

Adult learning and Wellbeing: What does the evidence tell us?

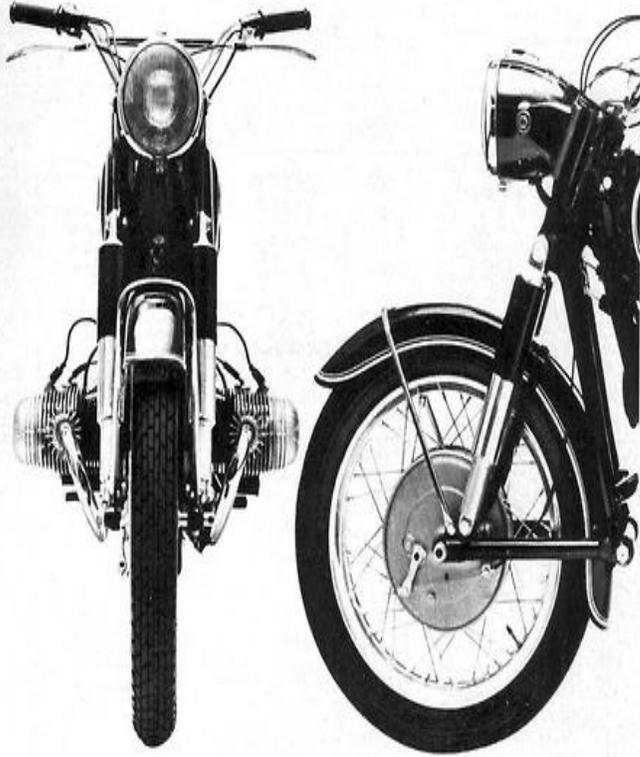
Prof Olga Tregaskis
University of East Anglia (UEA)

Research lead:
What Works Wellbeing – Work and
Learning Programme
ESRC Wellbeing and Productivity
Programme

If you want to be happy
for a day, drink.

If you want to be happy
for a year, marry.

If you want to be happy
for a lifetime, ride a BMW.



SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
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CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO



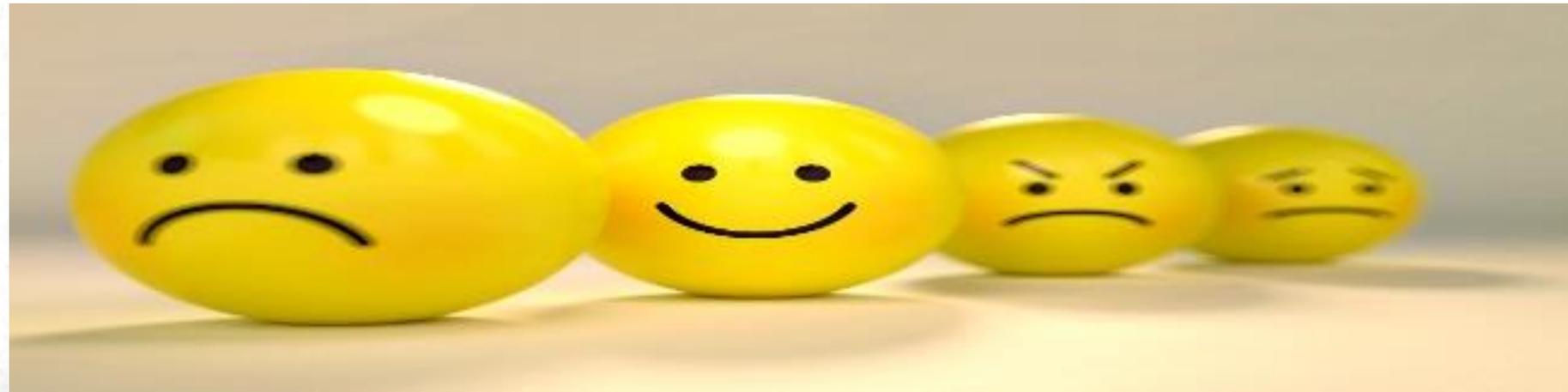
‘There is growing recognition that the measures of a country’s progress need to include the wellbeing of its citizens (Lord O’Donnell et al, *Wellbeing and Policy*, Legatum Institute, 2014)

