

BIS IMPACT REPORT 2014-15

April 2015

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales)

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NIACE is the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, the national voice for lifelong learning. We are an international development organisation and think-tank, working on issues central to the economic renewal of the UK, particularly in the political economy, education and learning, public policy and regeneration fields.

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SUMMARY

1. The UK has longstanding shortfalls in learning and skills. For example, some five million adults lack the functional literacy and numeracy capabilities they need for life in modern Britain. This is linked to disparities in participation in learning, with some groups locked out of opportunity.
2. This has a significant impact on prospects for the UK and people's life chances. Access to learning is crucial to help people be active citizens and get the best deal as consumers. It is critical to helping people find work and build a career – making the most of their talents. Learning matters for our businesses: skills gaps and shortages risk holding back our future prosperity and growth prospects. And all of this has an impact on the public finances too – **learning and skills are drivers of prosperity and inclusion**. Taken together, shortfalls and inequalities in access to learning hold back national prosperity, individual opportunity, and business success.
3. The Government has introduced a range of reforms over recent years to try to widen participation in learning and skills, and ensure that this benefits people's lives and meets national and business need. These can help to make a real difference and support the wider change we need as a country.
4. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (**NIACE**) **plays a key role in supporting Government achieve its objectives**. NIACE is a national and international development organisation and think tank. NIACE supports the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to deliver its objectives through a formal written Compact with BIS, and an annually agreed grant agreement setting out the work it will undertake with the Government and partners.
5. This is in addition to wider work undertaken by NIACE and funded by other bodies, supporting similar objectives. In total, the BIS grant work covered by this report represents around one third of the total work undertaken by NIACE. In this way, the value of investment by BIS is maximised, allowing NIACE **to make a greater contribution to supporting BIS achieve its objectives**.
6. Over the course of 2014-15, NIACE has delivered 31 projects contributing to 21 outcomes through its grant agreement with BIS. The aim of these has been to support BIS in meeting its objectives to widen participation in learning and skills, and maximise its impact on people's lives and the nation's economy. **Table 1 shows some of the major highlights of the work**. This is very much a snapshot – the report describes more fully the complete range of activity undertaken.

Table 1: Key NIACE work for BIS undertaken during 2014-15

	The challenge	What have we done?	What next?
1. Citizens' Curriculum	Millions of adults lack the core capabilities they need for life and work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ran 16 pilots trialling a new approach delivering capabilities in an integrated way • 9 in 10 learners felt more motivated and 83% reported less social isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing with other groups, such as those out-of-work • Work to embed in mainstream delivery and funding
2. Personal & social development (PSD)	For many people out of work, employability and soft skills are key barriers to employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted research with the Army to identify what works from their PSD provision • Developed a new PSD course being trialled for female prisoners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build what works evidence base • Extend best practice to boost value of public investment
3. Adult Learners' Week	Adults, particularly in disadvantaged groups, are less likely to participate in learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ran Adult Learners' Week, bringing in £1 of ESF for every £1 of BIS funding • 2000 award nominations, 3000 'Have a Go' events, attendees included 64 politicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2015 campaign has launched, with national media coverage • Supported by a wider Festival of Learning to extend learning
4. UK Coordinator for EU adult learning agenda	The EU agenda for adult learning helps to guide EU-level investment and strategy for adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIACE is UK coordinator, on behalf of BIS, representing the UK at EU Agenda events • Developed eight projects to share good practice and create communities of practice across the UK • Set up UK wide Impact Forums in each of the 4 nations to support engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to act as UK coordinator, with UK-wide activities • Impact Forums embedded in UK Adult Learning Strategy • Shape EU strategy so that UK benefits from EU investment
5. Mid-life career review	People in mid-life often lack support to make choices over their life and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered with 17 partners some 3000 mid-life career reviews, a 'life-wide' approach • 51% felt more confident, 37% interested in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending the concept to other groups, such as with

	career. An aging population makes this a cross-government issue	further learning, 22% found work	Age UK and Jobcentre Plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing stakeholder group to roll out the model
6. Young people	Some young people, such as young adult carers and care leavers, miss out on learning, including access to Traineeships and Apprenticeships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced, with care leavers, Inspire Me, an App with personal stories of leaving care Developed What Employers Want website, where young people engage directly with employers such as Asda Delivered 10 workshops on Traineeships to JCP and traineeship providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to facilitate a cross-Government group & campaign for our three asks for young adult carers Continue to run successful groups and networks to share best practice
7. Digital learning	Digital technology can transform learning, but to do this providers and learners need support across the sector including OLASS and local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with three family learning providers to trial ways to embed digital learning Research with four providers to identify benefits of and barriers to blended learning Supported the implementation of FELTAG recommendation for learners to be able to learn using their own devices (BYOD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support the use of the Virtual Campus for OLASS Work with the Skills Funding Agency to establish funding guidelines for online learning Continue to ensure access for underrepresented groups
8. Making the wider system work	The learning and skills system is complex and interacts with other systems. People and providers need to work together effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped Government meet its target for referrals from Jobcentre Plus to Traineeships by training 190 JCP staff and 52 providers Developed an English, Maths and digital online screening tool; and established an online forum for community learning Worked with the Skills Funding Agency to consider the effectiveness of support for people taking out Learning Loans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support growth of Traineeships and widening participation Continue joint work to support providers to offer provision that better meets the needs of their local economy

INTRODUCTION

1. NIACE is the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, the national voice for lifelong learning. We are an internationally respected development organisation and think-tank, working on issues central to the economic renewal of the UK, particularly in the political economy, education and learning, public policy and regeneration fields.
2. We campaign for the **personal, social and economic benefits from lifelong learning**, work to improve people's experience of the **adult learning and skills system**, and fight for all adults to have opportunities throughout their lives to participate in and benefit from learning.
3. We are a membership organisation, and our work is local, national and pan-European, across all types of learning including literacy and numeracy, digital, further/higher education, apprenticeships, workplace, community learning, leisure and citizenship. Our specialism is **post-16 learning and skills**, but we increasingly work across all age ranges from early years to later life.
4. NIACE has a **formal written Compact with the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS)**. This agreement acknowledges NIACE's **unique role** as a '**critical friend**' of Government on matters relating to **lifelong learning**. NIACE also receives a grant from BIS, which focuses on themes and outcomes agreed annually.
5. In the last year (2014-15), NIACE has used the BIS grant to **lead and deliver 31 projects contributing to 21 outcomes**. This report summarises the outcomes and impact of this work and is structured around the four priority themes: **Life Skills** core curriculum; Supporting **progression** for excluded groups; **Digital learning**; and **Supporting and evaluation** policy implementation.

