently stood for a humane education as an essential element in the social aims of democracy”, *1919 Report*, p. 30.

In the year of the *1919 Report* on Adult Education, the Co-operative College was founded in Manchester. The College was the culmination of 80 years of adult and community education, based on the co-operative values and principles devised by the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844. Throughout the 19th Century, technical, literary and philosophical classes were held in reading rooms above co-op shops. This education was focussed not only on developing the skills and knowledge relevant for the co-operative economy, but also for forming co-operative identity and democratic citizenship. Non-hierarchical pedagogy, distributed engagement, and values-based content was an approach used by the historian and pioneering adult educator, RH Tawney, later a member of the 1919 committee, when he ran Economic History classes with Rochdale weavers in 1908, and characterises co-operative education to the present day.

The Higher Education Research Act (2018) enables ‘challenger institutions’ to acquire Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs). Co-operators see this as an opportunity to develop a values-based and member-

led model of adult education which aligns values with governance, and is characterised by a commitment to the co-creation of educational practices. The College and its federated partners are working with the Office for Students towards a Co-operative University, with an aspiration to acquire DAPs by 2020.

Whilst the College is seeking DAPs, the Co-operative University would consist of a federation of autonomous and geographically dispersed Higher Education Co-operatives (HEC), which have emerged through interested academics, educators, practitioners, students and administrators. We draw upon Mondragon as a model. Staff and students of each HEC will be members of the University, and participate in its ‘ownership’ and governance. Along with colleagues from the Workers’ Educational Association, representatives from each HEC sit on an Interim Academic Board.

The Co-operative University will value formal and informal experiential learning, with a strong ‘social justice’ and social purpose philosophy. Students and tutors will work together to address the challenges of our times, committed to countering injustice and inequality. Provision will be part time and blended - mixing virtual, face to face and residential teaching with participatory, peer to peer approaches.

higher education, and indeed in schools; most were pioneered in adult education, and in courses developed closely with emerging social movements of their day. All have been marked by the centrality of discussion and face-to-face encounters, allowing and encouraging students to shape what they learn, and to discover for themselves.

This element of dialogue, exchange and discovery – involving the social movements that are shaping new ideas in society, as well as educational organisations – has been good not just for adult learners, and for the movements, but also for education, for

knowledge, and for public debate. The origins of academic fields such as industrial archaeology and cultural studies can be traced back, in significant ways, to work initiated in, and by, adult education. In this way the links that adult education formed with social movements also had a profound impact on education and academic knowledge.





Case 7

Sharing understanding through community theatre

Common Wealth theatre company

Common Wealth make site-specific theatre events that address concerns of our times. Much of Common Wealth’s work is produced with non-professional actors. The process is very much about working with people to understand the context they are in, understanding who people are within these contexts, and reminding people they’ve got something to bring and a story to tell of their own.

Rhiannon White, Common Wealth’s Co-artistic Director, told us:

‘Common Wealth believe people can be artists and tell stories. We want people to have the power to represent themselves – telling our stories is an embodiment of power. In terms of adult education, I’m interested in what happened to places like Dartington College of the Arts, where I went to study but has closed now. It was very experimental – and that was a real opportunity for me to discover myself and so much came from there that I do now.

‘So, I guess, I’m interested in seeing more adult learning that’s like that – which gives people a bit more freedom and space to fail, experiment and break boundaries – it gave me options. Art Colleges and adult learning in the arts doesn’t seem to have that level of social experimentation now. There’s not many people from my background becoming students now either. I think it’s important to have experimental journeys and a wide range of people involved. My own experience of education helped me articulate my politics and understand the

context I was from and how it related to the work I wanted to do.

‘The Common Wealth approach is about creating the space where different understandings and experiences can be shared. What we try to do is to find the common ground in terms of how people have been shaped by their contexts. That’s what is powerful about theatre.

‘To do more of this kind of work we need better community infrastructure. Adult learning today must be with people and in a place that people trust, it must be from and in that place. It needs to be created by people and be geared to helping people create lives for themselves. You need to look at how adult education needs to bend to fit with people’s needs at a time of austerity. It needs to involve food, be welcoming of kids, needs to be reinvented and support people reinventing themselves. It needs to be community led.

‘Non-professionals that have worked with Common Wealth have gone on to more formal study, at the Open University and elsewhere. Common Wealth theatre company show that informal adult learning in the arts can be successful today if people see its relevance to their lives, communities and contexts – it must speak to who different people are, and be responsive to what people want to do.’



This occurred in large measure because public institutions were encouraged – not least by the *1919 Report* and professionals and civil servants influenced by it – to work with and support these movements. Universities, the WEA, and local authorities employed staff to work in communities, who built up networks of connections with a host of voluntary bodies. These staff went under a whole host of titles – resident lecturers and tutors, staff tutors, community development workers, organising tutors, and the like. The educational bodies that employed them received public funds to do so, and were able to deploy these staff – subject to quality inspection – as they, in discussion with local stakeholders, thought most appropriate.

Few if any educational bodies can now do this. Typically, to obtain funding to support grass-roots

community education, organisations must develop a bid because a government agency (or charity) has a ‘pot of money’ (usually quite a small pot) to encourage what is, in effect, a passing fashion in the corridors of power. The answer is to fund properly the national and local institutions and communities, and devolve decision making to the appropriate level, as we argue elsewhere.

The Centenary Commission has encountered inspiring examples of grass-roots adult education in communities. We have also visited organisations devoted to making entry into areas of professional work fairer – for example, in current circumstances, access to employment in the creative arts is often limited for people from poorer backgrounds.



 Case 8

‘Spoken’: new cultures of co-operation

Interview with Moussa Amine Sylla, Community Organiser at The Selby Centre, Tottenham, London

‘**Spoken** is an approach that encourages people who don’t normally have a voice and who are not used to talking in public to do so, in a supportive context. Spoken takes the form of a community-based event where local people can express themselves, and have an audience who will listen and respond. The overall ambition of Spoken is not just to share experiences and cultures but to create new cultures of cooperation. Spoken is therefore about mixing and speaking with people from different backgrounds. At any one event we might have people from the community, council officers and politicians and sometimes corporate organisations as well. It’s about mixing different cultures – third sector, urban, business, politics, arts and more.

‘For example, when the company Converse came to the last event, both Converse and community members found it hard. The community members didn’t find Converse very warm or open; and Converse were very protective of what they were doing there, so found it difficult to collaborate and come up with a shared approach. This led to lots of conversations about what creativity is, who was in charge in creative terms and who needs who. The idea was to create a new culture of cooperation, but what we didn’t have on this occasion was much mixing. Spoken is designed to be a space where these and other kinds of cultural clashes and shocks can be created in nice ways, with the goal of generating new forms of collective learning and intelligence out of diversity.

‘Every encounter with other people, new cultures and new situations is an opportunity to learn and we can learn most from each other in spaces where spontaneous, organic and passion-driven exchanges can take place. Community activities of this kind can play a massive part in developing people’s self-empowerment, raising self-esteem and in starting to connect people so they can do more with others in the community.

‘Formal education can take you towards specific learning outcomes, but not necessarily prepare you for these kinds of encounters. And if you’re not prepared, then you’re also not ready for this kind of informal learning to happen – these situations really can result in a kind of volcanic eruption of new learning! Such learning that can often be extremely valuable in community situations, as it can help break down some of the barriers which can often block people from developing – this might mean creating new personal understandings, beginning to organise in the community, re-entering formal education or taking control of your life in another way.