Hedonic – anxiety, happiness

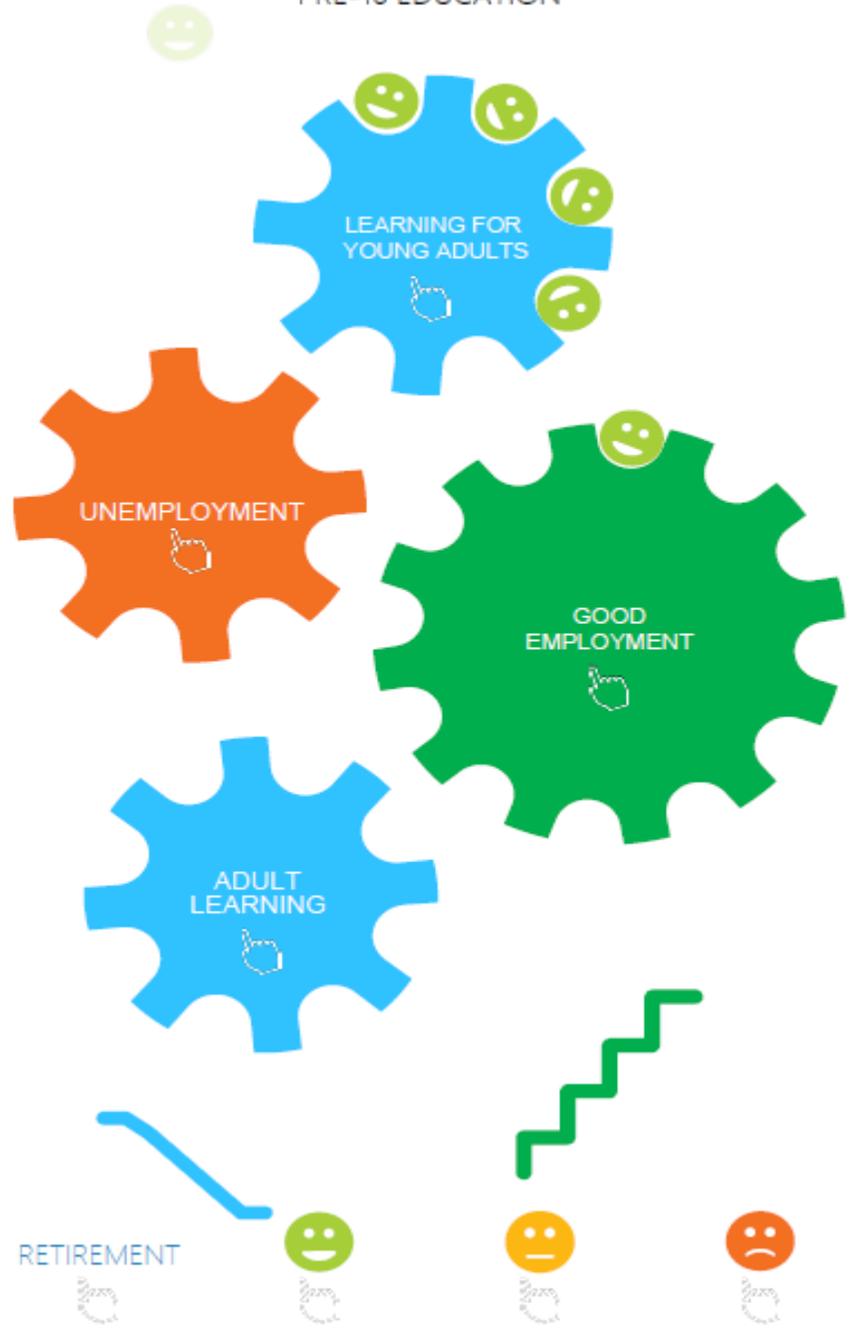
Eudaimonic - captured by meaning and purpose

‘Human knowledge is one thing, human wellbeing another. There is no predetermined harmony between the two. The examined life may not be worth living.’ (John Gray, *Straw Dogs*, 2003)

Summative/subjective – life satisfaction



PRE-16 EDUCATION



What Works Network



- Communities
- Sport & culture
- Wellbeing economics
- Work & learning

Reviewed over 25k scientific studies
 Picked around 240 of the best
 Analysed data from 100000s people & 100s of organisations
 Spoke to around 450 stakeholders

- Employment transitions
- Adult & community learning
- Workplace wellbeing
- Cost effectiveness

Adults learners – Who and What type of learning supports wellbeing?