THEME 1: LIFE SKILLS

6. In the UK around 1 in 6 adults struggle with reading and writing, and around 1 in 4 adults find maths difficult. Life Skills - [English, maths](#), financial, [ESOL, digital](#) and other related skills - underpin lifelong learning and enable adults to **participate** and contribute fully in society, and **support economic growth**. Research shows that adults who improve their life skills have better life chances, are more employable and enjoy improved health and well-being.
7. The case for the delivery of Life Skills as a set of inter-related '**Citizens' Curriculum**' capabilities is supported by research evidence which suggests that embedded approaches to literacy and numeracy teaching improve learning outcomes: learners have more **positive attitudes** to the value of basic skills learning and are more likely to gain a qualification (Casey et al., 2006). Supporting this, research also shows that a higher degree of integration of key skills is one of the main areas of good practice associated with successful completion of work based learning programmes (Martinez, 2002).

8. Our work under this theme supports BIS to:

- implement the English and maths actions set out in *New Challenges, New Chances* which are focused on **progressing learners** towards GCSE/Level 2 standard;
- support the sector to **improve the engagement and progression** of adults who lack basic English and maths skills by scoping and promoting pathways for progression, and by preparing case studies for use in the field;
- take forward the priorities outlined by the **Education Technology Action Group** (ETAG); and
- ensure **Apprenticeships can be accessed** by those with lower initial attainment in English and Maths including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Citizens' Curriculum

9. A key recommendation of *Learning through Life*, the report of the NIACE Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning¹, is the creation of a Citizens' Curriculum. NIACE believes that this approach – learning which is **locally-led**, actively **involves learners** in shaping its contents, and **interlinks language** (English for Speakers of Other Languages), English and maths skills with digital, health, financial and civic capabilities – has great potential to engage adults, including the most disadvantaged, and **motivate them to participate** in learning provision which addresses **English, maths and language needs** whilst developing the wider skills and capabilities needed in today's society.
10. In 2014, NIACE completed a six month Citizens' Curriculum scoping study funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The study found strong support for such an approach amongst providers, practitioners and other stakeholders. Three underlying principles for a life skills / citizens' curriculum for adult learning were identified:
- An holistic approach to provision for adult learners interpreted through the local context.
 - Learner involvement in determining the curriculum to meet their needs and interests.
 - An interlinked combination of literacy, numeracy, language (English for Speakers of Other Languages), financial, health, digital and civic capabilities.
11. Within our BIS funding this year, we have piloted the Citizens' Curriculum with a particular focus on **engaging learners from disadvantaged groups**. We recruited and supported 16 learning providers to implement the approach and create progression pathways to formal learning, such as Functional Skills English and maths and GCSE qualifications. Providers represented the full breadth of the learning and skills sector, including ex-/offender learning, family learning,

¹ Schuller, T. and Watson, D. (2009) *Learning through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning*. Leicester: NIACE

provision for homeless adults, provision for disadvantaged young adult learners and provision for migrants. NIACE also undertook a mixed methods evaluation to capture the impact of the activity for providers, practitioners and learners.

12. Our piloting activity broadly confirms the feasibility of the adoption of such an approach in a range of delivery contexts across the adult learning and skills sector. Providers and practitioners in a range of settings were able to use the Citizens' Curriculum approach to develop their provision by including new content and activities, involving learners in the design of the curriculum and establishing new partnerships. These developments resulted in an offer which helped providers to engage adults in learning. This suggests clear potential to use the Citizens' Curriculum as the basis for the development of **'study programme' for adult learners**, particularly for those with skills at or below Level 1, in a range of contexts beyond the scope of the current pilots.

As a result of participating in the Citizens' Curriculum pilots...

- 92 per cent of learners are more motivated to learn
- 83 per cent of learners report a reduction in social isolation
- 59 per cent of learners want to get more involved in their community
- 59 per cent of learners are more confidence in their maths skills and 48 per cent are more confident in their literacy skills
- 53 per cent of learners have positive attitudes towards finding employment
- 35 per cent of learners are more able to manage their health

13. The Citizens' Curriculum is a key part of NIACE's strategic plan, and central to implementing *Skills for Prosperity: Building Sustainable Recovery for All*, our manifesto for the 2015 general election². We look forward to working with a wide range of stakeholders – including policy makers, charitable trusts, sector representative organisations, awarding organisations, providers, practitioners and learners – to support the further development of the Citizens' Curriculum in 2015/16 and beyond.
14. To ensure NIACE effectively engages the sector with the Citizens' Curriculum, we are hosting an event on 20 May 2015, to be attended by the charity's patron, HRH The Princess Royal. It will be attended by senior staff from a wide range of organisations who are well-placed to work with us in the future to expand and drive forward the Citizens' Curriculum approach. The event will include a showcase of the pilot projects including presentations, videos and learner and staff interviews, followed by round table discussions focussing on next steps for the Citizens' Curriculum.

² <http://shop.niace.org.uk/manifesto-general-election-2015.html>

15. In partnership with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), NIACE has been working with the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) to develop a proposal a Citizens' Curriculum approach with people in receipt of **Employment and Support Allowance** (ESA). The aim is to rigorously test whether a tailored **programme of study** designed to equip ESA claimants with the skills they need to be an active citizen and prepare for the labour market can more effectively engage customers and increase the numbers finding work. The outcome would inform future policy, including commissioning of employment programmes after the 2015 Election and potential **devolution of skills and employment services**, as well as frontline delivery developed a proposal to pilot a Citizens' Curriculum approach with adults.

Personal and social development (PSD) learning

16. A recent study undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation examined the causes of recurrent cycles of work, poverty and benefit cycling. Qualitative research into a group of low-skilled and long-term unemployed people identified that low qualifications made people more vulnerable to losing their job but also that **skills, attitude and motivation**, alongside other personal circumstances, impact upon the ability of individuals to **break the cycle** of unemployment.³
17. Employers and educators also increasingly stress the importance of attributes like versatility and self-efficacy and transferable skills such as team working and problem-solving. These can be developed **through personal and social development** (PSD) provision and in order to support the Government's commitment to reach full employment, cut the benefits bill and support unemployed adults to get the skills they need to gain **sustainable work**, NIACE has undertaken a comparative analysis and mapping of PSD qualifications and non-formal provision aimed at **supporting disadvantaged learners** to progress towards employment.
18. This was complemented by a **consultation with employers**, learning providers and learners who have recently completed a PSD course. This consultation identified the PSD learning outcomes/ skills that are missing that would otherwise help learners progress towards employment, as well as providing a better understanding of the most helpful positioning of PSD content within learner progression pathways towards employment.
19. Building on the long term contract that NIACE with the **British Army**, our survey of employers included depth interviews with leaders of military preparation courses and focus groups with trainees who completed the PSD/ employability skills

³ Bivand, P. et al. (2010) *The Impact of Devolution: Employment and Employability*, Report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York:
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/impact-of-devolution-employment.pdf>

element during their initial training. The Royal Navy has subsequently expressed an interest in this work.

