

EUROPEAN AGENDA FOR ADULT LEARNING

Disadvantaged Groups

NIACE research into participation in learning shows that 38% of adults in England and 35% of adults in Scotland are learning. Yet there continue to be significant inequalities in participation, which is determined by age, employment status, prior learning and social class and other factors¹. For example, 43% of adults with internet access report having taken part in learning in the last three years, compared to just 12% of those without internet access. NIACE's work seeks to tackle such inequalities and, by encouraging people to take part in learning, empower those from under-represented and excluded groups to achieve greater self-determination in their lives and overcome the disadvantages they face

In this paper, we highlight some of our recent work in provision for the disadvantaged, including for homeless learners, family learning, recent and established migrant communities, young adult carers and care leavers, amongst others. Language, literacy and numeracy skills are a recurring theme within this work, but we also consider digital skills, and health, financial and civic capabilities, which together comprise a 'citizens' curriculum' approach.

Homeless Adults

In 2014, NIACE completed an evaluation of St Mungo's residential college in Clapham, London. Set up to provide an integrated and intensive life skills, employment and education training programme for adults who have experienced long term unemployment and homelessness, the college's first cohort of learners moved in from January to April 2014. The evaluation identified a positive impact on learners and some critical success factors for maintaining stable provision in the residential college context. These included the need for improved relationships and communication between stakeholders; setting clearer boundaries for learners; formalising the review process for learners and making greater use of individual learning plans (ILPs). It was also suggested that recruitment procedures were revised, so that clients are enrolled when they are ready to benefit most from the experience.

At the same time, a NIACE project which aimed to support engagement with English and maths learning, and create progression routes to Functional Skills qualifications, also successfully delivered financial capability workshops, which were held with

¹ NIACE (2014) *Adult Participation in Learning Survey: Headline Findings*. Available at http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/2/0/2014_headline_findings_final_web_2.pdf

homeless adults moving into hostels. NIACE is currently strengthening and extending this work through the Citizens' Curriculum project – an approach which is locally-led, actively involves learners in deciding the course content, and interlinks language, literacy and numeracy skills with financial, digital, health and civic capabilities.

Adults under-represented in Family Learning

Family Learning Works, the report of the NIACE Family Learning Inquiry,² documented how it has been the case for some time that family learning is accessed predominantly by women, while the groups that are most under-represented are men and parents, grandparents and carers at each end of the age range. Adults with a disability have also been identified as being under-represented.

Through its implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations, NIACE has been strengthening the infrastructure to support engaging these underrepresented groups. NIACE is working with the Family Learning Local Authority group (FLLAG) in England to facilitate a tracking and progression survey of parents/carers who have accessed family learning within the last 2 years. The results survey will help FLLAG to build the evidence base of feedback and impact, and to identify any further groups not accessing provision. The survey will also assist the identification of case studies of participation in family learning by men and also parents, grandparents and carers at each end of the age range, in order to encourage providers to offer family learning provision.

Other projects include a 'maths4mums' programme of peer-led family learning activity and parenting skills at HMP Styal, to support progression into further learning. A family learning citizens' curriculum pilot is also underway in three other family learning settings.

Other Excluded Groups

In addition to the work above, our citizens' curriculum pilots are engaging with other disadvantaged cohorts including offenders and ex-offenders, migrants with English language needs, young adults and those recovering from addiction. NIACE's work with disadvantaged young adults, such as carers, care leavers and ex-offenders includes a project to enable and support their participation in traineeships³ and convening, on behalf of the Government in England, the national policy forum for young adult carers. This aims to identify, and support the implementation of,

² NIACE (2013) *Family Learning Works. The Inquiry into Family Learning in England and Wales* http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/n/i/niace_family_learning_report_reprint_fi_nal.pdf

³ In England, the Traineeships programme is intended for young people aged 16 – 24 who wish to progress to an apprenticeship or work, but who don't yet have the appropriate skills or experience. www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships-programme

improvements to policy to help young adult carers access learning and overcome the disadvantages they face.

Technology and Disadvantaged Groups

A number of NIACE projects explore the use of technology with excluded groups. For example, work is underway to make the innovative Maths Everywhere⁴ app available in the secure estate via the virtual campus. A Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) pilot is considering how this can support recent migrant ESOL learners, who are unable to access mainstream provision in a community setting.

Questions for the Forum

- What examples, case studies or other information can members provide with regard to learning provision for any of the above disadvantaged learners? Have any other groups been identified as a priority in England?
- To what extent do learning initiatives targeted at England's most disadvantaged adults adopt a 'citizens' curriculum' approach?

⁴ <http://www.mathseverywhere.org.uk/>