

# Citizens' Curriculum

## Follow-up evaluation report

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Forum for Adult Learning NI



Scotland's Learning Partnership



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## INTRODUCTION

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We strive for a fair society in which learning and work helps people realise their ambitions and potential throughout life. We do this by researching what works, influencing policy and implementing new ways to improve people's experiences of learning and employment. We believe a better skilled workforce, in better paid jobs, is good for business, good for the economy, and good for society.

Between 2014/15 and 2015/16, L&W (then the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) was supported by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to run a series of pilots to test a 'Citizens' Curriculum' in a variety of contexts. This model promotes learning which is locally-led, involves learners in shaping its contents, and interlinks basic skills in language (English for Speakers of Other Languages), literacy and numeracy with digital, financial, health and civic capabilities. The evaluation of the piloting activity broadly confirmed the feasibility and success of the Citizens' Curriculum approach in a range of delivery contexts across the adult learning and skills sector, and resulted in a multitude of benefits for learners, practitioners and providers.

In-depth reports outlining the Citizens' Curriculum can be accessed [here](#).

This report presents the findings of the follow-up evaluation which L&W conducted with learners and pilot providers six months after their Phase 2 Citizens' Curriculum pilots ended, in October 2016. This work was carried out as part of L&W's role as the UK National Coordinator for the [European Agenda for Adult Learning](#) 2015-17. On behalf of the Department for Education and the European Commission for the European Union's Agenda for Adult Learning, we are delivering a programme of work which spans the following themes: Adult Basic Skills, Young Adults Employability, Digital Skills for Underrepresented Groups.

One of the aims of our work under the Adult Basic Skills theme is to develop, through longitudinal research methods and evaluation, an enhanced evidence base about the Citizens' Curriculum's impact on longer term outcomes for participating learners. In order to find out what difference the Citizens' Curriculum makes to learners, tutors and providers, L&W carried out evaluation activities to track long-term impacts and outcomes. This evaluation report presents the findings of the evaluation activities carried out during, at the immediate end of the Phase 2 piloting activities and six months following the end of the pilots.

## METHODOLOGY

The overall aim of this evaluation was to gather evidence of effective practice in sustaining the Citizens' Curriculum for learners, practitioners and providers. The evaluation focused on the long-term impact that the Citizens' Curriculum may have on learners' self-efficacy, social and civic engagement, employability and attitudes towards learning. By doing this, we aimed to:

- identify pilots that successfully continued their programme following the second phase of the programme;
- recognise pilot leads that have been able to embed elements of the Citizens' Curriculum to their current service provision;
- assess the impact of the pilot programmes on key stakeholders, including learners, practitioners and providers;
- identify the key success factors in sustaining the programmes;
- identify challenges in sustaining a long-term Citizens' Curriculum model.

The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach, combining the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. These included:

**Pre- and post-programme questionnaires for learners.** These were designed to capture any change in learners' attitudes towards their self-efficacy, social and civic engagement, employability and attitudes towards learning over time. Pilots were asked to administer the questionnaires to their learners at the beginning, end and six months after their learning in order to measure any difference.

**Follow-up telephone interviews with the key contact(s) at each pilot.** These were carried out a number of months following the end of the pilot activity and explored the process and long-term impacts of pilots, including key achievements, critical success factors, lessons learned, main challenges encountered and how these were addressed.

In total, we received 129 follow-up questionnaires from learners who had taken part in a Citizens' Curriculum pilot. To analyse the questionnaire data, each response to a statement was allocated a numerical score, with six indicating that a learner gave a very positive response and one indicating a very negative response. All quantitative data were entered into MS Excel for analysis. The difference between learners' mean scores at the beginning and end of their programme were also calculated. Frequency data was utilised for the binary data collected, and displayed where applicable. In this report, the quantitative data are reported alongside the qualitative data from interviews with eight pilot leads, which were analysed thematically using the gridding method.

## FINDINGS

This section of the report outlines findings from the follow-up interviews with pilot providers as well as results of the follow-up learner survey.

### Sustaining the Citizens' Curriculum

Two organisations successfully continued delivering their Citizens' Curriculum programme after their phase two pilot finished. One provider described the continuation of the programme in their organisation as 'business as usual':

*"Yes, it's still happening. In fact, I can't remember when it ended so you'll have to remind me because it's still going on. So, I suppose it's now business as usual really."* (Derby Adult Learning Service pilot lead)

Derby Adult Learning Service added that they had continued delivering their Citizens' Curriculum programme in areas where there are particularly high levels of learner need.

*"...it's not been rolled out across the whole borough but in areas where we've got high levels of need that are appropriate for that kind of approach, yes that's now in our plan."* (Derby Adult Learning Service pilot lead)

Most organisations who took part in a follow-up interview talked about how they had taken elements of the approach that worked well within their own organisation, and embedded it into their already existing provision. Some specifically recognised the value of adopting the "learner led approach" in delivering their curriculum, experiencing a range of benefits for learners as well as providers. Some identified that taking a learner-led approach fitted in particularly well with their already existing methods of provision.