‘Informal learning in the context of community organising processes can also be much more inclusive than formal education often is – not least because it doesn’t need to take place behind four walls and at set times. Spoken is fundamentally about resourcing connection and creatively in order to learn together and collectively build in the contexts people are living in, it’s about fostering forms of social enterprise that have both the planet and people in mind. The process is therefore about using people’s knowledge and experience to learn about and respond to the social challenges they face. The aim is to think collaboratively about how people can generate their own development, including their own economy and environment.

‘So although Spoken isn’t always about creating knowledge that’s going to be recognised by formal education and employers (e.g. qualifications), it is undoubtedly about creating knowledge and practice that’s immediately useful in people’s own lives and settings. Having said this, after taking part in a community organising process, people do often go back into formal education. And when they do this they usually do so with a different spirit, because they want to go and have a better sense of what they want from this.’

Our recommendations would, we believe, represent a step-change in funding arrangements and approach, providing a real opportunity for secure, longer-term funding for organisations – voluntary and statutory – working with and among emerging social movements and excluded communities. We believe that an innovation fund should be available specifically to encourage innovative work with such emerging movements and organisations.

Innovation and technology: learning from the MOOCs

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) were initially open to all, free of charge. Quite rapidly it became clear that the take up was largely by the already well educated. There is, of course, absolutely nothing wrong with lifelong learning for the already well-educated. It plays an important role in a civilised, efficient, productive and educated democracy, and we wholeheartedly encourage the development of MOOCs. But decades of adult educational experience has shown that being ‘open to all’ is not the same as being ‘used by all’ – and unless steps are taken to build links with less educated people, it is they who continue to miss out.

We have encountered encouraging examples of the use of MOOCs in creative ways. For instance, working with Hibernian Football Club (‘Hibs’), Edinburgh University developed an online course, ‘Football: More Than A Game’. It has reached over 40,000 learners, some as far afield as Chile and South Africa. Scottish football has roots in many communities that are now areas of multiple deprivation. Working with the Hibs foundation, using the online course materials as a basis, but linking up with community learning centres, it has been possible to engage adults in learning about data literacy, financial management, and healthy lifestyles.⁸

We believe the potential that digital resources offer should be made available to adult learners of all backgrounds and kinds. This requires not only the provision of educational materials that will meet diverse interests and needs, at a range of levels, but also enabling educational bodies and community organisations to take advantage of, and adapt, digital learning materials already produced – and to do so on a safe and secure basis.

Recommendation 13

A non-profit institution (possibly the Open University) should be funded to provide **a trusted digital platform** accessible to all publicly supported providers of adult education – to prioritise the interests of the individual learner and community-based learning initiatives.

For-profit companies tend inevitably to concentrate on the sectors from which revenues are likely to be greatest. Other things being equal, they will target the rich rather than the poor. This is not a good basis for overcoming inequality.

The question of the reliability and quality of learning materials is also a matter of public concern. On the whole, this is achieved by the involvement of public educational institutions, such as universities. In the age of ‘fake news’ we need to be confident that high-quality and trustworthy educational materials will be freely available, on a long-term basis. We believe that a non-profit organisation, such as the Open University, should be resourced to provide this.

Our understanding of what adult learning entails needs to be constantly refreshed. The last couple of decades have seen massive innovation in digital learning resources. Community learning is affected by these, and remain responsive to their potential. However, particularly in community learning, the face-to-face dimension is vital. Partly this is because adult education must allow for the informal and unanticipated, as well as the planned. The historian and adult educator R.H. Tawney, one of the members of the 1919 committee, wrote of how the ‘friendly smittings of weavers, potters, miners, and engineers’ had taught him ‘about problems of economic science which cannot easily be learned from books’ – ‘often’ it was in these informal discussions ‘before the classes begin and after they end that the root of the matter is reached’.⁹ Digital resources offer tremendous opportunities for adult learning, but there are vital informal, human, interactions and exchanges that are possible only when people meet together in person.

We don’t only learn what we are told: in discussions and interactions, we create new understandings that enable us to get on with one another, and to identify solutions to shared problems.

Focus 5: Securing Individual Learning and Wellbeing

The *1919 Report* took as read the benefits adult education brings to individuals: its starting point was that adults were entitled to a full education as ‘an inseparable aspect of citizenship’. It added that an educated citizenry was good for, even essential to, democracy, but made no attempt to explain how people as individuals gained from it. Today this view of education as unarguably beneficial seems decidedly old-fashioned: few now argue in public that education should be an end in itself. Governments, journalists and commentators have long called for evidence that education ‘works’, is ‘effective’, and ‘delivers’ things – besides capabilities and wisdom.

Much research has been done on whether education delivers ‘useful’ outcomes. The results have demonstrated that adult education is indeed important to people’s lives: to their physical and mental health, to their happiness, to their sociability, and to their capabilities more broadly. Adult education plays a profoundly important part in helping people understand, deal with, and take some control of life’s transitions, new experiences and situations. That is unquestionably one of its major contributions to human happiness and a good society.

The starting point for considering what adult education does for individuals must, of course, be that each individual is unique. We come to education for different reasons; in the dry language of research and policy, we have different motivations to learn, and respond to different incentives.

Work and Money

People with better skills earn more. A major survey in 2019 for the OECD found that across European countries, 67% of participants thought training helped them to achieve positive employment outcomes.¹⁰ A major analysis of large-scale survey data across 23 countries, found that higher ‘cognitive skills’ – in numeracy, literacy, and problem-solving – are linked to higher wages in all countries.¹¹ There is a real pay-off for adults to upgrading their skills. Of course, this isn’t very surprising. More highly-skilled people have always been better paid, on average, and had better job prospects, than less-highly-skilled people. What is perhaps significant is that recent research underlines that the difference applies in relation to the problem-solving skills required in today’s economy, and that it is not only what you learn at school and college that makes a difference. Financial benefits come from learning at any age. The same is true of finding and keeping a job.

This means that structures of lifelong learning should encourage and enable individuals to improve their skills throughout their working lives. Much work has been done to develop qualification levels and frameworks, both nationally and within particular sectors. These systems are intended to make the system ‘transparent’, enabling people to know what they will be learning, and to have their skills and learning accredited and recognised by others, including employers. They have been reasonably effective in this.

However, these frameworks have had some unfortunate unintended consequences. For instance,



they led, ten years ago, to the ELQ fiasco: in a short-sighted cost-saving exercise, the then government took away support for students studying for equivalent or lower level qualifications than they already held. This made it much more expensive for adults to develop expertise in new areas: a bizarre decision given the need for flexibility. We support the recommendation of the Augar Review that the ELQ rules should be abolished.

Similarly, the focus on accreditation was key to the near-elimination of the rich provision of non-accredited courses offered by colleges, universities, the WEA and local authorities; this has impoverished community educational offerings.

Wider Benefits

With our working and technological environments constantly changing, the economic benefits of learning throughout life are widely recognised. This has been the main driver behind government pressure to ensure provision of, and worker involvement in, work-related education and training since the early 1990s. But over much the same period, it has become unfashionable to justify public expenditure on adult learning by reference to education itself. Instead, governments look to education as merely a mechanism for 'delivering' something apparently more significant.

**'Funders avoid using the term "education" in relation to older people, and they're pretty ambivalent about learning. It's all couched as "wellbeing", not education'.
John Miles, Community Development worker**



A programme to investigate the ‘wider benefits of learning’, based at the University of London in the early 2000s, undertook a wide range of research projects over the best part of a decade. ‘Longitudinal’ studies of cohorts of adults born in 1958 and 1970 were able to see how people changed over time as a result of the types of education they involved themselves in. A summary of the research programme reported ‘strong evidence’ that participation in adult education ‘contributes to positive changes in behaviours and attitudes’, including ‘increased civic participation and more healthy living’. ‘People involved in adult education are less likely to be dissatisfied in midlife, more likely to be optimistic and less likely to use health services.’ It added that these benefits were ‘greater for educationally disadvantaged adults.’¹²

One of the studies of people born in 1958 found that participation in ‘leisure courses’ increases the chances of giving up smoking, taking more exercise, increases levels of civic participation and reduces authoritarian attitudes. Adult learning has an ‘important role in promoting a positive process of personal and social development’. For instance, it found that taking between three and ten adult education courses between the ages of 33 and 42 increases the probability of giving up smoking by 7.3 percentage points – increasing the chances of giving up by almost one-third. The same number of courses generated an 18.5% increase in the probability of a person increasing their level of exercise.

