

# Healthy, Wealthy and Wise:

The impact of adult learning across the UK

Report of the Scotland Impact Forum, 2017



# Scotland

## Context

Adult learning policy in Scotland is led by the Scottish Government and administered and supported through Education Scotland's Community Learning and Development (CLD) Team. Since 1975 local education authorities have had powers to provide further education for their areas as set out in the Education Scotland Act 1980.

The system of continuing, post-school, non-tertiary education in Scotland includes three main types of provision that are available to adult learners:

- Community Learning and Development (CLD)
- Training and Apprenticeships
- Further and Higher Education

There is overlap among these types of provision. For example, colleges contribute strongly to both training and developing the young workforce. Adults who wish to access Higher Education can do so through the Scottish Wider Access Programme in colleges.

The common defining feature of CLD programmes and activities is that they are negotiated and developed with communities and participants, enabling individuals to re-engage in learning.

Training provision, underpinned by the Skills for Scotland strategy (Scottish Government, 2010), supports lifelong development and the use of skills. Government funded national training programmes are managed and delivered by Skills Development Scotland.

Further education has a wide remit, including the preparation of learners for qualifications, access to higher education and participation in any programme of learning, as well as assisting people whose first language is not English.



## Policy Drivers

In Scotland adult learning policy is largely shaped by:

- Current funding challenges at both national and local levels
- An ageing population
- Unemployment, particularly in areas of social deprivation
- Political changes
- The Community Empowerment Act
- Education Scotland Act 1980
- Public Service Reform-sharing outcomes with other services including health, justice etc.,

Adult learning in Scotland is considered to be the remit of local authorities, in line with the 1980 Education Scotland Act and the subsequent Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 which cites as one of its goals, improved life chances for people of all ages through learning, personal development and active citizenship.

To this end, the Community Planning Partnerships have responsibility to enact this goal and to ensure greater co-operation and co-ordination between the key players. Now the challenge is to extend this further and develop adult learning across sectors. Adult learning in its traditional form includes literacy, ESOL, skills for work and life; however, learning in respect of health, STEM, citizenship, resilience, business etc. is also delivered at a community level in partnership with other providers.

Scotland, like many other countries has an ageing population. Health and social conditions have contributed to people not only living longer, but also being active longer. People wish to, and often need to, work beyond the traditional retirement ages, yet, as they age, they are faced with new learning demands, such as, workplace skills (IT), managing health conditions, active volunteering opportunities and engaging with different leisure activities.

To enable older people to effectively contribute and add to community capacity, a more cohesive and co-ordinated learning plan is required. Older people's unemployment (particularly those aged 50+) is a challenge and there is a need for a proactive policy in developing the older workforce, particularly amongst those that have not gone on to university. Vocational pathways, which begin in community settings and continue through colleges, employers and within community groups can help develop both practical and social skills.

## Key Challenges

- **Recent changes to the benefits systems** require claimants to commit to work or additional learning. CLD's remit to be all-inclusive in terms of age and health capacity provides an opportunity to address what could be a changing set of learning needs.
- **The capacity of CLD staff** to meet the varied and diverse set of learning needs requires new and diverse sets of delivery needs. Education Scotland's CLD Standard's Council's remit is through the i-develop framework to support and encourage innovative learning and development for CLD practitioners.
- **Learner engagement.** Despite the commitment to assess 'real' needs, learner engagement has always presented a challenge. Undoubtedly greater community based activity will help and through the likes of Scotland's Learning Partnership's Learner Forums, greater and more relevant learning opportunities can become reality.
- **Up-skilling and re-skilling of people in work** is being supported by a recently announced Scottish Government initiative to fund employers to better provide and support in-work training. This is intended to involve the Further Education providers with an opportunity to participate more in adult learning.



Nicola Sturgeon MSP presenting the 25th Scottish Adult Learners' Week Awards with Jordan Young.

## Action Required

- 1. Develop an integrated and cross sectoral adult learning (lifelong) agenda**, which recognizes that learning has the potential to meet the needs of all, whether it is for economic, social or personal reasons
- 2. Support the advancement of community-based adult learning** that incorporates:
  - a. Literacies learning
  - b. Creativity
  - c. Technology and Future Skills
  - d. ESOL
  - e. Health awareness
  - f. STEM involvement
  - g. Citizenship
  - h. Resilience
  - i. Business start-up
- 3. Enable the development of a learning culture** that is both aimed at and inclusive of an ageing population. We must be equipped and ready to 'teach old dogs new tricks'. Learning is not the sole remit of the young and working population. Both through necessity and for pleasure, older people have the right to develop new skills and new interests. The opportunity also exists to utilize the skills and experience of older people through intergenerational and family learning programmes, which contribute to raising attainment amongst school pupils.
- 4. Create more vocational pathways** that begin in community settings and continue through colleges, employers and within community groups. This would help to develop both practical and social skills.
- 5. Support a 'Year of the Adult Learner' in Scotland**, building on last year's EAEA initiative to support lasting links and bridges with our European networks post 2019. Celebration is a critical part of adult learning strategy. For over twenty-five years Scotland has run an annual Adult Learners' Week Awards programme that centres on the achievements of the adult learner, particularly those who have not benefitted from their initial education.



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