For example, Tomorrow's Women Wirral explained that their programmes are designed using the principles of a learner-led approach. In doing so, they found that the adoption of this approach requires the ability to strike a balance between what learners would like to take part in and what they are capable of. This approach empowers learners to engage with their programme and actively manage their learning, as opposed to taking on too much and becoming overwhelmed.

*"That's how you embed it now... you create those learner plans with your learners, with the women, and you guide them through things and advise them throughout. It's basically what they want, so it's more of an individual learner-led approach."* (Tomorrow's Women Wirral pilot lead)

*"...they initially come to us and they see what we offer, I think they're like...it's amazing, I want to do this... I want to do that. You've got to be a little bit like, alright, we need to be a bit realistic, because otherwise they can then become overwhelmed, then they feel like they can't do something, then they feel bad for letting you down..."* (Tomorrow's Women Wirral pilot lead)

Other organisations deemed the multi-capability structure of the Citizens' Curriculum to be quite useful in that it presented as an opportunity for them to evaluate and re-structure their existing provision.

*“...particularly in terms of the multiple capabilities approach, that was much more [an unexpected] focus as a result of our collaboration with the Citizens’ Curriculum work.” (English for Action pilot lead)*

## **Challenges encountered in sustaining the curriculum**

Whilst the majority of pilot leads continued their provision of the Citizens’ Curriculum or successfully embedded elements of the programme to their existing offer, for some providers, there were several challenges with sustaining the programme once their pilot had ended. In most cases, the challenges experienced by organisations reported in the follow-up interviews reflected those encountered during the pilot programme. These included: covering multiple capabilities within one programme; learner buy-in; and managing business needs.

### ***Covering multiple capabilities at once***

The multiple-capability structure of the Citizens’ Curriculum was sometimes challenging to implement, especially for providers who developed an accredited and intensive approach. For example, Learndirect ran a 12-week pilot which attempted to accredit each of the six capabilities, and found that this was challenging for some learners.

*“I think for me it was putting so many qualifications so close together over such a short period of time... cramming all of those qualifications in in that length of time, the model didn’t suit our learner group.” (Learndirect pilot lead)*

Other providers who embedded the Citizens’ Curriculum into their accredited courses took a different approach and used informal activities based on the wider capabilities to enhance their programme. For example, Leicester College and Manchester College built in visits, talks and events to address the civic capabilities and enhance the experiences of their ESOL learners. This approach was more effective in addressing the multiple capabilities of the Citizens’ Curriculum.

A small number of providers also found it challenging to judge the right level for each of the Citizens’ Curriculum capabilities. For example, the Prison Officers Association (POA) pilot lead expressed concern that the maths element of their pilot was at a level that was too high for their learners, and they would need to address this before running it again. They used a booklet to encourage learners to consider the maths and health capabilities, but found that they misjudged the levels of some learners.

*“We found that a lot of the learners who used it didn’t understand a lot of the maths that we were using. I think that’s why we haven’t used it as much; because of fear of putting people off. We feel that maybe it’s not really aimed at the right kind of level. We did have a plan to adapt it and create a more simplified version of it with more simplified nutritional information and more simplified maths as well, but we just haven’t got around to doing that yet.” (POA pilot lead)*

This feedback suggests that the descriptions of the different capabilities and how these can be embedded into programmes need to be made clearer. The pilots which found the multi-capability principle of the Citizens’ Curriculum a challenge took a formal and accredited

approach to embedding all of the capabilities, when this was not necessarily needed. This emphasises the need for providers to have a clear understanding of learners' needs and work with them to develop programmes. More support from L&W to explore informal or unaccredited ways of embedding the different capabilities in a way that meets learners' needs could have helped to overcome this challenge. Our recent resources on embedding capabilities and adopting participatory approaches to learning were developed to address this. In addition, changes to the funding rules since the pilots took place mean that providers now have more flexibility to develop non-accredited programmes in response to specific local needs, and this would also contribute to overcoming this challenge.

### ***Managing business needs***

A small number of pilot leads found it challenging to balance the requirements of adopting the Citizens' Curriculum model with their existing business needs, such as time and financial resources. From a provider's perspective, Rochdale Borough Council recognised the value and effectiveness of the Citizens' Curriculum in meeting the needs of learners with the highest level of need. However, they simultaneously appreciated the effort that would be required to make a case for continuing the work in the context of lots of different pressures and priorities.

*"Citizens' Curriculum, or at least principles of it, if not the programme, can be blended into their offer. So that's - it kind of depends on where they're at. They could be so busy with dealing with their own difficulties and area based reviews and trying to pass Ofsted and all that kind of stuff, so there's varying degrees of warmth to wanting to change. But there's nobody said no; it's just the kind of practicalities that we're working with at the moment. But certainly, some of our community voluntary sector providers are really into it."*  
(Rochdale Borough Council Pilot Lead)

In addition, limited resources within the council meant that some difficult decisions had to be made about where to focus resources and investment.

*"...a lot of emphasis was on making the case for this work to continue because we're targeting the people with the very highest level of need and it's kind of how that's perceived in terms of resource allocation: do you go for the lowest-hanging fruit and get more volume through or do you try and work with the people who are hardest to help and get more impact. So fortunately, that was agreed. But the main challenge was the worry I guess about whether or not that would be accepted."* (Rochdale Borough Council Pilot Lead)

Workplace Learning Advocates experienced similar challenges in persuading employers to invest time in their pilot.