Taking courses also has a positive effect on happiness: the researchers concluded that taking 3-10 courses reduced the decline in life satisfaction typical over this decade of life by 35% compared with those who took no courses. Participating in adult education also had a positive effect on social and political attitudes, leading to greater racial tolerance, less political cynicism, and greater political interest.¹³

Mental Wellbeing

Subsequent research, both in Britain and internationally, has supported and extended these findings. The Government Office for Science found extensive benefits from adult learning for mental health, both in mid-life and in older age. For instance, it helps people recovering from poor mental health. Among the elderly, it concluded: ‘evidence shows that learning can help to promote wellbeing, and protect against normal cognitive decline with age. And when it takes place in social settings, it can promote wellbeing indirectly through social networking.’¹⁴ Despite this, and despite the work of the University of the 3rd Age (U3A), there is far too little education aimed at older adults.

A study for the Department of Education, based on randomly allocating adults with ‘mild to moderate mental health problems’ to different kinds of adult education course found that most learners (76%) reported an improvement in their overall mental health. Apart from self-reported perceptions, nearly three in ten learners (29%) ‘showed significant improvement in their symptoms of depression and four in ten (39%) showed significant improvement in their symptoms of anxiety’. 52% of those who started their courses with clinically significant symptoms of anxiety and/or depression no longer had such symptoms when the course ended. It seems that the ‘process of learning something new, whether focussed on mental health and wellbeing, or general community learning’, had a positive effect on mental health and wellbeing.¹⁵

Internationally, the wider benefits of adult learning for people’s lives have been recognised by organisations such as the OECD and UNESCO.¹⁶ The latter points to benefits for health and wellbeing, including not only mental health but life expectancy and disease.

Life transitions

It is often around transitions in life that adult education proves to be the most beneficial. Transitions, as a recent study points out, involve changed circumstances. Some, such as retirement, preparing for retirement, or returning to work after caring for children, are closely connected to the labour market: moving into or out of it (partially or fully, permanently or temporarily). These transitions ‘often lead to a reappraisal of the decisions and actions that shape an adult’s life course, particularly as priorities shift and change’. In such situations, engaging in learning ‘can become more of a priority, especially when seen to play a pivotal role in helping people achieve their ambitions and aspirations’.¹⁷

Education helps people at key points of transition and crisis in their lives, but it also has effects which lead to socially beneficial behaviour. For instance, Feinstein estimated that one of the wider benefits of learning would be a reduction of crime. He concluded that taking 1% of the working age population from no or low qualifications to the achievement of Level 2 would have reduced the costs of property crime by between £10 million and £320 million per year.¹⁸

All this adds weight to the need to support a broad provision of adult education, covering all aspects of personal, community and work life. All these kinds of learning bring a wide range of benefits to individuals – and the benefits are not only educational.



We have recommended that local authorities, colleges and universities, employers and community groups should participate in Adult Learning Partnerships in their locality or region. We support the proposal from Sir Vince Cable's commission that individuals should be supported financially through Individual Learning Accounts. We recommend there also be Community Learning Accounts, administered by the Adult Learning Partnerships, to enable local groups to develop programmes of education which respond to local need and demand.



Focus 6: Attending to the World of Work

The *1919 Report* saw that with the approach of new technologies and industries, ‘training’ for today’s ‘skills’ was insufficient. Imagination and flexibility would be needed. That required *education*, not just training – developing capabilities of critical thinking and judgement.

One hundred years on, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics will be displacing millions, across the whole range of the professions, and skill levels. The human will have a very different – and ever changing – role to play.

Britain is already one of the world’s most regionally unequal societies, and whilst the likely impact of AI and robotics is unknown and to an extent unknowable, the latest predictions are that it will make regional inequality even worse.

The costs of failure would be inflicted upon the economy, society, and individual wellbeing. Government needs to act – as do employers and others. The changing world of work requires adult education and lifelong

learning. It would be disastrously inadequate to limit this to training for skills, for three main reasons:

First, jobs will require empathy, team-working, and thinking ‘outside the box’ – capabilities best developed through a broad-based education. For productivity and innovation, workers need to have access to training and education. They also need to be committed, which adult education and lifelong learning can engender – yet in Britain most workers aren’t even being consulted on new technology, let alone educated about and for it.¹⁹

Second, then, organisations need employees who are motivated and engaged, and who enjoy good emotional and mental wellbeing. All the evidence is that this requires – or at least benefits greatly from – continuing education. With longer lives, including working lives, retaining and developing employees is important, not just recruiting them – and that requires their continuing wellbeing, which lifelong learning supports.



And third, no company or organisation is an island. They depend on the localities in which they operate – for employees, customers, suppliers, and the productive and social infrastructure. Education – adult and continuing education, lifelong and life-wide – is vital for learning regions and vibrant communities. Many companies engage with their communities as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility activities, and this needs to include adult education, through partnerships with local providers through our proposed Adult Learning Partnerships.

Policy failures

Given that adult education and lifelong learning is more important today than ever, and will become increasingly so in the future, why have successive governments failed – cutting rather than investing in adult education and lifelong learning over the past dozen years at least?

One reason is that politicians the world over seem to feel obliged to genuflect to the god of STEM ('Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics'). Of course, science, technology, engineering and mathematics are important. But so too are the humanities and social sciences; indeed, most issues of science, technology, engineering and mathematics cannot be fully appreciated, understood, and tackled without an understanding of the humanities (such as ethics and history) and social sciences (including why people – employees, managers, consumers and others – behave the way we do). Thus, while we need investment in STEM, we need a matching investment in those areas which help secure understanding of the ethical and practical issues that its disruptive innovations generate.

An example that illustrates the connection between STEM skills and the humanities arose in relation to one of the greatest challenges that the UK government has ever faced: the need during World War Two to break the enemy codes at Bletchley Park. For this purpose, the government supported the development of the world's first digital programmable computer, Colossus.²⁰ Who did they recruit? Yes, some 'STEM' scientists such as Alan Turing. But alongside them, a whole range of Humanities scholars – classicists, linguists – and others. That worked.

Or, as Paul Getty replied when asked why his oil company hired classics graduates: 'Because they sell more oil'.

A further reason for the weakness of current arrangements has been the decline of trades unions outside the public sector, allied to major resource constraints resulting from austerity within the public sector. Where unions have worked alongside employers to encourage and support adults to engage in learning – through for example UNISON's 'Return to Learn' programme, or through the union-wide UnionLearn programme of peer learning advice offered by learning representatives – the results have been extremely effective. Countries like Germany, Switzerland and Austria – where learning at work is planned through tripartite agreements by Government, employers and unions – enjoy consistently higher levels of productivity.

Recommendation 14

The Apprenticeship Levy should be broadened and made more flexible.

The national Adult Education & Lifelong Learning Strategy will seek ways of leveraging corporate investment into education and training, including through reforming the apprenticeship levy to enable employers to use it for a wider range of educational opportunities for staff than only those courses classified as 'apprenticeships'.