PT course = wellbeing benefit equivalent to £1,584 of income per year (BIS 2012)

Who is learning?

Participation in adult learning beyond compulsory education is low:

- 20% of adults engage in job-related training and
- 3% in hobbies and leisure courses
- (Understanding Society, UK population 16+ year olds excluding those in full-time education);

CBT, mindfulness, relaxation, learning works

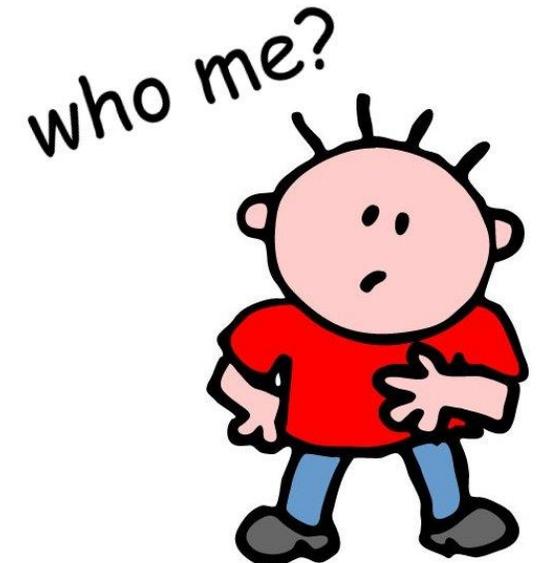
What?

Employers are the single largest provider of job-related training (71%).....Soworkplace is an important space for learning

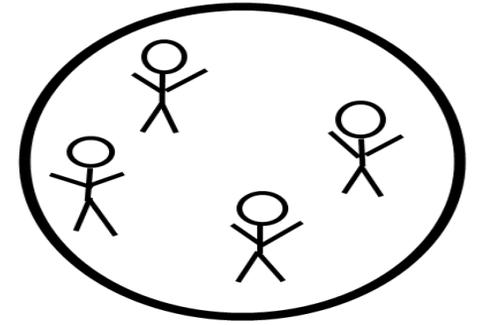
Leisure and hobby learning provision is dominated by 'other providers' (70%). HE and FE =16%, employers 8%, government schemes 5%

37% of job-related training is formal leads to a qualification

36% of hobby/leisure learning is formal leads to a qualification



What about those not in work?



Worklessness – is damaging to wellbeing

In the UK, the not employed = 24% of working age population (16-64 year olds who are not full-time students)

- 7% unemployed (majority of 16-24 yr olds within this group); 6% retired, 6% taking care of family 4% long-term sick/disabled – these can be amongst some of our more marginalised groups (and majority are female)**
- Across the UK the proportion of unemployed is high in NI; proportion of sick/disabled high for NI; proportion of carers high for NI; Wales the highest proportion of retired**

Wellbeing levels (Understanding Society 2010-14; n=149,271 (weighted)) SWB 1-7

Employment status:

retired 5.39;

employed 5.16;

taking care of family 4.94;

unemployed 4.41;

longterm sick or disabled 3.46

Men & women 5.10

Educational qual:

Degree 5.27 vs no qualification 5.04

Ethnicity:

white UK 5.13,

ethnic minority born in outside UK 4.94,

Ethnic minority born inside UK 4.78

Area level deprivation (England only):

least deprivation 5.31 vs high deprivation 4.79

**There is an important role for
adult learning in supporting
wellbeing**

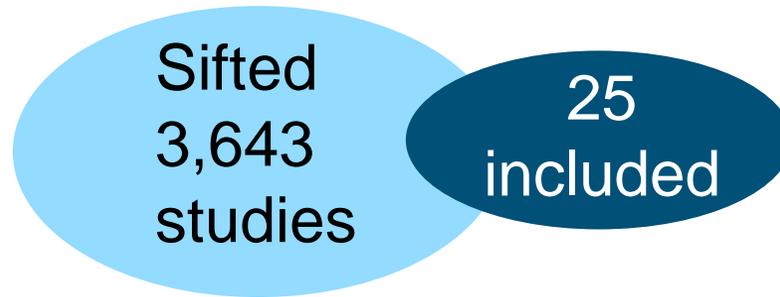
Statistical Evidence

**Intervention
evidence**



Wellbeing value of adult learning: systematic review of interventions

What impact did an AL intervention have on learner wellbeing?