*"...we've tried lots of initiatives with lots of employers, and you always get a big fall out. Some of them start and they can't continue because the business needs take over."* (Workplace Learning Advocates Pilot Lead)

Workplace Learning Advocates provided further insight by highlighting that in addition to finding the time to integrate an approach like the Citizens' Curriculum, employers will often have to request permission from Senior Management to be involved in these kinds of development activities and this can create an additional challenge.

*"They get no facility time. It's just if the employer allows them to do it really. I think time and maybe being able to get more agreement with the senior management in companies. Although, to be fair, the CVS person, he's a Workplace Learning Advocate. He's not a senior person. He works on the frontline. But the person at [organisation name] is the senior manager in the company and she couldn't allocate the time."* (Workplace Learning Advocates Pilot Lead)

### **Learner buy-in**

One challenge reported by providers was learner buy-in and retention. Tomorrow's Women Wirral voiced that although learners are often eager and express interest in participating in a programme, sometimes other challenges prevent them from fully committing to a programme. Derby Adult Learning Service noted that the success of the Citizens' Curriculum can be dependent on the motivation and needs of the particular group of learners. This emphasises the need for programmes to be responsive to different groups of learners and, wherever possible, address their barriers to participating in learning.

*"I think it just depends on the learners, because the first pilot we had went brilliantly. The tutors were very positive about it. There was a second course that followed on to that. There were quite a lot of difficulties with retaining learners. I think it just depends on that group of learners as well."* (Derby Adult Learning Service Pilot Lead)

### **Future of the Citizens' Curriculum**

The final stage of the follow-up interviews allowed providers the opportunity to suggest changes to the Citizens' Curriculum that could add benefits to adopting the approach, and secondly how they might be better supported to embed the model into their provision.

At this point, all providers offered positive feedback about the Citizens' Curriculum and referred to the difference it has made to their organisation. For example, one organisation described how taking part in the programme led them to reflect on their organisational practice:

*"I think, having done this, it makes you step back and think, no, everyone's different and everyone's learning styles are different and everybody learns at a different rate. It brings it back to basics again, and about us listening to them and them listening to what they're capable of, as well."* (Tomorrow's Women Wirral pilot lead)

Those providers who had experienced challenges in implementing and sustaining the approach were also positive about its potential benefits.

*“I really like the ethos of what the Citizens' Curriculum was. I think if we were able to get it right so it worked financially for providers as well as giving the learners the structure and support and everything we want to give our learners; I think it'd be really good. I think if we could review it, it's definitely worth doing again, if we could get it right.”* (Learn Direct Pilot Lead)

A number of pilot leads stressed their intention to continue implementing the Citizens' Curriculum. Rochdale Borough Council in particular were planning to deliver a second learner-led and multi-capability programme, designed around the needs of a specific geographic area:

*“So the design of the programme will come from what they're telling us in the early engagement stage about what people need and then when we get them in we'll get them to develop the programme themselves. But the area that we're going to demographically is quite different to the first area and it's going to be very interesting to see how we need to develop a curriculum that meets those different needs.”* (Rochdale Borough Council Pilot Lead)

Tomorrow's Woman Wirral expressed their pride in not only adopting the programme, but in observing the difference that it made to their learners.

*“Yeah. I think we will always - because obviously we're all about adult learning and stuff like that and things, so I think, yeah, it will be something we will always use. I think we should be quite proud of ourselves and the women that came through that... it was interesting to see, and you can see the difference in the women as well. So yes, it's definitely something we will continue to do in our everyday stuff in the centre.”* (Tomorrow's Women Wirral Pilot Lead)