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy did seek to promote investment in learning; the results have been good in parts. Companies should now be given greater discretion over the sort of educational activities on which the levy funds may be spend. With the levy becoming more 'user friendly' to employers, it would enable the levy to be broadened to a greater range of companies without the resistance this would meet under the present restrictive arrangements. This would increase corporate investment in employee education and training, and boost the number of employees benefiting.

Recommendation 15

As part of enriching the learning dimension of working life for all, **employers should provide paid time off work for learning.** Many employees cannot afford to take unpaid leave, so it is important that paid leave provision is available to undertake lifelong learning. Where practicable, employers should provide learning spaces within the workplace.

We need broad-based and lifelong education, motivated and engaged workers, within learning organisations embedded in learning regions. Employers need to provide paid time off for courses that are free for the individual, with an active encouragement to all sectors of the workforce to engage. But where the worker has no direct employer, there is an additional hidden barrier, of work organisation.

UK employers are almost alone in the EU in providing less training rather than more since the 2007-2008 financial crisis. Companies and other organisations need to be learning organisations. We also need to broaden what we mean by work. Responding to the big societal challenges means the work/leisure binary needs to be rethought as part of this process. A broader range of activities needs to be included under the rubric of work, as making a valuable contribution to the society we live in. Adult education will be vital in this extended sphere just as much as in more orthodox work realms. This is particularly relevant in terms of potential policy developments around the 4 or even 3 day working week of the future. We will need learning for productive but non-traditional workplace forms of work, as well as for leisure. Our recommendations elsewhere in this report are designed to enable this.

There are also changes afoot regarding the way that more conventional forms of work are organised. Alongside the 4th industrial revolution, there are also societal pressures for more socially inclusive workplaces.

There are corporate versions of this including the ‘new workplace movement’; there is an increased variety of cooperative forms and activities; there is also growing interest in new models of employee ownership. All of this is likely to foster learning and innovation. It also makes lifelong learning increasingly necessary, to make the most from such future workplace developments.

The way in which workplaces are organised can itself play a vital role in adult learning. While some workplaces provide ‘expansive’ environments, encouraging workers’ learning, others are much more ‘restrictive’.²¹ This is not a matter (only) of what training courses an employer offers, but (much more important) of whether the organisation of work (production processes, group working, allocation of responsibilities, use of technologies, role of trades unions, etc.) encourages informal learning. Research shows that learning ‘spills over’ between different dimensions of life (work, civic, personal). This applies not only to technical knowledge and skills, but also to learning, skills and attitudes relevant to citizenship.²²

There are related debates around what constitutes a productive economy, and around the relationship between industrial policy, sustainable development, and the good society. A recent NESTA report on *Democratising the Knowledge Economy* argues that the knowledge economy will require a greater degree of inclusion.²³

Of course, there are contrary forces at play too, which lead to out-sourcing and precarity. These contrary forces, and the need for them to be discussed and understood, makes the need for lifelong learning – of the broadest character – even more important. The costs of not going down the path of education, discussion and understanding are growing; they are costs that as a society and economy we cannot afford.



Case 9

Interview with Teresa Donegan

Head of UNISON Learning and Organising Services

‘If people feel valued and empowered in a society, their overall general wellbeing is improved. And if people can learn at work it will contribute to that, and that’s great. There are some employers out there we work with in the public sector and the private sector and they are excellent ... but it’s just not enough.

‘I think if there was mandatory reporting under a national skills strategy, or if there was a Government levy based on the number of employees you’ve got, ... which means that an employer has got to spend X amount on [learning] it would focus minds. ...

‘Even if people say to me, well what if there’s no more for them to learn for the job, ... there’s always something to learn with lifelong learning.’



 Case 10**Open Data Services (ODS) co-operative**

ODS is a workers' co-operative which supports platform co-ops and works to promote and enable transparency with open data. In this new world of tech people work, network and learn differently. Two co-operators share their views about how they learn individually and collectively – by doing, and through problem solving, reflection and enquiry.

One element of ODS's work can be found in the development of Manchester Digital Laboratory (MadLab) - a grassroots organisation whose area of focus is science, technology, arts and culture. MadLab is a self-organised, technical community group which runs monthly meetups and courses advocating and enabling experimentation with new and emerging technologies. It's a place 'where young people originally came together to exchange, learn and talk around coding because they couldn't talk about this at school or in youth clubs. Before MadLab they had met in parks, above and in pubs. Now over 100 meet regularly. Policy makers and the council started to get interested in skills and employability with MadLab but we wanted to make sure this was about fun and creativity and making a space safe and secure' Steve.

How do they learn their skills in ODS? Steve: 'We consciously co-operate, we have a video call every morning and team retrospectives weekly and co-working general meetings. Our method is discussing, reflecting and learning. We have been learning how to run the company but also how to work with each other. Every other Friday morning is spent building the culture. We recognise that we need to keep an eye on relations within the co-op as some members might appear more influential than others. We do think about learning a lot. How to do learning by doing – how do you teach mobility/agility in tech transparency?'

Jack, a co-worker: 'There's two halves of the business. One is like developers ... you don't get all of the skills you need to be a good developer from a university computer science degree, but there's a fairly well understood pathway to become an experienced developer once you understand computer science. The other is the analyst side, and an analyst for our organisation doesn't exist, we have to in effect create them. It's a set of transferable skills, and one of those is about being able to work by yourself, being able to figure out problems, combined with a set of technical skills, and enough people skills and to switch between technical policy and people managing and client management skills. It's difficult to teach those skills.

'Some of the most creative time is the time we spend together, physically in a room. Some of it is structural around our process, where we'll think about what's happened in the last couple of months, and sometimes we'll also do more project focused retreats, where we'll spend a day or two days trying to think about these knotty problems that we've had over the past few months, and really dig into those. The other thing we've done is have someone come in and give us a really focused bit of training on something to do with the co-op, like what are your responsibilities as a director? How do we understand our accounts and finances? That's the kind of thing that is difficult to get people to engage with unless you've got the focus of being in a room at a particular time. So that face to face time is really important.'

When companies feel under pressure financially – or have doubts over future prospects – they may be reluctant to invest in education and training with paid time off. How can such costs be afforded? As argued above, investment in education and training is likely to pay dividends. The real question is can we – as a society and economy – afford to be left behind when it comes to education?

Recommendation 16

Employers should facilitate the presence and work of learning representatives in all workplaces. The introduction and operation of ‘union learning representatives’ has generally been regarded as a success – by employers, employees, and governments alike – in delivering vital learning opportunities; however, this applies only to places of employment with trade union organisation, and needs to be extended to all workplaces.

Management will have its view on what skills are required, but the people who really know are those doing the work. When new technology is introduced, its potential contribution is often unknown, and is in a fundamental sense unknowable, since the actual performance of and benefits from the technology will depend on those who use it.

First, the actual productivity of the new technology will depend on employees ‘learning on the job’, imagining and developing new and different uses that may not have been previously envisaged. Second, it will depend on these workers being sufficiently engaged and committed to want to go this ‘extra mile’, of developing the new technology’s capabilities beyond what may have been initially envisaged. Third, it will depend on work organisation that gives opportunities to employees to bring about the new uses – not just suggestion schemes, but genuine participation at work.

Every aspect of this process will depend on adult education and training. In its absence, not much will be achieved. Designed and developed appropriately, education and training can enhance all three aspects of employee capabilities, commitment, and participation. This benefits the individuals concerned – the country’s citizens. It also boosts productivity and economic performance – thereby paying for itself.

It is therefore in all our interests that the successful scheme around ‘union learning representatives’ be extended to all workplaces, whether unionised or not.

Recommendation 17

Employers should be required to report annually on their spending on employee education and training; these figures should be broken down in order to show spending on the top 20% of earners and the bottom 20% within their organisation.