Direct measure of SWB – satisfaction and purpose; depression measures; WHO-QOL; SF-36

Soft learning outcome measures – self-esteem; confidence; sense of belonging/community; joy of learning; social relationships; social support; self-efficacy.

Hard learning outcomes – course completion; competence level assessment
Mixture of quals and quants measures



Literacy & Numeracy



Literacy and numeracy learning interventions (4 studies – 1RCT):

😊😊 - literacy learning has a positive impact on wellbeing, likely casual mechanism being self-confidence and self-esteem,

- also leading to more ambitious learning trajectories and higher employment expectations
- Speculation that the casual mechanisms enable independence in progression pathways which may in turn further enhance wellbeing
- Self-confidence and self-esteem closely linked to attainment of educational certificates

😊 - literacy has a positive impact on social capital (development of social networks followed by socio-economic progression outcomes)

- Some evidence that the youth and non-English speaking groups benefited from the social context of the learning environment, whilst the mature-age group and indigenous students valued the educational benefits & certificates

Learning interventions for older people (8 studies- 2 quants (1RCT and 1Quasi-expt; 2 focus on men and 4 focused on women –men only may be particularly beneficial; hobby learning, mental and physical fitness):

😊😊 - learning for older people has a +ve impact on their wellbeing

😊😊 - learning facilitates social contact and relations = +ve wellbeing

😊 - hobby learning i.e. for personal interest realises hedonic wellbeing 'joy of learning'

😊 - sense of belonging at community and group level were key ways in which learning opportunities impacts on individual wellbeing

😊 - for retired older men, unstructured or informal learning may be more beneficial for wellbeing (Men's Sheds)

😊 - opportunity to share skills or mentor others may also be particularly important to older learners in realising wellbeing (may explain why older workers gain less SWB from workplace learning)

Older People



Empowering Marginalised Groups

Learning interventions aimed at empowering marginalised groups (10 studies -9 longitudinal/2 RTCs, only 1 qual):

😊😊😊 - soft learning outcomes (self-esteem and self-worth) critical process outcome that consistently impacts wellbeing across groups

😊😊😊 - learning in order to build confidence enhances wellbeing and helps individuals progress in education and personal development

- Key in the empowerment interventions

😊😊 - learning has a direct +ve effect on reducing depression and stress – learning life skills and social skills, carer competence, parenting skills were important here – consistent with ‘mastery’ benefits of learning

😊 - learning for marginalised groups can help people develop a sense of purpose in life

😊 - Soft learning outcomes support increased wellbeing and both help individual progress in employment – consistent with the transformative impact of learning on people lives

Groups included – carers, adults with intellectual difficulties, mental health service users, adults with mental health issues, young adults with anxiety, female empowerment aimed at domestic violence groups, migrant and refugee groups



Community Organisations

Learning interventions organised by community organisations (7 studies, only 1 longitudinal, mixed methods):

Learning in the community learning centres – the learners were younger - stepping stone to further learning, they wanted/valued formal learning recognition



😊😊 - learning in the community has a +ve effect on wellbeing

😊 - a key casual mechanism is social contact – desire by many to escape boredom and loneliness (counter-intuitive finding as this was for those under 30 compared to over 60 yr olds)

😊 Learning can increase sense of purpose and confidence which also supports increased wellbeing

- Increased happiness and improved quality of life reported

😊 Community learning may create spillover effects beyond the individual to community and family relationships

- Some of these studies included older people and the sense of community connection and giving-back was important to wellbeing and the value of the learning opportunity

What are the ingredients?