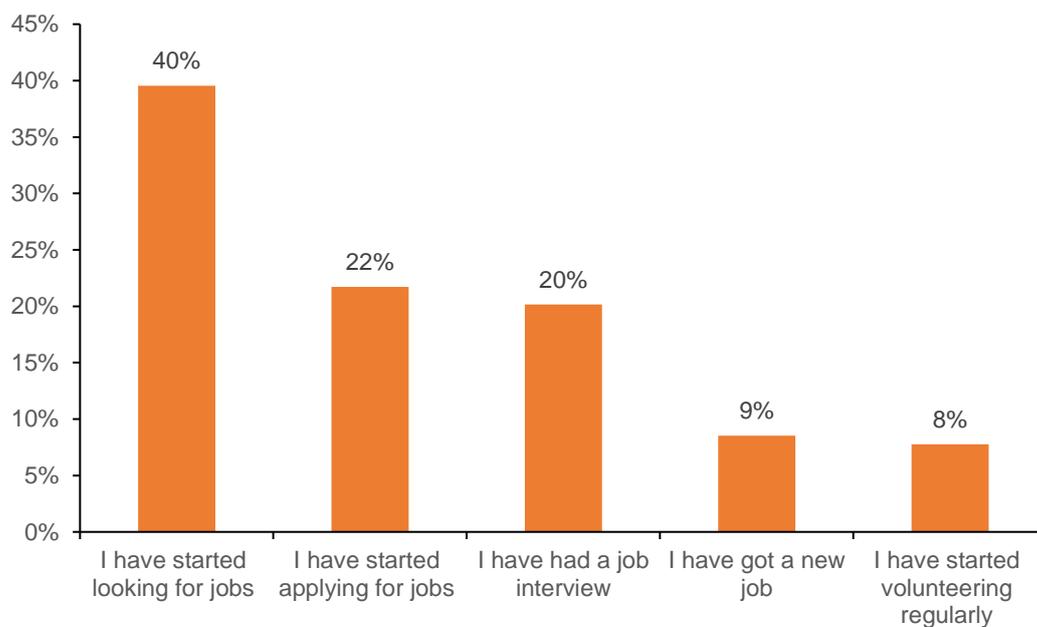
## Long-term outcomes for learners

This section explores the long-term outcomes and impact experienced by the learners who took part in the Citizens' Curriculum pilots. Where possible, results of the phase two learner survey are compared with results from the follow up-survey, allowing for an observation of changes in outcomes for learners. They are presented under four headings: employability; learning; social and civic engagement; and self-efficacy.

### Employability outcomes

Learners experienced a variety of positive outcomes in relation to employability following completion of their Citizens' Curriculum programme. Namely, two fifths (40%) of surveyed learners have started searching for jobs. Around one fifth (22%) have started making applications for jobs, with a similar proportion (20%) having had a job interview. Almost 10% of surveyed learners have been successfully employed. These findings strongly suggest that the Citizens' Curriculum programmes were effective in improving as well as sustaining learners' employability outcomes.

**Figure 1: Learner's employability outcomes (follow up survey)**



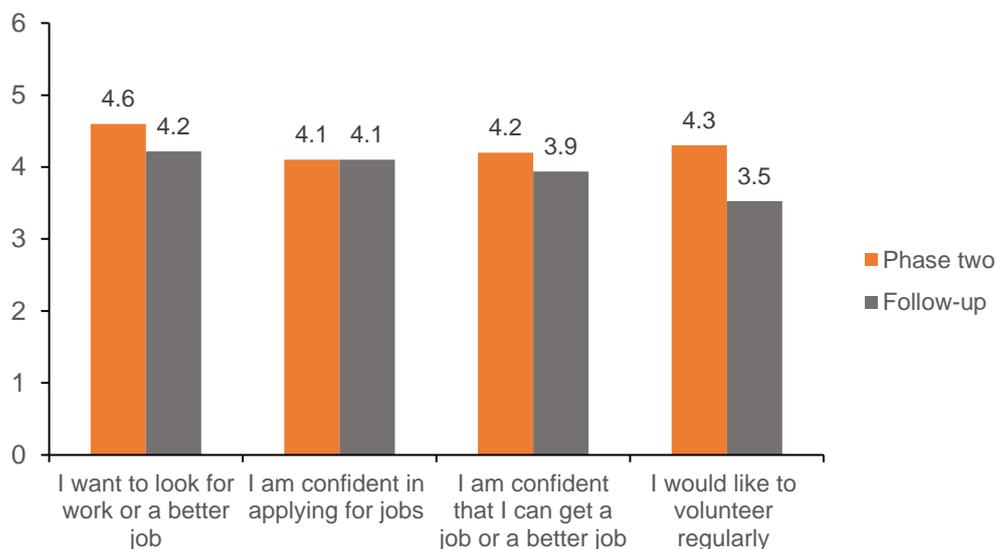
In their questionnaires, learners were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with a set of statements about their employability, with 6 indicating that they strongly agreed and 0 indicating that they strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 2 provides a comparison of learners' mean scores against these statements at the end of and six months after their pilot programme. Overall, this analysis suggests that learners' attitudes toward employment-related activities had remained positive, despite a slight downward trend. For example, learners' mean scores against 'I want to look for work or a better job', 'I am confident in applying for jobs' and 'I am confident that I can get a job or a better job' were still high at 4.2, 4.1 and 3.9 respectively, suggesting that, on average, learners agreed with these statements. The statement 'I would like to volunteer regularly' received a slightly lower average score than before (3.5 compared to 4.3), suggesting that learners were less likely to

consider volunteering as an option six months after their programme. However, volunteering was a key theme in the provider interviews and was mentioned as a key outcome of participating in the Citizens' Curriculum by both the Workplace Learning Advocates and Tomorrow's Women Wirral.