Workplaces have changed hugely over the past few decades. While today there are variations across sectors in the gender and race makeup of employment, the workforce in general is more balanced in terms of gender, and diverse in terms of race than was once the case. But there remains a gender and race gap in earnings. And spending on workforce education and training is often biased in favour of the already skilled and well paid, which reinforces these inequalities.

Adult education and lifelong learning can be a positive force both in unifying diverse workforces, and in overcoming historic disparities in levels of education and training, and earnings. This won’t happen automatically. It requires action.

First, to ensure that the whole workforce is involved in consultation over what sort of educational provision is desired – and indeed is engaged in its co-creation as appropriate.

And secondly, to ensure that the currently disadvantaged sections of the workforce – including all those with protected characteristics – are fully enabled to participate. It is thus important that support for employee education is not skewed towards funding MBAs and other provision for executive education, but encompasses the whole workforce. The clearest way of monitoring this would be for companies to provide in their Annual Report not only a figure for total spending on employee education and training, but also what proportion of this went on the 20% highest paid, and what amount went on the 20% lowest paid.

Recommendation 18

In many large workplaces the primary employer makes good provision for adult learning, but much of the workforce may be employed by subcontractors: ‘**contract compliance**’ should be used to ensure the same opportunities are available to all. And funding is needed for those in the ‘**gig economy**’ to access education and training with no loss of earnings; if this cannot be covered by the Individual and Community Learning Accounts, then an education maintenance allowance should be made available.

All employees should have the right to lifelong learning. This needs to be cast more generally, as the right to lifelong learning for all workers – including the self employed, sole traders, and ‘gig economy’ workers. Although the rise of the ‘gig economy’ is relatively new, the practice of contracting out is not. Nor therefore is the problem that employee rights may be lost when the work is contracted out.

This problem has been – and continues to be – dealt with effectively through contract compliance, that is, by writing the standards required in the contracts when work is contracted out, and ensuring that the sub-contractor complies. Indeed, such mechanisms have grown and developed recently with the need for companies to ensure that other companies within their supply chains comply with the required labour, environmental and ethical standards. Where good employers provide educational opportunities for their employees, they need to ensure that if work is contracted out, those employees enjoy the same benefits, through contract compliance measures.

For workers in the gig economy, the loss of earnings whilst learning may be covered by the Individual and Community Learning Accounts we propose, or by local authorities with the requirement to provide adult education restored as a statutory duty. But if not, then such costs should be borne by an education maintenance grant to make up the loss of earnings when such workers are participating in education or training.

In addition, £100m was announced in the last budget for the national retraining scheme²⁴ – it is vital that this be accessible to all, not just those currently in work and working for a ‘standard’ employer. With a more comprehensive and imaginative national system of adult education and lifelong learning, people currently not employed might feel empowered to engage with the economy through entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship – delivering on a social purpose in an economically sustainable way.

Such social enterprises are increasingly operating alongside new forms of co-operative, employee-owned and mutual organisations. The future corporate and organisational landscape seems set to evolve; our national system of adult education and lifelong learning needs to keep up.

Conclusion

What is needed is a system of lifelong learning which companies and other organisations contribute to and benefit from, which would provide a workforce with the abilities, capabilities, and agency to make the most of new technologies as they emerge. This would be embedded in learning communities — that constitute the local and regional productive and social infrastructure, that contribute towards the supply chain, and that provide the customers and the future employees.



Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Scotland and Wales



The importance of adult education and lifelong learning has been recognised globally – from the ‘right to education’ in the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, ‘directed to the full development of the human personality’, to the Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ‘promote lifelong learning opportunities for

all’, adopted in 2015 as part of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. With devolved authority, the arrangements in Scotland and Wales may continue to differ from those in England. However, we consider that the key principles behind our proposals are relevant to all three countries. Indeed, our proposal for a national strategy delivered through regional partnerships is to some extent prefigured in the strategic developments already unfolding in Scotland and Wales.



Case 11

Student support system in Wales

Following a 2016 Review by Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Wales has a student finance system that supports living costs across modes and levels of study, based on:

- i. The principle of universalism within a progressive system;
- ii. A ‘whole system’ approach (support across modes of study);
- iii. Investment shared between Government and those who directly benefit;
- iv. Accessibility, tackling barriers such as living costs; and
- v. Portability across the UK.

The bulk of the student support packages – for full-time and part-time undergraduates – came in for those starting in 2018/19. The new postgraduate package came in for those starting in 2019/20.

Initial indications show a 35% increase in part-time undergraduate student numbers, and an even bigger increase in the number of postgraduate students. Around half of all part-time students now receive the full living costs grant (which depending on study intensity, could be worth over £4,000). This expansion of part-time study is helping to meet the Welsh Government’s widening access, economic prosperity and social mobility ambitions.

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Scotland

The Scottish Government is in the process of developing a national strategy for adult learning. Adult learning sits within the broader policy area of Community Learning and Development (CLD). An Adult Learning Strategic Forum for Scotland (ALSFS) is chaired by Mhairi Harrington, a member of the board of the Scottish Funding Council and formerly Principal of West Lothian College. It held its first meeting in August 2019, and is due to produce its final report by November 2020. This work on adult learning aims to develop a strategic, comprehensive and overarching strategy, along the lines of the similar work undertaken for younger learners last year, the Scottish Government's *16-24 Learner Journey Review*. It comes at a time when there are serious concerns among the majority of stakeholders that adult learning provision is currently shrinking and under-funded.

Adult education is provided by local authorities, colleges and (most) universities (the Open University in Scotland plays a leading role) – and also by voluntary and community bodies, the largest of which is the WEA.

Adult education provision in Scottish universities typically takes three main forms – access to higher education courses for adults, usually organised under the umbrella of the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP); dedicated adult and community education courses; and, more broadly, continuing professional development (CPD) programmes.

In colleges the emphasis is on skills development and vocational education for adults. In local authorities it is on community based adult learning, including adult literacies and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Scotland has one dedicated adult education college, Newbattle Abbey College – which has led the way in establishing Adult Achievement Awards, flexible and inclusive awards that require no entry qualifications but are rated with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

The overall vision for the Adult Learning Strategy is that 'Adult learning in Scotland will develop better skilled, educated, confident and empowered people living in resilient, connected and inclusive communities'. Within this vision there are some emerging themes:

- i. Advice and guidance:** to develop guidance for adults that supports fair access to learning opportunities which meet learner needs.
- ii. The adult learning offer and progression:** to ensure all avail of lifelong, life-wide and learner centred learning opportunities which acknowledge the wider benefits of adult learning for individuals, families and communities; to secure literacies and ESOL support for adult learners, regardless of learning context; and to support pathways for progression through adult learning.
- iii. Access, empowerment and change:** to build the confidence of adults to participate in learning opportunities that meet their needs; to ensure adult learners have a voice in identifying and meeting their own learning needs; to ensure adult learners have the requisite skills and opportunities to participate in digital approaches to learning; and to develop learning opportunities underpinned by the principles of community empowerment that can lead to personal and social change.
- iv. Learning for work:** to ensure adults have access to flexible learning opportunities in a variety of settings which help them towards employment and to progress in the workplace; to ensure in-work learning opportunities contribute to reducing in-work poverty; and to provide routes into employment through adult learning for those furthest from the labour market that are flexible, accessible and learner centred.
- v. Workforce development:** to ensure a coordinated approach to the development of the adult learning workforce.





Case 12

Learning across communities

A Cardiff group of female learners of Muslim faith were first engaged on a cookery class, and progressed to an ICT course. The tutor arranged a trip to meet learners in Ebbw Vale, drawn from a local church group.

