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Measuring the Impact of Adult Learning

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Forum for Adult Learning  ECORYS 



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Healthy, Wealthy and Wise:

The impact of adult learning across the UK

October 2017



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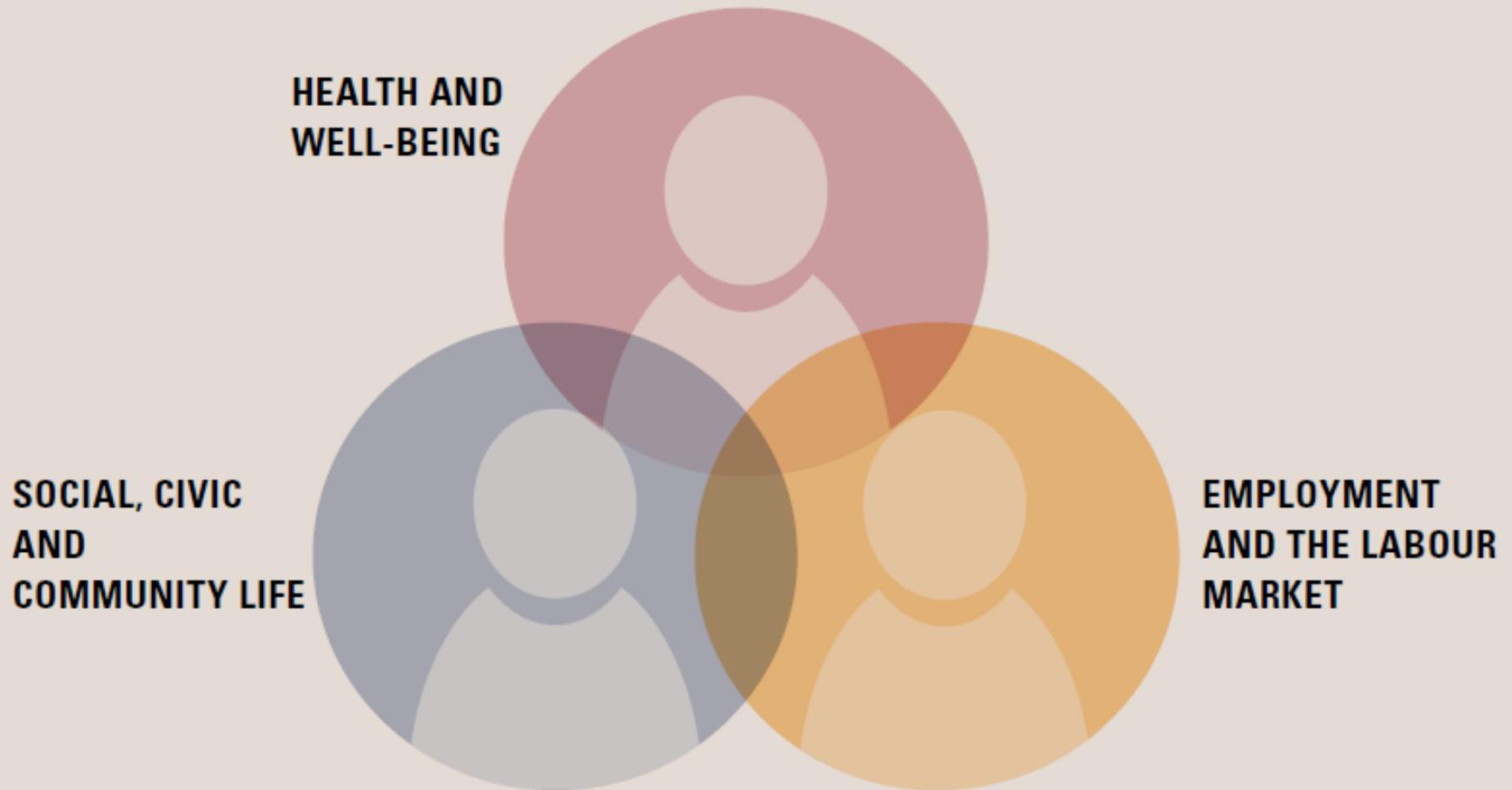
[Healthy, Wealthy and Wise Report](#)

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Adult learning covers the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities – both general and vocational – undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.

Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE, 2011)

The overlapping benefits of adult learning and education



UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2016) *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*, p.21

Ten Strategic Challenges for the UK

Community Safety and Security

Fair Work

Mental Health and Well-being

Lifestyles

Skills Mismatches

An Ageing Population

Poverty of Place

Engagement, Involvement and Empowerment

Productivity

Sustainable Development

How does Adult Learning help?

Empowering Communities

Contributing to Productivity

Extending Life Expectancy

Improving Health Behaviours and Attitudes

Encouraging Participation

Enabling More Efficient Healthcare

Enabling Access and Advancement

Developing Individual Skills

Building Social Capital

***Impact* - the different kinds of change that an intervention might help to bring about over time.**

Why measure impact?

- Some impacts are **easily measured but limited** e.g. qualifications
- **Fiscal austerity** - creates a need to look beyond qualifications
- Increasingly, adult learning providers need to **demonstrate and communicate ‘wider outcomes’** (e.g. health, well-being), alongside other data required by funders and inspectors.

Example: Adult Basic Skills

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

9.0m

people lack essential skills like literacy or numeracy.

13.5m

people lack basic digital skills.

One



out of



two



people with low literacy or numeracy are in work. People with essential skills are more likely to vote and be active citizens.

- Significant investment in England since 2000s under Skills for Life Strategy, via qualifications-driven funding.
- Yet recent research (e.g. OECD Survey of Adult Skills, 2013) shows limited improvements in adults' basic skills, esp. numeracy.
- Qualifications don't always equate to competence - nor do they capture wider impacts of learning.

New Approaches to Measuring Impact

- Use of ‘social metrics’ - a range of validated social science measurement scales:
 - ✓ statistical testing to ensure items are sufficiently independent, but combine to an appropriate measure
 - ✓ cognitively tested - ensures questions are neutral, clear and easy to respond to
 - ✓ field tested in surveys or studies elsewhere
 - **Embedding** social metrics allows:
 - ✓ more detailed understanding of learner outcomes
 - ✓ benchmarking against other interventions
 - ✓ stronger evidence of impact - does not show causal relationship between learning and change, but generates strong inference if done right
 - Challenges: **implementation and inclusivity**
-

Example: ONS Well-being Scale

The ONS health and well-being scale uses just four questions. Though still considered an experimental scale, it has been widely tested. The ONS questions have been used in a number of large scale, national surveys.

The questions included are:

- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, to what extent do you feel that your life is worthwhile?
- Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Scale: 0 to 10 scale where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.

Example: GSES

University College London's General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) seeks to measure independence, self-autonomy, and self-confidence using a ten-item set of questions. It has been validated as a robust measurement scale. Some of the questions included are:

- I will be able to achieve most of the goals I set for myself
- When facing difficult tasks, I am certain I will succeed
- In general, I think I can achieve outcomes that are important to me
- I believe I can succeed at most tasks to which I set my mind
- I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges
- I am confident I can manage well on many different tasks
- Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well
- Even when things are tough, I can manage quite well

Scale: Strongly agree; Agree; No preference; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

Final Thoughts

Practitioner Reflections

- In your setting, **which impacts and outcomes** are measured, and how?
- **Whose priorities** are reflected in the approach to measuring impact?
- How could impact measurement be improved?

What needs to be done?

- Adult learning providers of all kinds should be supported to **assess outcomes and impact in a systematic and comparable way**, building on existing good practice.
- Government departments must **embrace the demonstrable value of adult learning and its role in key strategies and policies**, acknowledging responsibility is not limited to DfE.

**THANK YOU
QUESTIONS**