*“Four have gone on to do volunteering as a result of coming together in a little group to do the initial Citizens' Curriculum activity. That's with a learning disability project involving befriending others.”* (Workplace Learning Advocates Pilot Lead)

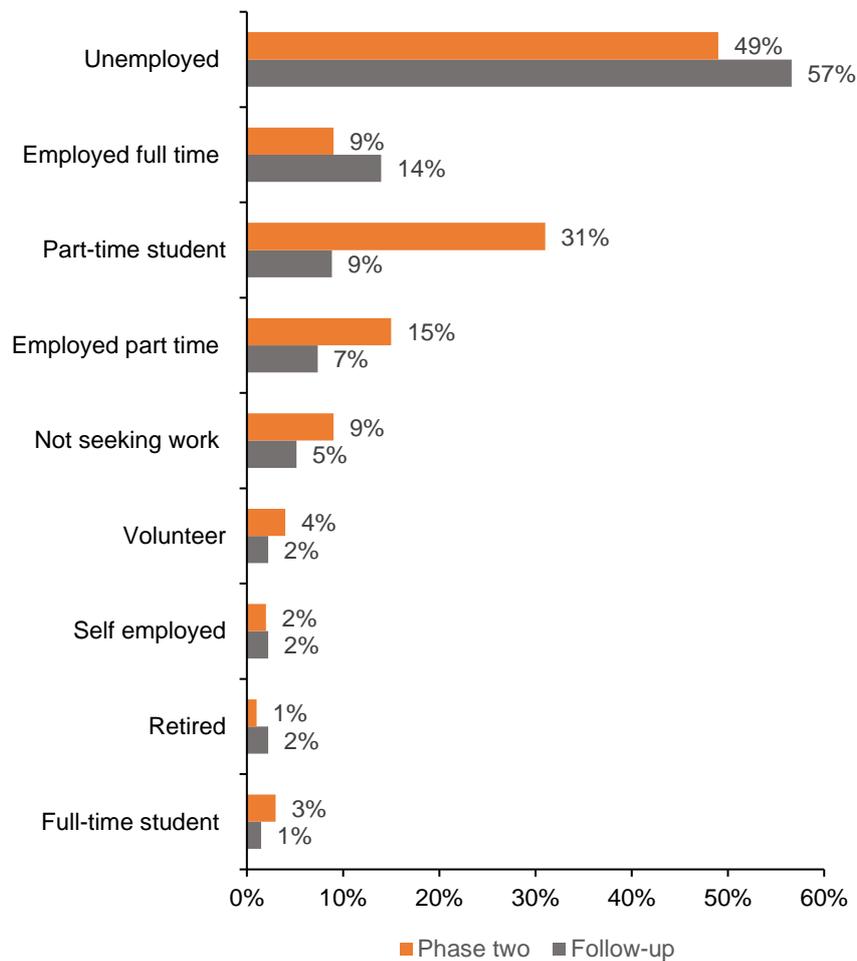
*“Two of them, who came to us via probation, did all of the NIACE pilots with us and they both now volunteer here at Tomorrow's Women, and one of them also works as well. That's come from them just building their confidence after their offences and stuff like that, and believing that they can get employment.”* (Tomorrow's Women Wirral)

**Figure 2: Learners' mean employability scores after and six months following the programme**



Changes in learners' attitudes towards employment and employability were reflected by changes in their employment status between the end of their programme and in the follow-up survey. As Figure 3 below shows, the proportion of learners who are employed full-time has increased by five percentage points. The proportion of learners who identify as 'unemployed' has increased to 57%. There has also been a substantial decrease in the percentage of learners identifying as a 'part-time student'. This is likely influenced by learners surveyed completing their Citizens' Curriculum pilot programmes (reducing the number of part-time learners) and starting to look for work (increasing the number who identify as unemployed).

**Figure 3: Employment status of learners at end and six months following the programme**



Changes in learners’ attitudes towards employment and employability were key themes in the interviews with pilot leads. Pilot leads often stipulated successful employment as a long-term outcome of participation in the Citizens’ Curriculum for learners. Rochdale Borough Council was one organisation which highlighted this in their follow-up interview.

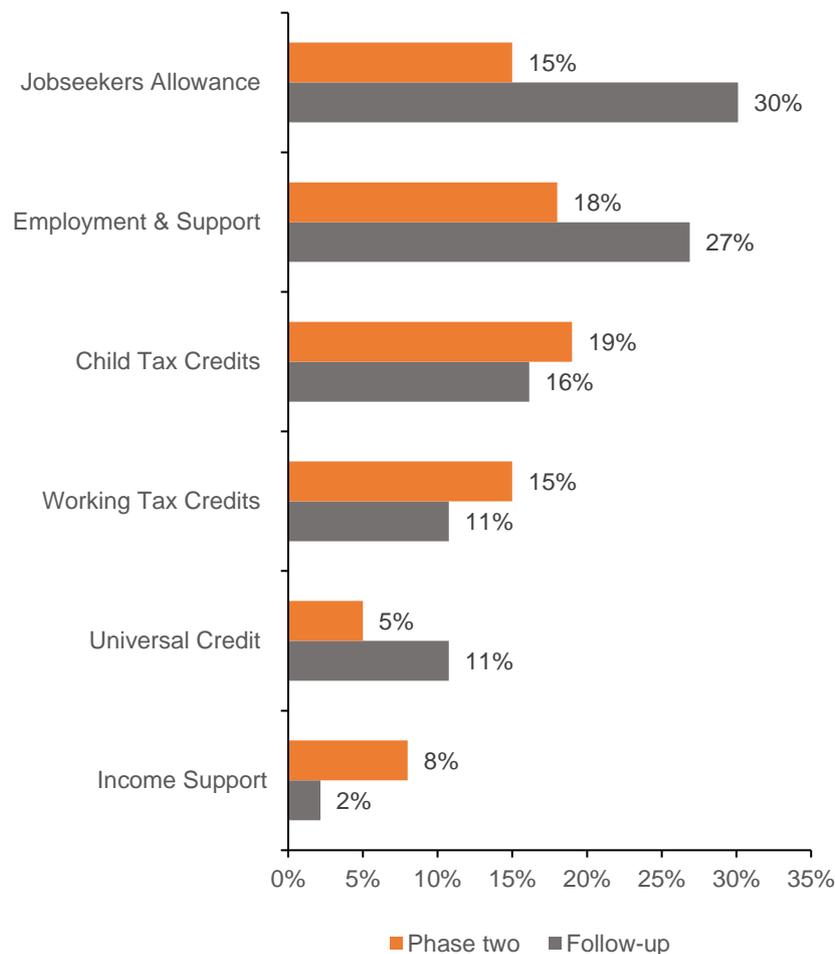
*"We've got incredibly high employment outcomes for example, and again, as I've said, it was working with people who were the least likely to be able to get into employment, kind of almost written off by the system."* (Rochdale Borough Council Pilot Lead)