Together, the learners visited sites of interest in Ebbw Vale and then returned to the church to share a meal and learn more about each other. Both groups of learners were positive about the experience, describing how they had extended their vocabulary, and had gained an appreciation of the differences between living in a city and living in a valley in Wales.

Both groups gained a greater awareness of different cultures. They were keen to share their views on how the visit helped them to see similarities between the two learning groups, which they had not previously considered. A return trip is planned – which itself is developing organisational skills.

The work of the ALSFS is still at an early stage, but there are already indications that the adult learning strategy will emphasise the need to:

- safeguard the current practice of adult learning and its present workforce – and to expand adult learning provision by setting ambitious growth targets;
- improve policy coordination by developing a more comprehensive definition of adult learning, in particular to embrace ESOL and literary and digital literacy, but also to broaden the focus to include other domains such as health and justice as well as education and employment;
- improve the guidance and advice available to adults so that they at least match those available to younger learners; and
- emphasise the fundamental focus on the reduction of inequality and importance of family and community learning, to ensure they are not ‘crowded out’ by the need to improve employability skills.

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Wales

The Welsh Government’s *Adult Learning in Wales, 2017* aims ‘to support adults to play an active role in the economy and society through enhancing their learning opportunities’. Whilst acknowledging that funding had been cut in previous years, and remains challenging, this policy document advocates lifelong learning as supporting the development of skills, improving health and wellbeing, and as a catalyst for social engagement and integration.

The funding for part-time adult education outside the higher education sector is currently around £40m a year. Adult Learning Wales – which delivers adult education and lifelong learning – currently receives £5.8m a year.

Local Authorities receive a Community Learning Grant, currently £4.3m a year, for Adult Community Learning. Some of this community learning is delivered by the local authorities directly, with the rest sub-contracted for others to deliver. Reforms are under way to try to ensure as equitable a spread of this funding across Wales, for which national oversight is regarded as essential. This restructuring will include linking the Community Learning Grant to the existing Regional Skills Partnerships within Wales.



The Welsh Government Learning Grant provides funding for those who might otherwise have been precluded from study for financial reasons. The availability of grants and loans is believed to have been an important factor behind the significantly increased Open University enrolments for Wales.

In the funding letters to universities, the vital importance of universities delivering on their civic mission is always stressed. The intention is to bring universities within the umbrella of a single funding body, to oversee the whole of post-compulsory education.

In separate meetings with the Welsh Government's Deputy Minister and with the Education Minister, the commitment of the Welsh Government to promoting adult education and lifelong learning was put in the context of the 'Progressive Agreement' that formed the Government, which includes the right to lifelong learning. The 2015 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act was also seen as underpinning a long-term perspective, within which adult education and lifelong learning can be seen for the investment it is. Longer term still, the current plans for a new school curriculum for Wales will aim to promote the principles of lifelong learning and an ethically informed citizenry.



Conclusion

As is clear from the detail above, there is much to draw upon from the experience and ambition in Scotland and Wales – and there is much to learn from each other as Scotland, Wales, and England take forward their national strategies for Adult Education & Lifelong Learning.

Conclusion

The *1919 Report* advocated the ‘permanent national necessity’ of adult education to deal with the democratic, societal, and industrial challenges that were already at that time unfolding. A similar range of challenges were faced in 1945, and again adult education was seen as a vitally important part of the way forward, with investment over the subsequent thirty years leading to an expansion of university adult education departments, the active role of local authorities, increased industrial education and training, and the expansion of the WEA and other community and voluntary groups – culminating in the creation of the Open University as a world leader in adult and lifelong learning provision.

However, as Helena Kennedy QC put it in her 1997 report on Further Education, the UK system is still based on the principle that ‘if at first you don’t succeed, you don’t succeed’. That remains true today. The regulator for Higher Education, the Office for Students, allows universities to focus on 17 and 18 year old applicants. If at first they don’t succeed, universities are permitted to wash their hands of them. The Access & Participation Plans don’t require universities to give any second chances, as other countries do.

Following the 2008-9 international financial crisis and global recession, Britain has suffered a ‘lost decade’ of austerity, increased regional inequality, stagnant

productivity and living standards, and a fractured society and democracy. Once again, the promotion and development of adult education across our communities and society has become an urgent ‘national necessity’.

Necessary to enable citizens to engage in educated reflection, critical thinking, and democratic discussion.

Necessary to promote community cohesion through the co-creation of educational provision involving members from across the various communities.

Necessary to promote understanding of different cultures and backgrounds. Not only to engender an appreciation of those with protected characteristics that need to be respected, but to create a strong collective understanding that can withstand the erosion of rights, and the hostility towards ‘other’ groups. And which can create the basis for making progress within a common appreciation that promoting the rights of each is the surest way of securing the rights of all.

Necessary to give members of society the capacity and capabilities to engage with the world of work constructively, whether through informed discussion over technological and other developments in the workplace, or combining with others to establish their own enterprise or social enterprise.





And necessary to enable all members of society to consider and analyse the great challenges for the future – of tackling the damaging effects of income and regional inequality; promoting cohesion amongst all members of society whatever their race, religion, or other protected characteristic; and ensuring that the climate crisis does not wreak the devastation it threatens.

In this Report we take the long view – to consider the worlds in which our children and grandchildren might live, and to stress the importance of preparing now to ensure society develops in a direction that will lead to positive outcomes over time. AI and other technologies could well displace up to half of current paid employment. That might lead to a society in which only half the adult citizens were employed – working as long hours and as stressed as today – while the other half languish without work or sufficient income.

Or we could take another path, with the work shared out, and the working week being gradually reduced over time.

Such a development itself could be welcomed as liberating, or feared as threatening, depending upon the context in which it develops and the manner of its introduction. If employees gained the right to paid time off to pursue education, that would enhance their lives, and might well lead to them becoming more engaged in their communities, more active as citizens and electors, and more committed at work – leading to higher productivity and increased opportunity for all to benefit from a still shorter working week over time.

The economist John Maynard Keynes believed that by now we would be working 15 hours a week, since in that time we would be able to produce more than the workforce could do in his day in 40 hours.²⁵

But we have not yet transitioned to the shorter working week. Productivity growth has been used to boost output ever higher over the ninety years since Keynes suggested we should instead use the productivity growth to enjoy more leisure time. This is unsustainable. So, having paid time off from work to study should be a priority for society and Government, as well as employers, as we move towards a more sustainable world of work, enlightenment, and human survival.

Our quality of life in the future will depend on averting a climate catastrophe. If any justification is required for providing increased educational opportunities for all, surely this is it – the importance of enabling educated discussion of such grave issues and problems, and how to go about tackling them, as individuals, communities, workplaces – and as a society.

Provided such catastrophe is averted, we can expect lifetimes of up to a hundred years, with increasing numbers remaining mentally and physically fit into their 90s. Lifelong learning needs to be about individual benefit and fulfilment as well as productivity at work and social engagement – although the enhanced mental and physical health that is associated with education will in turn benefit the economy and society. A far greater investment in lifelong learning will pay off in every sense. There is no benefit to be had from further delay.