20. The findings of this research formed the basis of other work. The content and format of a **new PSD course for female prisoners** has been heavily influenced by our findings. This exciting new course is being piloted in three female prisons and we hope to have fully evaluated it by November 2015.
21. The findings of this research have also contributed to discussions about whether it is of value for learners to work towards regulated PSD qualifications. Our finding is that regulated qualifications are not always necessary but within non formal learning there should still always be specified assessment criteria that attest to the attainment of defined learning outcomes. Outside of Community Learning, which requires the specification of individual learning outcomes, too often assessment criteria and learning outcomes are ill-defined within non-formal PSD learning and in their absence, **PSD learning leading to qualifications** appears to be a more robust alternative.
22. The findings of this research have also informed the debate as to whether there should be a **National standard for PSD** to inform regulated qualification development and non-formal delivery. Our findings were a conclusive yes as long as there are regular opportunities to review its content so that it keeps up with fast moving developments in our understanding arising through breakthroughs in behavioural sciences.

THEME 2: SUPPORTING PROGRESSION FOR EXCLUDED GROUPS

23. Learning benefits individuals, families, communities, employers, the economy and society as a whole. There is compelling evidence that those who participate in learning are likely to be healthier, happier and better paid than those who do not.⁴
24. Yet despite extensive evidence of the benefits of learning, our annual survey of adult participation in learning consistently shows that around **one third of adults have not done any learning** since leaving full time education. Furthermore, the survey also shows significant inequalities in who participates in learning, with those who have benefited least from their initial education also least likely to learn – and thereby enjoy the benefits of learning – as an adult. Across the breadth of its work, NIACE seeks to tackle inequalities and empower individuals from under-represented groups to take control of their lives and realise their potential.
25. Our work under this theme supports BIS in its agenda to:

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34671/12-1243-review-wider-benefits-of-adult-learning.pdf

- **widen participation** in adult learning and build the capability and capacity within its provider network for supporting the most disadvantaged or socially excluded learners. Through its networks and partnerships; and
- support the sector to develop **effective transitions into learning** for 'excluded groups', and support strategies for keeping learners in learning.

Adult Learners' Week

26. Adult Learners' Week is a national celebration of lifelong learning, which is now in its 24th year. It is a campaign that has been emulated by 50 countries and as well as having UNESCO endorsement, we have secured match funding from ESF, so that every £1 invested by BIS has released an additional £1 investment from ESF.
27. Each year, inspirational adults of every background, age and stage are nominated for awards as a result of transforming their own lives and the lives of their families, the communities they live in and the places they work, because of their learning. These stories are celebrated alongside award-winning tutors, projects and employers at local, regional and national levels. As part of the 2014 programme, nearly **2,000 nominations** were received for Adult Learners' Week, Inspire and Transforming Lives Awards. This resulted in more than **110 award** winners across England and Wales.



28. The Week was held alongside a two-month long Festival of Learning, in partnership with Inspired by, Museums at Night, The Skills Show, Learning at Work Week, VQ Day, the National Portrait Gallery, Universities Week, British Computer Society and CIPR.
29. As well as raising awareness of the value of learning amongst policy makers, Adult Learners' Week and the Festival of Learning provide an opportunity for many learning providers, community organisations and employers to **engage** adults who are disadvantaged, at risk of social exclusion and **furthest from learning**. During the festival, more **3000 'Have a Go'** events were held, aimed at inspiring more adults to take up learning. 64 MPs, Peers and AMs took part in activities in their constituencies, as well as national and local events.



30. Last year's Adult Learners' Week has been **shortlisted for two national PR awards:** the 2015 UK Public Sector Communications Awards "Integrated campaign" award and the PRCA Dare Awards "Public Sector and Third Sector" award.
31. Over the last year, NIACE has been working with eight **Adult Learner Ambassadors**, previous Adult Learners' Week award winners who are passionate advocates of lifelong learning. We delivered a two-day training course, providing an introduction to the Learner Ambassadors Programme, public speaking and media skills. Their role was officially launched at an event at Buckingham Palace, hosted by HRH The Princess Royal. The Ambassadors have since proactively promoted learning via a range of media, including social media such as Twitter. Most recently, their hopes for the next Parliament have been published in the General Election special edition of **Adults Learning**.
32. The 2015 campaign received more than 1,200 nominations and the winners will be announced during Adult Learners' Week (13-19 June). The Festival of Learning 2015 launched on the 28 April, with coverage from the BBC, Daily Mail, BT Online, CIPD and music bloggers.



UK Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning

33. The European Commission's renewed Agenda for Adult Learning defines the focus of European cooperation in adult education policies for 2012 - 2020. It is also closely linked to the wider policy framework that includes **vocational education and training** (VET)⁵
34. To support this work, the European Commission asked member states to designate a National Coordinator. The UK Government asked NIACE to take forward this work to help shape EU activity in line with **UK priorities** and to leverage money for the UK that the UK would not otherwise receive. In the last three years this had provided in the region of €550,000 additional wider project funding from the Commission.
35. In acting as the UK Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) on behalf of BIS this has allowed us to lead a number of activities to support the **priority areas of most relevance to the UK's needs**. During the first two years of the programme, which completed in September 2014, we developed eight projects that, collectively, identify and share good practice, develop strategies to engage excluded and marginalised groups in learning, review existing research on participation, and create communities of practice across the UK working on specific areas of development. We also worked with European Agencies, such as the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and the European Basic Skills Network (EBSN) to proactively share the outcomes of the work with colleagues in European adult learning. In the UK, we liaised with the **National Agency for Lifelong Learning Programme** to align our activity with funding through Grundtvig and Leonardo (now part of the **Erasmus+** programme).
36. A key part of the role of National Coordinator is to **share best practice**, link with other UK initiatives, such as Adult Learners' Week and the Skills Show, and to **involve as wide range of partners** as possible. We have aimed to do this through social media, traditional print media, reports, publications and conferences.
37. A three-day event held in Edinburgh in May 2014 was attended by 114 adult learners, practitioners, policy-makers and other stakeholders from **19 countries**. The conference was designed to address key actions in the EAAL: quality; participation; validation and recognition; demographic change and migration; and indicators and measures. Transnational workshops were led by Norway, Estonia, Austria, Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany and across the four nations of the UK. In addition, there were inputs from **the OECD, UNESCO, ICAE and EAEA**.

⁵ Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020)
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm

38. This year's work programme builds on the successes of the 2012/14 programme and adds some new features in response to the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) findings. There are an integrated set of five work-packages, each addressing a key concern in both the EAAL and the UK government's approach to **developing adult skills**.



39. In order that the work results in impact at a strategic level, **Impact Forums** have been set up in each of the four UK nations. Each forum is led by a key sector body based in that nation: NIACE (England), Scotland's Learning Partnership (SALP) (Scotland), Forum for Adult Learning Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland) and NIACE Cymru (Wales). Membership of these forums include representation from **government departments** and administrations, **national agencies** such as UKCES, research institutes such as the Institute of Education, and sector **representative organisations** such as the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Workers Educational Association (WEA). We have also engaged local decision-makers and influencers, such as large **Metropolitan Councils** and **Local Enterprise Partnerships** (LEPs). Through these forums, we are seeking to influence and gain traction at local, regional and national levels. Each forum will decide the focus of each meeting, guided by the work packages, enabling NIACE to build a more coherent picture of what is happening across the sectors so we can better focus our policy messages and ways of working with stakeholders.