Derby Adult Learning Service also revealed that two of their nine learners successfully entered employment following completion of their Citizens’ Curriculum pilot.

*"This morning I was just going through our data, going through each of the learners and seeing whether they've moved on to courses with us this year or gone on to - I know definitely we had two that had gone on to employment from the original lot of nine learners."* (Derby Adult Learning Service Pilot Lead)

These changes in learners' employment status also resulted in some differences in the benefits claimed by learners following completion of the programme, as displayed in Figure 4. Claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance increased by approximately 15 percentage points. This increase might reflect the shift in the proportion of respondents who identify as 'part-time' students, to 'unemployed' (see Figure 3), as a result of completing their Citizens' Curriculum pilot. Likewise, claimants of Employment and Support Allowance have increased from 18% to 27%. Claimants of other benefits, such as Child Tax Credits and Working Tax Credits have slightly decreased. The increase in claimants of Universal Credit from 5% to 11% could be explained by its increased rollout across the UK.

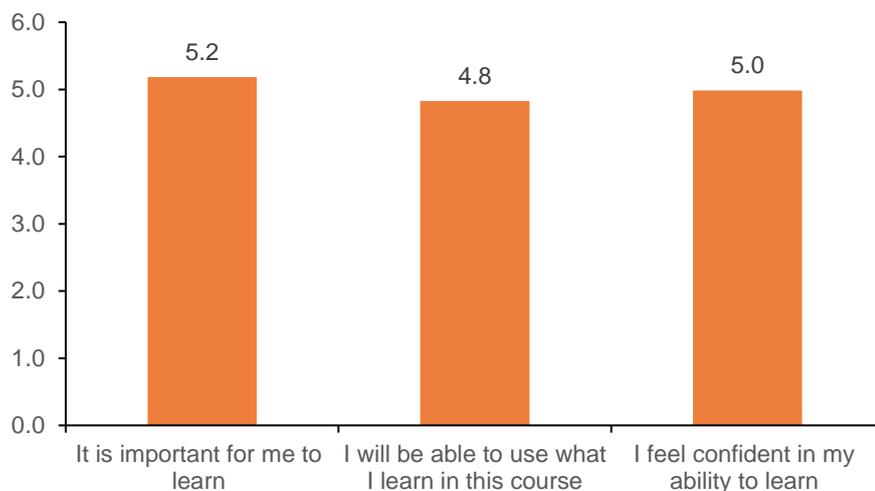
**Figure 4: Benefits claimed by learners at end and six months following the programme**



## Learning-related outcomes

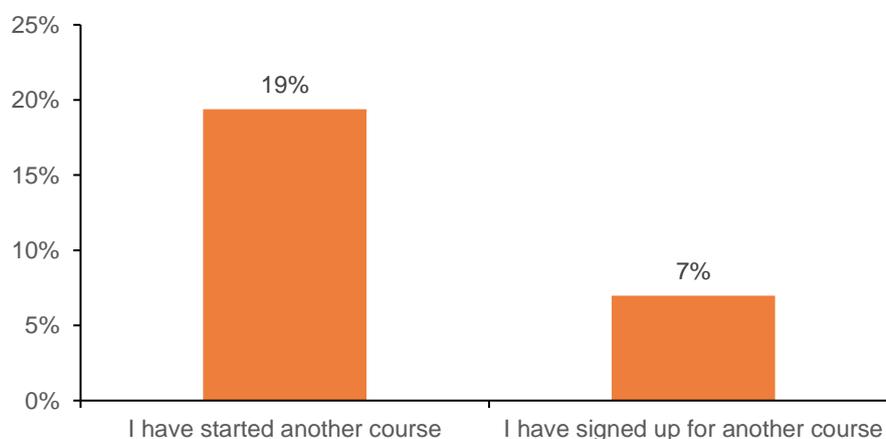
Surveyed learners were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with a set of statements related to learning from 0-6, with 6 indicating that they strongly agreed and 0 indicating that they strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 5 displays learners' mean scores against these statements six months after their pilot programme. Overall this analysis suggests that attitudes toward learning had stayed positive following their involvement in their Citizens' Curriculum programme. For example, learners' mean scores for the statements 'It is important for me to learn', 'I will be able to use what I learn in this course' and 'I am confident in my ability to learn' were 5.2, 4.8 and 5.0 respectively, suggesting that, on average, learners strongly agreed with these statements.