Appendix A: Commission Membership

Dame Helen Ghosh (Chair)	Master of Balliol College, Oxford. Previously: Chief Executive, The National Trust; Permanent Secretary at Home Office and Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.
Sir Alan Tuckett OBE (Vice-chair)	Professor, University of Wolverhampton. Previously: Chief Executive, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education; President, International Council for Adult Education.
Melissa Benn	Author, novelist, journalist, broadcaster. Chair, Comprehensive Future; Council member, New Visions for Education Group; founder member, Local Schools Network.
Lord (Karan) Bilimoria CBE	Co-founder & Chairman, Cobra Beer; Chancellor, University of Birmingham; Chair, Advisory Board, University of Cambridge Judge Business School; Vice President, Confederation of British Industry; independent crossbench peer, House of Lords.
Dr Sharon Clancy	Chair, Raymond Williams Foundation; Senior Research Fellow, University of Nottingham. Previously: Head of Community Partnerships, University of Nottingham; Chief Executive, Mansfield Council for Voluntary Service.
Uzo Iwobi OBE	Policy Adviser, Welsh Government; Hon. Fellow, University of Wales Trinity St David; Chair for Diversity, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. Previously: Chief Executive, Race Council Cymru; Commissioner, Commission for Racial Equality.
Melissa Highton	Assistant Principal, Online Learning and Director of Learning, Teaching & Web Services, University of Edinburgh.
Roger McKenzie	Assistant General Secretary, Unison. Previously: Vice Chair, West Midlands Assembly; Midlands Regional Secretary, TUC; Race Equality Officer, TUC.
Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE	Chairman, Shaw Trust; Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London; Chairman, Restoration Partners; Deputy Master, Worshipful Company of Information Technologists. Previously: member of Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority.
Dr Susan Pember OBE	Director, Holes (professional body for Adult Community Education and Learning). Previously: lead Director for FE, Dept for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) and Dept for Education & Skills (DfES); Principal, Canterbury College of F&HE.
Dr Cilla Ross	Vice Principal, Co-operative College.
Sir Peter Scott	Commissioner for Fair Access, Scottish Government; Emeritus Professor of Higher Education, UCL Institute of Education. Previously: Vice Chancellor, Kingston University; Pro-Vice Chancellor and Professor of Education, University of Leeds.
Ruth Spellman OBE	Chief Executive and General Secretary, Workers' Educational Association. Previously: Chief Executive of Chartered Management Institute, Institution of Mechanical Engineers, and Investors in People UK.



Dame Helen Ghosh with her predecessor, A.L. Smith,
Master of Balliol and chair of the 1919 committee

Joint Secretaries/Research Directors

John Holford Robert Peers Professor of Adult Education, University of Nottingham.

Jonathan Michie Professor of Innovation & Knowledge Exchange, President of Kellogg College, Director of the Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford.

Researcher: Dr Nick Mahony (University of Nottingham).

Appendix B: Evidence and Consultations

We are grateful for visits hosted and evidence provided by, and discussions and interviews held with the following organisations and individuals:

1. Contributions to Commission meetings

- i. 1st Commission meeting (Oxford)
Professor Ellen Boeren and Professor Tom Schuller
- ii. 2nd Commission meeting (Manchester)
Professor Lalage Bown; Mel Lenehan, Principal of Fircroft College; Nigel Todd, Chair of Trustees, Co-operative College
- iii. 3rd Commission meeting (Institute of Education)
Lord Kerslake, Chair of the ‘Civic University’ Commission
- iv. 4th Commission meeting (Oxford)
Chris Millward, Director for Fair Access and Participation, Office for Students
- v. 5th Commission meeting (Oxford)
Evidence from the ‘ENLIVEN’ research project

2. Evidence gathering meetings of the Commission

- i. *At the Co-operative College, Manchester*
 - Ria Higham, Secretary, Raymond Williams Foundation
 - Ed Mayo, Secretary General, Co-operatives UK
 - Frances Northrop, Director of Programmes and Practice, NEF
 - Dr Derek Tatton, Founder, Raymond Williams Foundation
 - Jess Thomas, Co-operatives UK Development Manager
- ii. *At the UCL Institute of Education, London*
 - Amar Dave, Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment, Brent Council

- Dr Jay Derrick, Senior Lecturer, Department of Education, Practice and Society
- Prof Vicky Duckworth, Professor of Education, Edge Hill University
- Paul Evans, Assistant National Secretary, BECTU
- David Hughes, CEO, Association of Colleges
- Alice Lester, Operational Director, Brent Council
- Ruairidh Payton, Organiser, The World Transformed Festival
- Ala Uddin, Head of Adult Education, Brent Council

3. Fact Finding Visits: We are grateful to the following for hosting fact finding visits:

- i. Association of Colleges: David Hughes, Chief Executive, and Lewis Cooper, Head of Public Affairs and External Relations
- ii. Birkbeck, University of London: Professor David Latchman, Master, and Jonathan Woodhead, Policy Adviser
- iii. CBI: John Cope, Head of Education and Skills
- iv. Open University: Dr Liz Marr, Acting Pro-Vice Chancellor (Students) and Professor Nicholas Braithwaite, Executive Dean (STEM), Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
- v. Rochdale Borough Council: Helen Chicot
- vi. TUC: Ian Murray, Head of Organisational Services and Skills
- vii. Welsh Government – two visits (July and September):
 - a. Jane Hutt AM, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip
Kathryn Robson, Chief Executive, Adult Learning Wales

- b. Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education
Huw Morris, Director of Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning
Kathryn Robson, Chief Executive, Adult Learning Wales

4. Discussions and consultations

Members of the Commission presented and discussed our perspectives and ideas, and listened to others' views, at:

- ABBC (formerly Association of British Correspondence Colleges): London, 27 March 2019
- Adult Education 100 Campaign stakeholder meeting: City Lit, London, 26 November 2018
- All-Party Parliamentary Group on Adult Education: Westminster, 10 September 2018
- European Agenda for Adult Learning, England Impact Forum: London, 29 January 2019
- European Society for Research in the Education of Adults, Policy Studies Network Conference: Prague, Czech Republic, 16-18 May 2019
- House of Commons Select Committee on Education: Westminster, 23 October 2019
- Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults: Nottingham, 2-4 July 2019
- Universities Association for Lifelong Learning Conference: Telford, 10-12 April 2019

5. Interviews

We are grateful to the following who agreed to be interviewed:

- Moussa Amine-Sylla, Community Organiser, Selby Community Centre
- Dr Sarah Amsler, University of Nottingham
- David Anderson, Director General, National Museum of Wales
- Professor Tim Blackman, Vice-Chancellor, The Open University

- Professor Lalage Bown OBE, Adult Educationalist
- Charlie Clarke, Co-organiser, The World Transformed (TWT) festival, TWT Research Fellow
- Naomi Diamond, Programme Manager, Co-organisers
- Teresa Donegan, Head of UNISON Learning and Organising Services
- Jonny Gordon-Farleigh, Director, Stir to Action
- Neil Griffiths, Director and campaigner, Arts Emergency
- Mark Johnson, Founder, User Voice
- Gerald Jones, Head of Adult Learning Lewisham, Lewisham Council; Chair, LEAFA
- Dr Kevin Love, Nottingham Trent University
- Colm Massey, Solidarity Economy Association
- Yultan Mellor, Principal and Chief Executive, The Northern College, Barnsley
- John Miles, Community Development worker
- Professor Mike Neary
- Pol Nugent, Community Development Worker (freelance) and disabled activist
- Annie Oliver, Community Inclusion Manager, Barton Hill Settlement
- Open Data Services Cooperative
- Matt Waddup, Head of Policy, University and College Union and member of the Labour Party Inquiry into Lifelong Learning
- Dr Volker Wedekind, University of Nottingham
- Rhiannon White, Co-Artistic Director, Common Wealth Theatre Company