Offender learning

40. Recent Government research⁶ is very clear about the personal, economic and social costs of re-offending⁷ and the positive and crucial role **learning** can play in **cutting re-offending** by helping offenders get ready for life and work on their release. We know there are still serious learning and skills gaps among prisoners, which is why NIACE's programme of offender learning work is critical in helping the current range of Government initiatives to work even more effectively and

⁶https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/230260/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation.pdf

⁷ http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0910/short_custodial_sentences.aspx

continue to support the Ministry of Justice's agenda to cut re-offending including Transforming Rehabilitation.⁸

41. In 2012-13, NIACE piloted **Maths Mentors**, a peer mentoring programme in prisons. Since then, the programme has been rolled out to more than **40 prisons** across England. We have trained peer mentors as well as **education and prison staff** who ensure the programme is sustainable. This year **50 Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)** practitioners working in 23 prisons attended 'train the trainer' courses. The Maths Mentors resources available for free download from the NIACE website.



42. Building on Maths Mentors, this year NIACE has trialled an innovative approach to delivering **Family Learning at HMP Styal**. The initiative is aimed at developing the **maths skills of female prisoners** and enables them to peer mentor other prisoners. The early evaluation indicates that the programme also has wider benefits for prisoners' families. In light of the positive early findings, we will develop the model further based on the Maths4Mums Peer Mentoring Framework. This should **improve the capacity** of delivery partners and Resettlement Prisons to embed peer mentoring approaches which **support effective transitions into learning, skills and employment**.
43. Based on these two peer mentoring approaches, we will also be working with **National Careers Service and OLASS** to pilot and evaluate a peer mentoring programme to promote the National Careers Service in the female estate.
44. This year, in partnership with OLASS 4 providers, the Gelder Group and WAMITAB, we have worked to identify some of the practical issues associated with working with young offenders, effective strategies that tackle these, as well as models

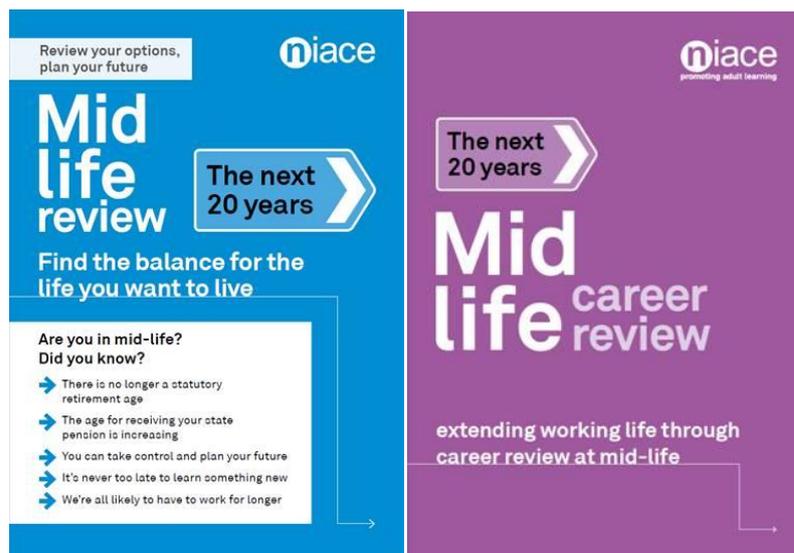
⁸ <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/transforming-rehabilitation/results/transforming-rehabilitation-response.pdf>

that support **effective transitions into learning**. We piloted a **traineeship** approach specifically targeted at the needs of young offenders, with two OLASS 4 providers, The Manchester College and Weston College.

45. Through the pilots, we identified a number of barriers to implementing a traineeship approach in prisons and young offender institutions. For example, pilot sites reported the lack of Released on Temporary Licence (ROTL) preventing trainees completing their work experience or placement, which is a critical element of the programme. Both pilots were only able to recruit low numbers. However, there are some early indications that an **apprenticeship model could work**, whereby learners would complete some elements of the programme in custody, with an apprenticeship in the community lined up upon release.

Mid-life Career Review

46. As part of our BIS funding in 2013-14, NIACE undertook a pilot project of career reviews for people in mid-life. The Mid-life Career Review (MLCR) programme worked with **17 pilot partners** to develop a variety of models of review, and deliver these to **3000 clients across England**. The early evaluation explored which models were most effective and for which groups of people, through the use of client questionnaires, telephone interviews with pilot leads and case study research. It found that the most effective models adopted a **'life-wide'** approach and took into account clients' life circumstances, such as health, financial, caring and housing needs, as well as their job and learning needs and interests. The findings also suggested that for the majority of clients the preferred delivery option would be a combination of well-facilitated **workshop sessions** with peers, followed by a number of **face-to-face**, one-to-one sessions with a **trained adviser**.



47. During the last year, NIACE has undertaken follow-up research to explore the ongoing impact of the MLCR pilots. This research found that pilot providers were **still positive** about the approach and the value of sustaining activity. The

majority had carried out activities to **promote MLCR** across their organisation or local area and some were continuing to deliver MLCR programmes as part of their offer. Even those who were not successful in securing new contracts for the National Careers Service commented that advisers involved in the delivery of MLCRs were **embedding** the lessons they learnt into their practice, and this had **improved their service** for mid-life clients. A survey of MLCR clients found that they were more likely to be in employment (**48 per cent**) than other National Careers Service (38 per cent of all NCS clients and only 14 per cent of NCS face to face clients).

As a result of taking part in a mid life career review...

- 51% of clients are more confident in their skills and experience
- 42% started applying for jobs
- 37% are interested in doing some learning
- 22% found work after being unemployed

48. NIACE is currently working with BIS to take forward the policy recommendations from the final report. NIACE, BIS, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Skills Funding Agency and other external board members are interested in engaging new partners and stakeholders in MLCR work. Information on the outcomes and impact will be communicated widely as a method to encourage engagement in future work. The planned MLCR infographic being developed with BIS will extend the **reach and impact** of the MLCR pilot project. BIS and DWP have included the MLCR in their briefings for **Lord Freud's office** to inform their messages on older workers for a House of Lords debate.
49. From April 2015, DWP and Job Centre Plus (JCP) have established **older claimant champions** in each region. A pilot programme has been established that is based on the Mid Life Career Review model. NIACE have been involved in the early project meetings with older claimant champions. The aim is to test out the approach in one JCP District and then apply more widely.
50. NIACE has also secured some funding to work with AGE UK to include the MLCR as a key element of **Age UK's Extending Working Life and Planning for Retirement programme**. The aim of this work is to test the approach working directly with employers. We then plan to build on this and take the work forward with other employers.
51. Drawing on its experience of MLCR, NIACE is also working in collaboration with CIPD and JCP as they seek to pilot their successful **Steps Ahead** youth mentoring programme with 50+jobseekers in the south west region. NIACE is involved in the training and support of mentors and will also evaluate the pilot.
52. NIACE is also seeking to secure funds to develop a MLCR approach to work with veterans' charities.