**Figure 5: Mean attitudes towards learning six months after the programme**



Learners were then asked if they had either 'started another course', or 'signed up for another course' since completing their Citizens' Curriculum programme. Almost one fifth (19%) of surveyed learners had started another course and a further 7% had signed up for a course yet to start.

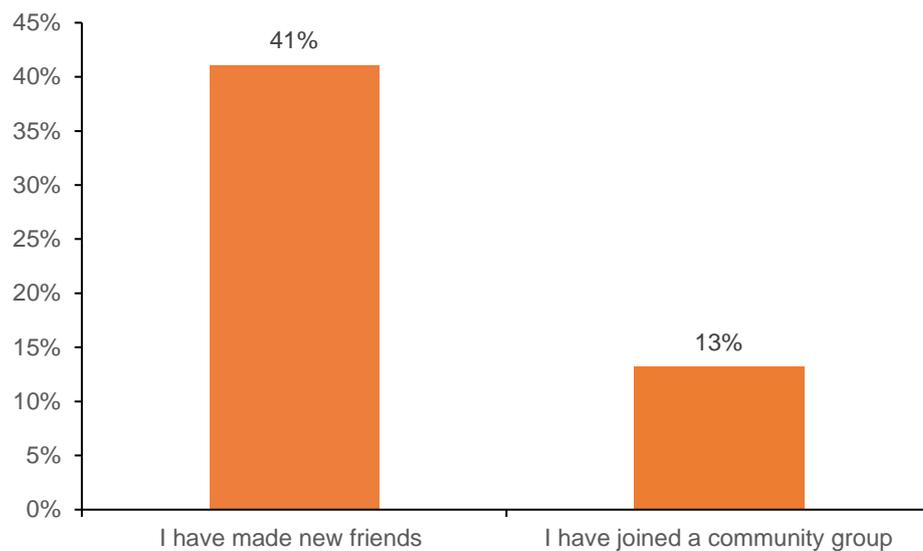
**Figure 6: Learning related activities six months after the programme**



## Social and civic engagement outcomes experienced by learners

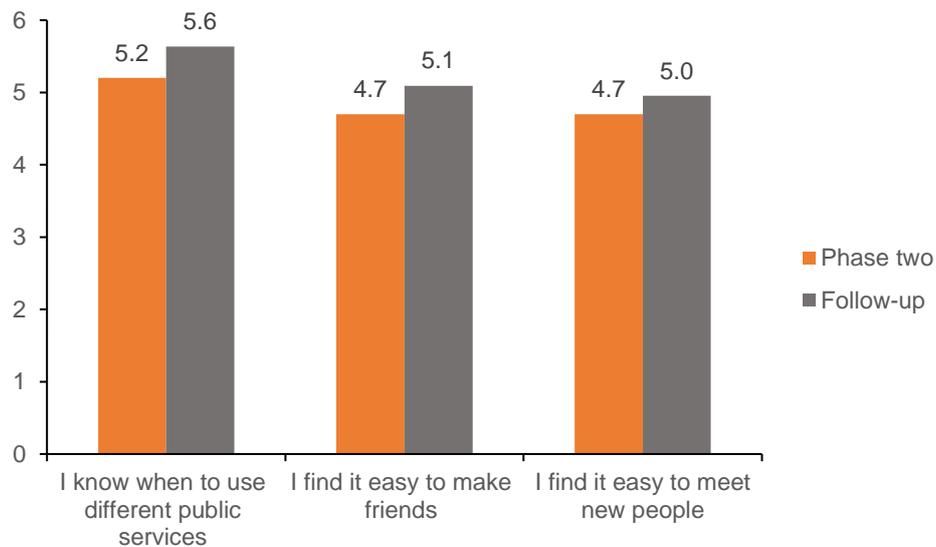
Learners experienced a range of social and civic engagement-related outcomes throughout their Citizens' Curriculum programme. As Figure 7 below shows, two-fifths (41%) of learners indicated that they had developed new friendships in the six months since they had finished their Citizens' Curriculum programme, as a result of their learning. In addition, over one in ten (13%) said they had joined a community group since ending their programme. These findings highlight the potential for a Citizens' Curriculum programme to have not only positive, but sustainable outcomes in relation to social and civic engagement.

**Figure 7: Social and civic engagement outcomes six months following the programme**



Surveyed learners were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with a set of statements related to social and civic engagement on a scale from 0-6, with 6 indicating that they strongly agreed and 0 indicating that they strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 8 displays learners' mean scores against these statements six months after their pilot programme and shows that mean scores have slightly increased against each of the three measures. This suggests that the Citizens' Curriculum was effective in enabling learners to gain the skills they needed to engage in social and civic life and sustain positive outcomes in these areas.