6. Submission of Written Evidence

- David Anderson, Director General, National Museum Wales
- Laurence Bassingha, President, University of Huddersfield French Speaking Society
- Deri Bevan, Wales TUC
- Wendy Burton, Scottish Union Learning/STUC
- Dr John Butcher, Director, Access & Open, The Open University
- Joanna Dennison, CEO, On Course South West, Plymouth
- Joe Dromey, Deputy Director, Learning & Work Institute
- Hilary Farnworth, Ransackers Association (RA)
- John Field, Emeritus Professor of Lifelong Learning, University of Stirling
- Dr Jo Forster, Adult Community Educator and Researcher, Co. Durham
- Diane Gardner, Curriculum Head, Widening Access and Community, City of Glasgow College
- Bernard Godding MBE, Educational Centres Association
- Dr Glenn Godenho, Department of Continuing Education, University of Liverpool
- Jonathan Gray, Scottish Government
- Dr Michael Hrebeniak, Wolfson College, University of Cambridge
- Jane Horne, CLD Manager, Glasgow Kelvin College
- Rob Hunter, Leicester Ageing Together
- Janet Kermack, Communities Assistant/Tutor, Angus Council
- Colin Kirkwood, Psychotherapist, Counsellor, Adult Educator, Author, Edinburgh
- Dewi Knight, Welsh Government
- Professor David Latchman, Master of Birkbeck, University of London
- John Miles, British Society of Gerontology (BSG) Special Interest Group (SIG) for Educational Gerontology
- Marianne Miller, Literacy Development Coordinator, Rosemount Lifelong Learning, Glasgow
- Jol Miskin, formerly WEA and GMWU
- Huw Morris, Director of Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, Welsh Government
- Myra Newman, Friends of Belsize Library
- Professor Keith Percy, Association for Education and Ageing (AEA)
- Professor Anna Robinson-Pant, Professor Alan Rogers, University of East Anglia AdultEducation100 Forum
- Kathryn Robson, Chief Executive, Adult Learning Wales
- Professor Tom Sperlinger, Academic Lead for Engagement for the Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus, on behalf of Professor Hugh Brady, Vice Chancellor, University of Bristol
- Tracy Walsh, The RED Learning Coop: Research, Education and Development
- Chris Williams, Welsh Government

Appendix C:

Glossary of Terms

Adult education and lifelong learning: The meaning of the terms ‘adult education’ and ‘lifelong learning’ have been much discussed. There are no universally accepted definitions. Their usage has varied over time and in different countries. In Britain, several other terms (such as ‘continuing education’) have been used for activities which are broadly similar.

The nearest to an ‘official’ definition is currently that issued by UNESCO: ‘Education specifically targeting individuals who are regarded as adults by the society to which they belong to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in a new field or to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field. This also includes what may be referred to as “continuing education”, “recurrent education” or “second chance education”.’

In Britain, particularly under the influence of the *1919 Report*, adult education came to be associated especially with education for adults that compensates for social (and individual) disadvantages that prevent adults from participating fully in initial further or higher education; with community education designed to empower disadvantaged or deprived groups and communities; with education for adults that embodies values and practice that question the status quo and the established order; with non-vocational courses, providing intellectual and cultural improvement and enjoyment for adults, and generally not leading to a qualification; and with learning for adults designed to promote democratic citizenship. The term ‘adult and community learning’ is now often used to refer to courses of these kinds.

During the 1990s, the term ‘lifelong learning’ became popular. It was initially promulgated by international organisations such as the OECD, UNESCO and the European Union, but taken up enthusiastically by UK governments under John Major and Tony Blair. While initially seen as a more all-embracing term than adult education, in practice came to be used (in Britain) particularly for education and training for work-related or vocational purposes, embracing courses to increase economic efficiency and productivity through

the updating of skills and knowledge.

Partly because the term lifelong learning came to be used in this rather narrow way, another term, ‘life-wide learning’ – intended to refer to the need for education to enrich all dimensions of human life and experience – has come into use, though not as an official category of provision.

ELQs: Equivalent and Lower Level Qualifications. In England, government will not provide funding for fees or living costs for students taking second qualifications at the same (or lower) level to a qualification they have already achieved. There are exceptions for a few specific subjects. This means, for instance, that someone who already has a degree or another higher education qualification, such as a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND), who wishes to study for a further qualification at the same level, will not receive financial support.

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages.

ILO: International Labour Organisation.

Levels and Learning Outcomes: The countries of the UK have Qualifications Frameworks which classify qualifications by level, based on learning outcomes. They reflect what the holder of a certificate or diploma is expected to know, understand, and be able to do. Learning outcomes are intended to help people move more easily between different education and training institutions and sectors, by making the meaning of qualifications more transparent. The levels in the English Regulated Qualifications Framework run from 1 to 8. Levels and expected outcomes are described in Cedefop (2018), pp. 165-167. In England, Ofqual regulates the allocation of qualifications to levels: for instance, GCSE A*-C is equivalent to Level 2; a doctorate to Level 8.

MBA: Master of Business Administration, a degree frequently taken by aspirant or ambitious managers and business professionals, either part-time or full-time (by taking a break from employment).

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics subjects.

U3A: University of the Third Age. U3A is an international movement aiming to provide education and stimulation for mainly retired members of the community (the ‘third age’ of life).

UNESCO: The United Nations’ Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. UNESCO was founded in 1946; its first Director-General was the British biologist, Sir Julian Huxley, and its early work and

perspectives were strongly influenced by British adult educators.

WEA: The Workers’ Educational Association is a voluntary adult education organisation founded in 1903 by Albert and Frances Mansbridge. Albert (1876–1952), who left school at 14 to become a clerk at the Co-operative Wholesale Society, was a member of the Ministry of Reconstruction’s Adult Education Committee. For further information, see the WEA’s Adult Learning website at <https://www.wea.org.uk>

Appendix D: The ENLIVEN Project

The work of the Centenary Commission has been supported throughout by input from researchers engaged in the ENLIVEN project. ENLIVEN, an acronym for ‘Encouraging Lifelong Learning for an Inclusive and Vibrant Europe’, is a major, multi-country project funded during 2016-2019 by the European Commission’s Horizon 2020 research programme. Its leader, Professor John Holford (University of

Nottingham), has been joint secretary to the Centenary Commission. Dr Sharon Clancy, a member of the Commission, is one of the project’s Senior Research Fellows. Professor Ellen Boeren (University of Glasgow), who contributed expert evidence to the Commission’s first meeting, is also a member of the project team. Further details are on the project’s website at: <https://h2020enliven.org/>

Endnotes

- 1 Haldane (2019)
- 2 Social Mobility Commission (2016, p. 5)
- 3 Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee (1919, p. 5)
- 4 Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee (1918, p. 3)
- 5 E.g. Almond and Verba (1963, 1989); de Tocqueville (1946); Putnam (1993, 2000)
- 6 Civil Society Futures (2018)
- 7 Felstead, Fuller, Jewson and Unwin (2009)
- 8 See <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2017/football-course-opens-doors>
- 9 Tawney (1912, p. ix); Tawney (1966, p. 82)
- 10 OECD (2019, p. 71)
- 11 Hanushek, Schwerdt, Wiederhold and Woessmann (2015)
- 12 Feinstein, Budge, Vorhaus and Duckworth (2008, p. 18)
- 13 Feinstein and Hammond (2004)
- 14 Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008, p. 216)
- 15 Ipsos MORI, Centre for Mental Health, and Lawson (2018, pp. 9-10)
- 16 OECD CERI (2007); UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2016)
- 17 Aldridge, Tyers, Smeaton and Klenk (2019, p. 12)
- 18 Feinstein (2002)
- 19 A June 2019 poll for the Commission on Workers and Technology (sponsored by the Fabian Society and Community, chaired by Yvette Cooper MP) suggests almost six out of ten employees had no say on the use of new technology.
- 20 See for example Copeland (2006), Roberts (2017)
- 21 Felstead, Fuller, Jewson and Unwin (2009)
- 22 Holford and van der Veen (2005)
- 23 Unger et al., 2019, https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Imagination_unleashed_-_Democratising_the_knowledge_economy_v6.pdf
- 24 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-retraining-scheme/national-retraining-scheme>
- 25 Keynes (1930)

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