53. MLCR has been featured in a number of **policy papers and campaigns**. For example, it features as one of the 'One Life Proposals' in the 'Age of No Retirement?' campaign, a collaborative movement including employers, policy makers, innovators, designers, academics and citizens in creating a society without age barriers. The MLCR was also included as one of the main recommendations of **Ros Allman's report**, *A new vision for older workers: retain, retrain, recruit*, published in March 2015. Similarly, *Decision Time*, the final report of the Commission on the Voluntary Sector and Ageing, launched in the same month, calls for piloting of 'new ways of supporting people through mid-life career transitions, through work and training packages delivered by, and in, the voluntary sector'.

Young people

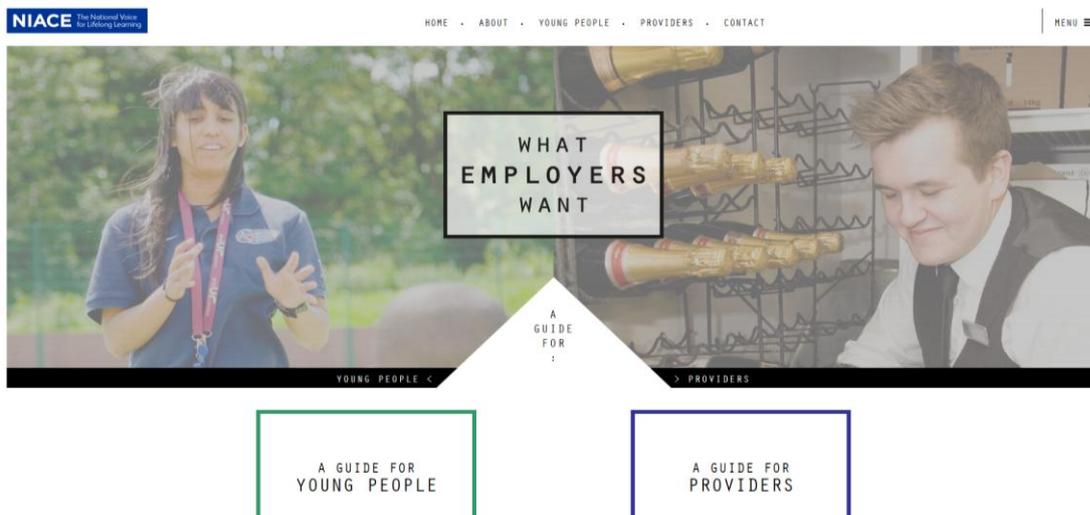
54. In light of the success of the MLCR pilots, NIACE is exploring how a career review approach may be beneficial with other groups of learners. Over the last year, NIACE worked with **three carers' services** that support **young adult carers** to make the transition into learning and work. Together, we developed and piloted approaches and tools for careers guidance tailored to the needs of Young Adult Carers. The piloting demonstrated that young adult carers prefer a tailored approach delivered by the agency that supports them as carers, who they already know and trust. They also prefer tools and approaches that enable them to evaluate and develop their skills both individually and as part of wider group activities. Our final report highlights the importance of **local partnership** work to deliver effective careers guidance for young adult carers and recommends the production of a briefing sheet to support carers support services to do this effectively. In addition it recommends that young adult carers should be supported and encouraged to use the resources and services developed by the **National Careers Service**.



55. Over the last year, NIACE has been working with a group of care leavers and digital developers to design and produce an app by and for care leavers. This is in response to our previous research with care leavers through which many care leavers told us that they did not feel supported effectively, both practically and emotionally, by Personal Advisers and other professional staff during Pathway Planning and transition to independence and formal learning opportunities. The

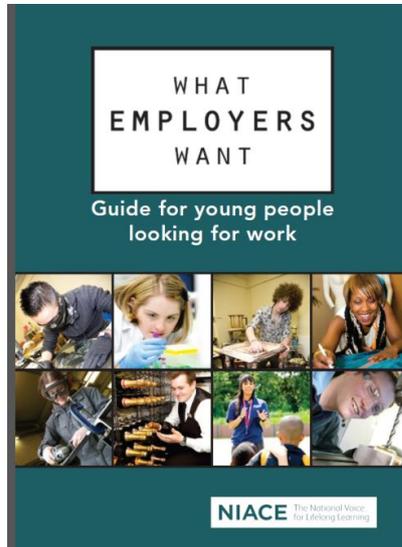
new app, '**Inspire Me**', is a source of inspirational stories written by care leavers about their experience of leaving care and moving into learning and work. The app enables care leavers to add their own story and collect a list of favourite stories for inspiration and peer support during transition to independence. NIACE has also worked with care leavers to produce a film to increase awareness of the app and its purpose. We will continue to measure the impact of the app through the number of stories added to the app and feedback collected through the app.

56. In response to the record high levels of youth unemployment, and reports suggesting that employers find it hard to recruit young people, as they often don't have the skills, qualities and experience that they are looking for, NIACE has developed a new responsive website, **What Employers Want**. The work builds on the Young people and Employability Skills project, completed by NIACE in its role as UK National Co-ordinator for the European Agenda for Lifelong Learning. This work, supported by the **UK Commission for Employment and Skills** (UKCES), involved training and supporting 30 young people to conduct research interviews with employers to identify the skills and attributes that employers look for when recruiting a young person. Our key partners were: ACT Training, Southway Housing Trust and Glasgow City Council Employment and Skills Partnership team. **31 employers participated** in the project including Asda, Wales Millennium Centre, Glasgow Rangers Football Club, The Princes Trust and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.



57. Through the new website we are seeking to reach and engage with two audiences:
- Young people aged 16-25 who are looking for a job or want to move on at work. The website contains lots of useful information from employers about the skills and qualities they are looking for. It gives young people ideas, hints and tips on how to develop and demonstrate their skills and to impress at interview/ in the workplace.

- Organisations who support young people to improve their employability skills and gain employment. The website supports organisations to set up and enable their young people to meet and interview employers and find out 'what employers want'. They can access a range of resources including a 'how to' guide.



58. *What Employers Want* features a range of material, including the key messages from the initial research and six short employer films focused on such topics as looking for work, applying for a job, job interviews and getting on at work. The contributing employers are Barclays Bank, Topps Tiles Plc, Spirit Pub Company, Sureline Communications Ltd, and Manchester Digital Laboratory (MadLab).