Make it accessible

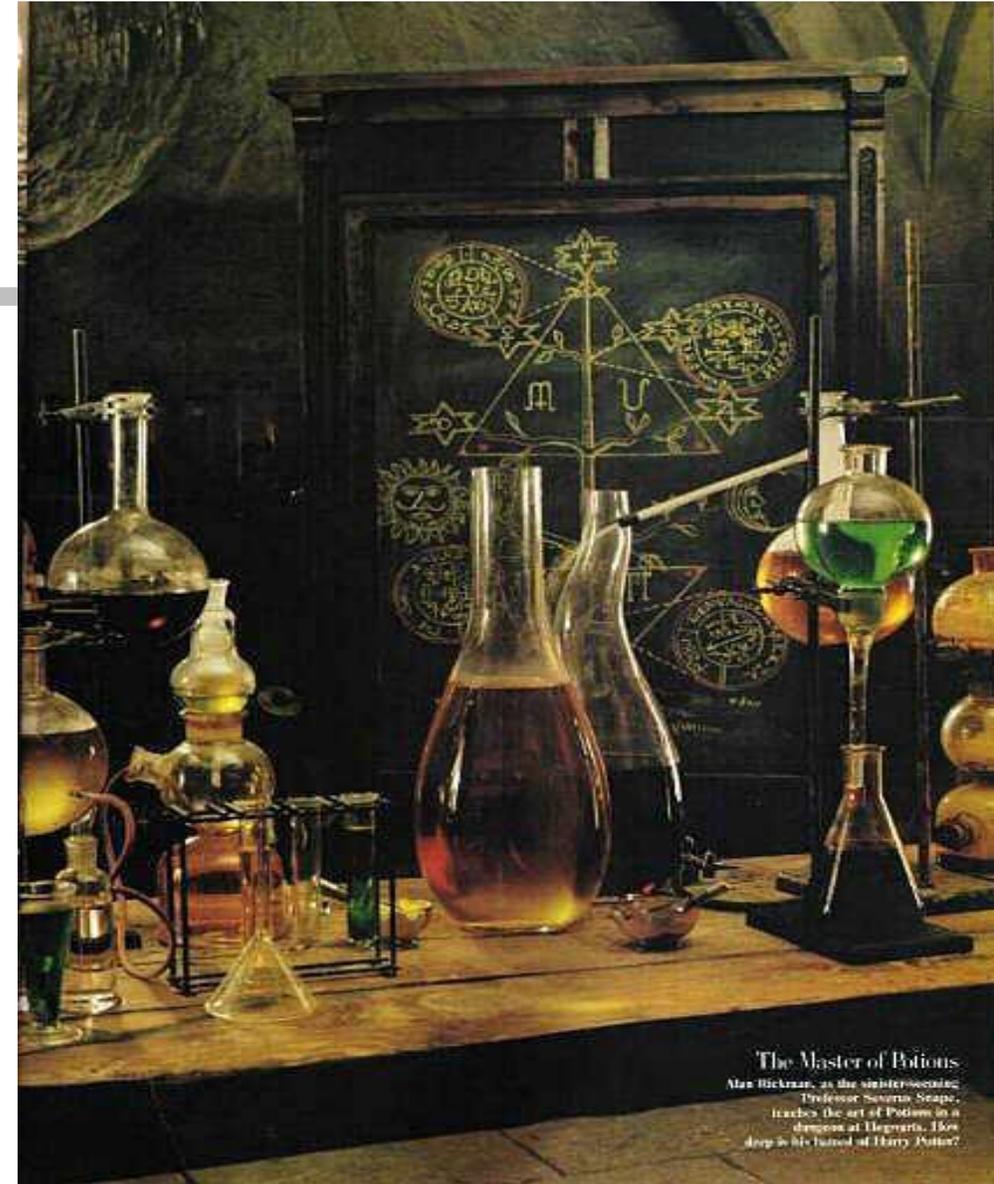
Make it enjoyable

Needs a social learning component – online training without a social learning component less effective for wellbeing than blended approaches)

- **Creating a supportive learning environment – allows self-confidence and self-esteem to improve**
- **Use of peer learning and learner as mentors**

Design for soft learning outcomes (relational competence, self-esteem and confidence, social ties/networks, learner agency)

All learners felt their learning was not yet complete – suggests a continuous learning mindset



The Master of Potions
Max Bickman, as the sinister-looking Professor Severus Snape, practices the art of Potions in a dungeon at Hogwarts. How deep is his bond of Harry Potter?