**Figure 8: Mean social engagement scores six months following the programme**

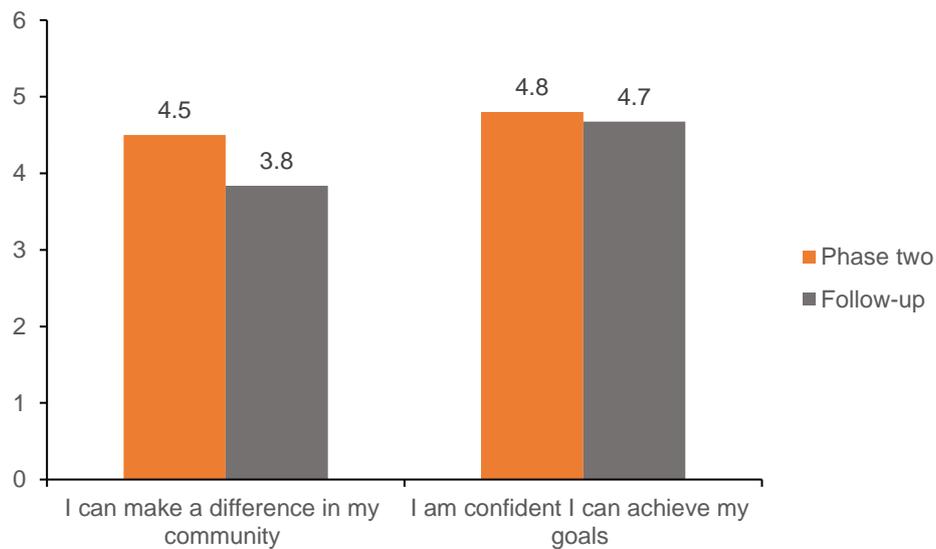


### Self-efficacy and self-confidence

Learner self-efficacy was measured by asking two attitudinal questions at the end of and six months following the Citizens' Curriculum pilots. As before, learners were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with each statement from 0-6, with 6 indicating that they strongly agreed and 0 indicating that they strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 9 displays learners' mean scores against these statements at the end of and six months after their pilot programme. Mean scores for self-efficacy and self-confidence related statements have stayed positive in the follow-up survey, with only a slight decline between the two times. Indeed, the qualitative interview with pilots suggested that for some learners, the development of self-efficacy and self-confidence enabled them to engage in employment related activities and even find full employment.

*"Two of them, who came to us via probation, did all of the NIACE pilots with us and they both now volunteer here at Tomorrow's Women, and one of them also works as well. She's got employment whilst volunteering for us too. That's come from them just building their confidence after their offenses." (Tomorrow's Women Wirral Pilot Lead)*

**Figure 9: Learners' mean self-efficacy scores before and after their programme**



Some providers revealed that adopting the Citizens' Curriculum in their organisation resulted in several unexpected outcomes, namely positive social and behavioural changes. Rochdale Borough Council in particular outlined how some participants of their Citizens' Curriculum programme were more likely to sustain their accommodation and less likely to come in to contact with police:

*"So yeah and family outcomes and reduced evictions and housing enforcements, reduced police call-outs. In one case it was a person who had the very highest amount of calls to the police in any one time across the whole borough of Rochdale, and the demand from that case came down by 95 per cent."* (Rochdale Borough Council Pilot Lead)

They continued to appraise their Citizens' Curriculum programme as having wider implications in addition to learning and skills:

*"...It's now recognised as an effective premature mortality programme as well as a learning and skills programme."* (Rochdale Borough Council Pilot Lead)

## CONCLUSION

The phase two pilot evaluation carried out in October 2016 made a number of conclusions about the impact participation in the Citizens' Curriculum had for learners and providers of the programme. This research builds on these findings and sheds light on the sustainability of the Citizens' Curriculum, as well as the long-term outcomes for learners.

The findings of this evaluation demonstrate that adopting the Citizens' Curriculum can result in positive long-term changes for learners, such as:

- Sustained improvements in their **employability**, with 9% finding a new job, 22% starting to apply for jobs, and 40% starting to look for work.
- Improvements in their **attitudes towards learning**, with over one quarter (26%) of learners having signed up for, or started a new course.
- Long-term differences in **social and civic engagement**, with 41% making new friends, and 13% joining a community group.

In addition to the outcomes for learners, this evaluation identified aspects of the Citizens' Curriculum that providers found beneficial for their organisation and learners, as well as areas they found challenging. Some organisations have continued providing the Citizens' Curriculum in full, others have taken elements of the approach and embedded it to their existing provision. Taking part in the programme has also led providers to reflect on their organisation and practice.

Challenges experienced by providers included balancing business needs with the needs of the programme, learner buy-in and motivation, and delivering multiple capabilities at once.

Providers appraise the Citizens' Curriculum to be a positive addition to their provision, whether the programme is sustained in full or elements of it are embedded. Providers also expressed pride in their organisation and learners for taking part in the Citizens' Curriculum pilots.

Learning and Work Institute is continuing to develop and test the ways in which the Citizens' Curriculum model can be embedded and used in adult learning provision. The findings of this evaluation will feed into our current work in this area, which includes developing a model specifically for use with ESOL learners in prisons, and exploring how the Citizens' Curriculum principles can inform local commissioning models for basic and life skills provision in areas where the Adult Education Budget may be devolved.