"It's made me a lot more pro-active and a lot more confident with regards to applying for work...it's made me more confident making that initial contact." (Young person)

"Opened up my eyes to the struggle young people are having in trying to find suitable employment... It's really made me re-evaluate what we do here to better support young people in to employment." (Employer)

"As a result of the project, we are now going to introduce young person-led question and answer sessions with selected employers." (Partner)

59. The website has been promoted at the national **Youth Employment Convention** 2014 and The Skills Show 2014. It will be widely publicised as part of its launch in early May 2015. In addition, as part of NIACE's ongoing role as UK National Co-ordinator, the Young People and Employability Skills project is being **extended to Northern Ireland**. This presents further opportunities to promote and develop the website with different stakeholders. The website will be introduced to young people and providers taking part in the project, and also members of the national Impact Forums and policy makers from across the UK and Europe.

Networks and partnerships

60. NIACE convenes a number of forums, each focused on a specific group of learners or learning contexts. These bring key stakeholders together from a range of sectors to engage them with our research findings and take forward policy recommendations. For example, the **National Older Learners Group (NOLG)** meets three times a year to share ideas and knowledge around the key issues faced by older learners and workers. Its members include Age UK, Open University, WEA, Chartered Institute of Personnel Management and Development, BIS, DWP, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which ensures that cross-sectoral and cross-departmental understanding of older people can be improved. This year, with the NOLG, NIACE has produced **a policy paper on older people and learning** titled *A Better Future For Us All*, which outlines a number of priorities to ensure that the learning and skills system effectively supports an ageing population.
61. NIACE's **National Policy Forum for Young Adult Carers** has met twice this year to discuss the policy challenges that hinder young adult carers' participation in learning and work and develop policy asks. This activity led to BIS and the Department of Health (DH) establishing the first **cross –government task and finish group** on young adult carers. NIACE is working with DH to support this group and organised a research summit in March 2015, which brought together leading researchers from across the UK and Europe. This provides government departments with a strong sense of the existing research evidence base around young adult carers' participation in learning, which will be crucial in informing policy and the work of the task and finish group.
62. The Forum (alongside other activity led by NIACE and key partners) has raised the profile of young adult carers at a national level and the **Carers Strategy Second National Action Plan**, published in November 2014, now includes specific actions related to this group. In addition, both the Carers Act and the Children and Families Act include important provisions that will improve the identification of and support for young adult carers.
63. The work of the Forum contributed to NIACE running a successful national conference, in the presence of **HRH The Princess Royal**. The event was effective in sharing good practice and raising awareness of young adult carers' needs.



64. NIACE has continued to support the work and activities of the **LEAFEA** network in 2014/15, including the ongoing management of the members' e-mail network, administrative support to the Executive and arranging network meetings. The spring meeting was held in February 2015 and attended by 38 members. A further meeting will take place in July.
65. The spring meeting raised attendees' awareness of key initiatives in adult learning policy and practice particularly relevant to Adult and Community Learning providers, and stimulated discussion of the implications for future planning at provider level. Inputs included a policy update from BIS, an English and Maths update from the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and an update on Public Service Mutuals from the Cabinet Office. Other contributions covered qualifications reform, the careers service and leadership and governance. Participant feedback on the relevance of the content was highly positive.
66. This year, NIACE established the **National Family Learning Forum (NFLF)**, ensuring representation from a range of national influencers in Family Learning, including BIS, Booktrust, The Reading Agency, Campaign for Learning, the University of Sheffield, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Department for Education (DfE), which is a crucial step in ensuring that **Family Learning is embedded** in school strategies and interdepartmental government working.
67. NIACE has hosted three meetings and two guest seminars, attended by members of the **Family Learning Local Authority Group**, also facilitated by NIACE. The first seminar focused on LEPs and Family Learning and the second Family Languages, to members of the National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA) were also invited. These guest seminars have ensured that the Forum links with the wider learning community. The next meeting of the Forum will take place in July 2015.
68. NIACE also coordinates the **Peer Volunteering Advisory Group**, bringing together key players, such as National Children's Bureau, Citizens' Advice Bureau, National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, TUC, Business in the Community, South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation, The Cabinet Office, BIS and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The establishment of this group has provided a seamless transition from NIACE's previous work with **Community Learning Champions**, ensuring that the longer-term impact of this work can continue.
69. By working in partnership with members of the group, NIACE oversaw the development of a **Peer Volunteering Charter** and a booklet about peer volunteering. At the invitation of Age UK, the Charter was publicised in a recent interview aired on 'The Wireless', Age UK's online radio station. An impact report of the work of this group has been compiled, along with a clear set of recommendations, which will inform NIACE's future programme of work in this area. This includes engaging and sharing best practice with organisations

offering peer volunteering approaches, as well as scoping the prevalence of peer volunteering across the sector with a view to reaching groups less likely to engage in learning.

70. Through the **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Forum**, we have brought together key representatives from providers and government departments, including the Third Sector National Learning Alliance (TSNLA), WEA, London Learning Consortium, and NCVO. NIACE has hosted three seminars, including workshops and presentations on strategic issues for learning skills and support, development and delivery through the VCSE sector. These were run in partnership with a range of stakeholder, including BIS, ETF, Network for Europe, and Ofsted.

THEME 3: DIGITAL LEARNING

71. Digital skills are critical for life in the 21st Century. Everyday activities—such as shopping, using a telephone and banking—increasingly require interaction with technology. Furthermore, 90% of jobs need at least basic computer skills, but international research shows that around half of adults in England and Northern Ireland lack the basic skills to effectively use computers.
72. Digital skills (the skills needed to interact with digital technologies) are now necessary life skills. It is not acceptable for any group to be excluded from access to digital technologies and 6.4 million adults - over 13 per cent of the adult population in the UK - have never used the Internet.
73. Our work under this theme supports BIS to:
- take forward the **priorities and recommendations** from FELTAG and ETAG;
 - support the use of the Virtual Campus in line with recommendations from “**Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation**”;
 - support the development of **digital capabilities** to enable full participation in 21st century society and learning;
 - **widen access** to and participation in English and maths through technology; and
 - research and disseminate evidence to demonstrate how **technology can be used** for learning and the development of vocational skills.
74. This year we have worked with three Family Learning providers to develop resources that embed **digital technologies into Family Learning curriculum**. The resources comprised schemes of work, handouts and a short guide to help other providers implement their work. A group of digital experts was recruited and made available to pilots for individual support. Our early evaluation of the pilots indicated that embedding technology into Family Learning resulted in several positive impacts for participating learners: **it increased their employability**, gave them more **confidence** with their children, and enabled them to understand some of the changes to the school computing curriculum. We are planning to

continue working with these providers in a number of ways, including supporting them to mentor other providers in embedding technology into their provision, as well as strengthening the links between digital family learning and school curriculum. In addition, the group of digital experts recruited for this project will continue as a network for future work.