Wellbeing value of adult learning: scaling up the evidence outcomes

Understanding
Society, 2010-14

Life Satisfaction measure of wellbeing

Over 45,000 individuals tracked over 4 years

Findings:

Hobbies & leisure training increased life satisfaction across more groups than did job-related training.

The intensity of job-related training made a difference to life satisfaction for young people and those living in highly deprived areas:

- low intensity training decreased life satisfaction while high intensity training increased it.

The unemployed: low-intensity job training **decreased** their life satisfaction by 4%, however, high intensity hobbies and leisure training **increased** it by 8%.

Those with no educational qualifications particularly **benefitted** from hobbies and leisure training, more so than many other groups.

Older adults (50+ years) experienced an **increase** in their life satisfaction after taking up low intensity hobbies and leisure training

Those living in more deprived areas benefitted from all types of hobbies & leisure training and high intensity job related training

Wellbeing as a barrier to learning: the next generation

Understanding
Society, 2010-18

Adolescent wellbeing and learning:

MH measured via the Strengths
and Difficulties questionnaire:

Peer-problems; prosocial
behaviour;
hyperactivity/inattention;
emotional symptoms of stress;
emotion control.

Findings:

Adolescent MH is a predictor of
educational attainment

Good mental health for boys and girls
has a direct +ve association on A level
attainment

However...

for girls, poor wellbeing's negative
influences on education attainment can
be off-set by parent/family support

for boys family support does not work
in the same way. **The association
between mental health and educational
outcomes for boys is much strong – yet
we understand less about the
mechanisms.**

Is learning good for the Wellbeing of adults?

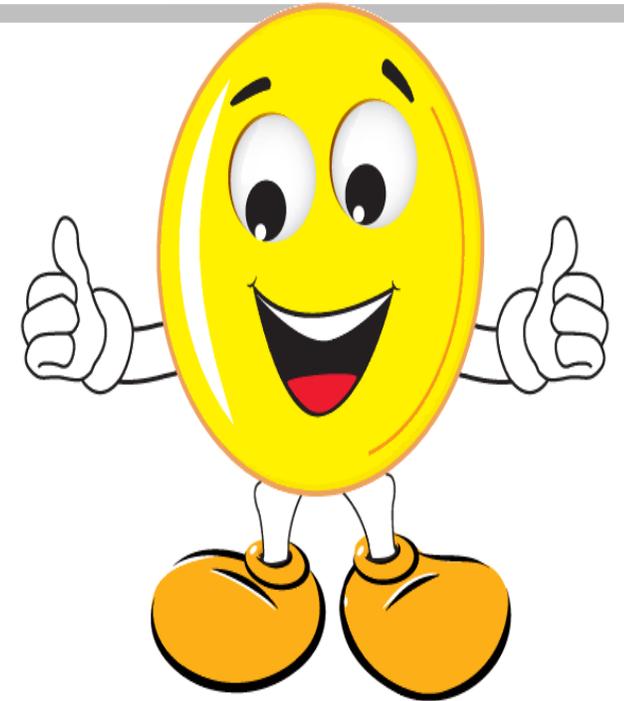
😊😊😊 - learning is positive for wellbeing

😊 - 😊😊😊 - casual mechanism – facilitating social contact, social skills, social networks, developing purpose and progression pathways

😊😊- 😊😊😊 - Learning outcomes matter - soft outcomes are as relevant as hard outcomes to enhancing individual wellbeing

😊 - for some, unstructured or informal learning may be more beneficial for wellbeing than formal structures

😊 NO intervention studies found adverse effects of the learning intervention on wellbeing – no evidence of harm



But quantitative evidence suggests some evidence of harm for some groups

What next?

Policy
Implications

How do we mobilize the evidence into practice?

- Who are the sector champions?
- What tools are useful?
- What (sector) structural changes are needed?

How do we plug the evidence gaps?

- Is there a role for evidence hub?
- Is there a role of evaluation practitioners?

How do we remove the implementation problems?

- Learning design
- Learning delivery
- Learner empowerment



Work & Learning Programme
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