75. Working with the Skills Funding Agency, NIACE developed a two-phase project approach to identify barriers and benefits for providers and learners in **delivering blended learning**. Both phases collected evidence from providers and learners via surveys. We undertook the research with four providers working in tandem with **five pilots identified by the Agency** for a separate but complementary initiative. The NIACE pilots are two colleges (one working with offenders), one residential provider and one Adult and Community Learning service.
76. The initial findings have been cascaded to the pilots and the Agency via a webinar. The results of the research indicate that benefits of blended learning approaches for providers include access to more resources and 'communities of practice' and a more flexible curriculum offer. Similarly, learners' benefits included access to more interesting materials and other learners/ tutor, and learning new skills.
77. However, providers reported a number of common barriers to blended learning, including insufficient: staff time, technical support, funding, strategic leadership and staff confidence. **Learners also identified barriers**, such as **insufficient skills**, knowledge and confidence, as well as **access** to reliable equipment.
78. These findings have raised several ideas for improving learner access, with a strong message about the importance of continuous support. The Skills Funding Agency has indicated its interest in using the findings to inform its future work with providers in this area and early discussions suggest the value of generating **more qualitative evidence** from all nine pilots and developing **exemplars** and case studies to support practice. We will continue to work with the Agency to

engage the providers further, interrogate the existing findings and refine the research instruments to provide solid **policy and funding recommendations**.

79. This work has already been of value to the Skills Funding Agency in developing a further plan for their research informing the **proposed online funding rate**. They have, as a result, incorporated the initial findings in their forward plan. The project has also impacted on participating providers who have used the results of their and other participants' activities to re-consider effective models within their learning delivery. This work will continue in 2015 – 16 with further analysis, research and provider activities to augment and extend information gathered to date.
80. Over the last year, NIACE has been working to support the implementation of the **FELTAG recommendation** that institutional policy changes should address the use of learners' **own devices** (BYOD) and that learners should be equipped to learn with their own devices. Use in FE colleges, is higher than in other FE providers, but is still sporadic and by no means universal. In informal and community adult learning, where learning can take place in any area and, in many cases, in a building run by a local authority, current use is limited.
81. At the outset of the project, a call for evidence from learning providers working in diverse settings, identified the following barriers to use of learners own devices for learning:
- Access to mobile phone signals.
 - Access to public WiFi.
 - Restrictions on corporate WiFi systems (including those open to the public).
 - Lack of support for mobile device usage.
 - Lack of guidance for staff and learners.
 - Lack of policies by learning providers.
 - Limited knowledge of resource requirements for multiplatform access.
 - Access to suitable multiplatform enabled learning resources.
 - Inclusive access to technologies for learners.
82. This information provided a starting point for the next phase of the project which worked directly with learning providers to trial various approaches to 'Bring Your Own Device' (BYOD) in different learning contexts. Each participant concentrated on approaches to overcoming a specific barrier. Providers included those in remote, rural locations; local authority provision; community building; apprenticeship/traineeship provision; with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and outside the classroom, and those offering peer supported and blended provision.
83. As a result, participating providers have been able to **progress culture change** and a whole organisation approach to BYOD and the use of disruptive

technology. Providers reported that learners are more empowered to use their own devices to support their learning. This is partly as a result of practical changes, such as secure storage, Wi-Fi connectivity and changes to induction processes. In addition CPD and training for staff has improved their digital literacy and confidence to support their learners through technology, as well as provided them with an opportunity to share best practice and learn from others.

84. Participating providers have incorporated the lessons learned from their own and other participants' activities to establish or revise internal policies for BYOD.
85. A virtual community of practice (CoP) has been established with membership of all participating providers and technology experts from NIACE and the JISC (Techdis were originally included separately but have since been incorporated into JISC). Longer term impacts will be realised through the continuation of the CoP and further trial and refinement of BYOD policy and deployment in providers' settings.
86. A guidance document including exemplars of effective use, evidence of success, exemplar policies and individual reports is currently under development and will be shared with to FE and skills providers. The document will include case studies which have been gathered throughout the project by providers.
87. Project findings have been shared with **JISC in their role as coordinator of the FELTAG coalition** to influence practice among other coalition stakeholders.



88. Building on NIACE's previous work with OLASS and the Virtual Campus (VC), and on The Manchester College's Digital Literacy programme, NIACE has worked with all OLASS 4 providers and with Jisc Techdis to raise awareness of the necessity for **more inclusive VC content** and to increase tutor production of accessible resources for the VC.
89. Project activities included:
 - National event for OLASS 4 staff, with presentations and workshops on the creation of accessible resources and use of tools to enhance interactivity and inclusion in the secure environment. Approximately 40 delegates attended the event and evaluation demonstrated their intention to change

practice in how they create VC content to make it more inclusive and accessible.

- Eight delegates from the national event were recruited to participate in NIACE's two day training programme for "**Assistive Technology Virtual Campus (ATVC) Champions**" with the support of their managers. Champions are currently liaising with their managers to develop a cascade plan for each of their organisations, with two providers in the process of parallel implementation. Champions have also formed a supportive community of practice, where they are exchanging practice and resources and have volunteered (with management approval) to contribute to the newly launched **National Careers Service programme**, sharing their knowledge with careers advisors through a series of 34 training days. OLASS provider managers are in the process of incorporating the ATVC champion programme in their forward plans. Two OLASS 4 providers have or are in the process of installing accessible content creation tools on their college networks to increase the production of accessible content in OLASS and in wider college provision.
- As a result of a champion "competition", two highly interactive and extensive learning resources have been produced for submission to the VC board for inclusion on the Virtual Campus.

90. Presentations, multimedia assets, lesson plans and resources which were developed for the national event and the champion training are currently being collated with other resources from JISC, NIACE and OLASS providers to produce "**CPD in a box**" which will further support the cascade process. This will be presented shortly to the VC board (at the request of NOMS) for consideration and subsequent upload to the VC. An amended version of this resource will be distributed to careers advisors.

THEME 4: SUPPORTING AND EVALUATING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

91. In November 2010 the Coalition Government published [*Skills for Sustainable Growth*](#) and [*Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth*](#) , which guided the Government's reform of adult learning and skills, with the aim of building an internationally competitive skills base and point the way towards growth in the longer term.
92. *Skills for Sustainable Growth* brought together the necessity for businesses to continue to invest in training and skills of their workforce while recognising several key areas would continue to need government support. In December 2011, BIS published *New Challenges New Chances*, an FE and Skills system reform plan and investment strategy, and has subsequently implemented an extensive programme of reform.
93. Our work under this theme supports BIS in ensuring **effective policy development and implementation**, as part of the reform programme, with particular focus on

ensuring that reforms do not unfairly **disadvantage those in socially excluded groups**.

Community Learning Reform

94. In order to support policy implementation that helps disadvantaged and socially excluded groups, NIACE has been working with BIS-funded Community Learning providers to ensure they:

- have in place a strategy that can **demonstrate and deliver**, in their geographical area, a **relevant balance** of the Community Learning objectives;
- embed strong, local, **partnership working**;
- produce a **robust financial strategy** that adds to their Community Learning allocation;
- influence and share **effective practice**; and
- **engage Community Learning stakeholders** and providers in the ongoing Community Learning Reform process.

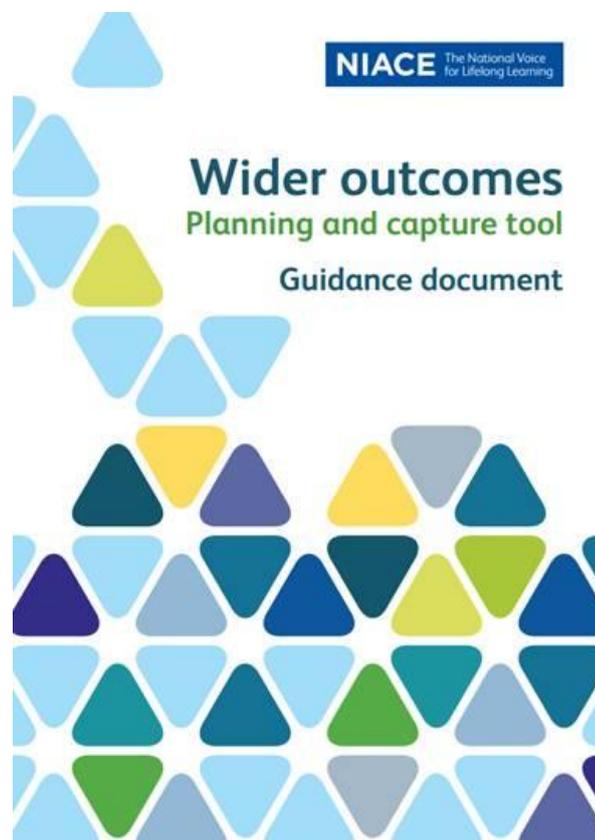
95. NIACE provided this support in a number of ways. For example, we set up an **online forum** for Community Learning stakeholders, for individuals and organisations to have a say on the future of Community Learning and discuss what matters most for the future to ensure that Community Learning remains relevant and sustainable.



96. Surveys of Community Learning providers and LEPs identified a range of incentives and solutions for these two groups of stakeholders to engage more effectively. These findings were supported by evidence from a subsequent conference organised by NIACE, '**Community Learning and stronger local communities and economies**', attended by 42 participants, representing local authorities, colleges, third sector organisations, LEPs and BIS. A research report on the theme of Community Learning and LEPs has been compiled and a clear

set of recommendations made from the group for continuing this work in 2015-16.

97. NIACE led the planning and delivery of a BIS **Health and Wellbeing seminar** in December 2014. The event explored a range of learning approaches to support wellbeing and help people manage their health conditions, bringing together 90 health practitioners and community learning providers. The conference, attended by more than 90 participants, enabled national/local policy makers, commissioners of services, adult education/health partnerships to look in more depth at the **evidence base around adult learning for health and wellbeing**, and the national and local policies in order to support its continued and future development.
98. Feedback from Community Learning providers indicated an appetite for further training **on evidencing the wider outcomes of adult learning**. Building on NIACE's previous work, including the management of the Community Learning Trusts Pilots and the Community Learning Innovation Fund, we developed and delivered a programme of training on the '**NIACE Wider Outcomes Planning and Capture Tool**', which was over-subscribed. This training is aimed at better equipping the sector to plan provision **focused on impact** from the outset and collect evidence of this impact. This supports self-evaluation and quality improvement in the sector and contributes to an evidence base of the impact that Community Learning can make.



99. In 2015-16 NIACE will continue to pursue opportunities to deepen our engagement with Community Learning providers; to strengthen the

infrastructure for effective collaboration and effective use of resources; increase the reach of the Wider Outcomes Tool training; and progress work of the systems for LEPs and Community Learning providers to work in partnership.

Supporting learners during the 24+ Advanced Learning Loans process

100. Since early 2015, NIACE has been working with the Skills Funding Agency and BIS to undertake research into the effectiveness of support available to learners during the 24+ Advanced Learning Loans process and to advise on how learners might better be supported. The work **builds on consumer protection research** undertaken by NIACE for the Agency in 2012, published as *Protecting the consumer during and after implementation of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans*. The initial study was used by BIS and the Agency to **inform ongoing policy development and implementation**, and as a basis for the development of learner information and provider toolkits. The report was subsequently published by the Agency to support the sector in engaging with 24+ Loans, from which NIACE was then commissioned to develop and deliver a range of CPD activities for providers.
101. This new study explores providers' and learners' experience of loans since their introduction in 2013, and demonstrates the extent to which recommendations made in the initial study have been implemented and where further action is required. In addition, the research was used to **review and improve the effectiveness of the Learning and Funding Information Letter**, as well as to develop a '**key facts document**' for learners that will clearly signpost them to relevant information about loans throughout each stage of their learning journey.
102. NIACE is currently working with BIS and the Agency to explore how the recommendations can be taken forward and how the research can be used to further support the sector. NIACE are also in conversation with a number of LEPs and non-governmental funders to explore how providers can be supported to develop their offer of provision to better meet the needs of their local economy.

Online screening tool

103. NIACE developed the contents for an online screening tool for English, maths and digital skills. The contents were developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including DWP, at a BIS-facilitated workshop and were referenced to relevant national standards in each skill area. NIACE understands that DWP, for reasons beyond the remit of this project, is yet to introduce online screening. However, the development work undertaken by NIACE has helped to highlight the **complexities of online screening** and the supporting infrastructure needed to deliver this successfully.

Jobcentre Plus referrals to Traineeships

104. To drive up the number of young people referred to a traineeship by JCP, in early 2015, NIACE delivered 10 workshops on traineeships to JCP and

traineeships providers. These were well attended by **190 JCP/ DWP staff and 52 provider representatives (from 34 provider agencies)**, as well as senior DWP and BIS staff. The events provided an opportunity for staff to discuss traineeships and issues impacting on referrals, as well as time to plan actions they will take to increase referrals. Key messages arising from the events are being cascaded within staff teams and securing further impact.



105. As part of this work, we also developed nine organisational and 13 individual case studies (exceeding our initial agreement of producing four organisational and eight individual case studies).

106. The impact of the training is being evaluated, and this will be completed during May 2015. Initial findings indicate that the training and case studies have given **JCP staff an insight** into the programme, **raised awareness** and **busted** a number of myths. The key findings of the work have been presented to the traineeship policy group in March 2015. DWP expect the growth plan target for **referrals will be exceeded** as a result of this work.

107. NIACE's work identified a range of challenges that limited the impact of the policy. During the last 12 months a number of refinements to traineeship policy have been made, most recently this included:

- The policy that restricted (in practice) participation of 18 year old claimants in traineeships has been amended so that they can continue to claim Job Seekers' Allowance whilst in traineeships.
- The policy that requires trainees to continue to actively seek work whilst participating in a traineeship is also being reviewed.