

## Welcome

Welcome to the fifth edition of *Revolutions* from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). A lot has happened since our last edition; we've all taken part in an election and another very successful Adult Learners' Week.

In this edition, we:

- introduce John Hayes, Minister for Skills, FE and Lifelong Learning (note the new title – good news)
- take a look at Business in The Community's work with high profile employers
- congratulate a clutch of award-winning Transformation Fund projects
- hear some inspiring stories from Community Learning Champions
- share some findings from last year's Learning Revolution festival
- learn how museums and libraries are opening up their spaces to self-organised learning groups.

## Our new Minister

Our new Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, John Hayes, is the MP for South Holland and The Deepings. He comes to BIS with a wealth of experience in the Shadow Cabinet, having worked in a range of positions including education, employment, agriculture and transport. Since December 2007, he has served as the Shadow Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education.



In his first speech as Minister, addressing the NIACE Adult Learners Week policy conference, the Minister emphasised the important role of adult learning in society. He said, "If we want to build a bigger society as the Prime Minister has missioned us to, then we must recognise the value of community learning to civil society." He went on to say, "Over the past five years, through the many visits, meetings and encounters I had in every part of this country, I have seen the difference that learning can make, the joy that art or music-making can bring into the lives of the most severely challenged and disabled people, how the activities of the University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age helps people to learn again."

To read the Minister's full speech, go to [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

## Employers recognise the benefits of informal learning

Thanks to the work of Business in The Community (BiTC), big employers are recognising the importance of creating a learning culture in the workplace. Adult learning has received a huge boost over the past months, with pledges from high-profile businesses such as Barclays and npower.

Employers know that staff are key to corporate success, and businesses have shown that offering opportunities for informal learning alongside formal training can create a more engaged and productive workforce. For many businesses, signing up to the Pledge has been a natural progression that reflects what they already do as part of their commitment to supporting employees and delivering their corporate social responsibilities.

Through their work with businesses, BiTC colleagues have helped to reach nearly two million employees. Now, to help these organisations encourage other businesses to take the Pledge, BiTC has developed an employer toolkit and best practice guides. The resources show how companies can integrate informal learning into responsible business practice, with case studies, guidance, tips, information on partnership working and much more.

To find out more go [www.skillstories.org/learningcultures](http://www.skillstories.org/learningcultures) or contact: [anita.powell@bitc.org.uk](mailto:anita.powell@bitc.org.uk)



## Ambassadors for informal adult learning

We have around 4,500 **organisations** signed up to the informal adult learning pledge. But we also need **people** to raise awareness of informal adult learning. Anyone can be an ambassador for informal adult learning – a learner, a teacher, a manager in adult education, a community learning champion or anyone who feels passionately about informal adult learning. The role does not require lots of time or energy. It's just about being aware and helping others to find out about the pledge and understand the benefits that learning brings.

Ambassadors work inside, and in many cases outside, organisations to champion the pledge and help open up spaces for self-organised learning. They make contact with other organisations and support initiatives like Adult Learners' Week and Get Online Day. We need more people like this in order to build grassroots awareness of - and commitment to - informal adult learning.

If you're interested in becoming an ambassador for informal adult learning or know somebody who you think could become an ambassador, get in touch now. To sign up, just email [revolutions@bis.gov.uk](mailto:revolutions@bis.gov.uk).

To find out more about the ambassador role and the informal adult learning pledge by visiting [www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/corporate/docs/T/tlr-pledge-pack-final.pdf](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/corporate/docs/T/tlr-pledge-pack-final.pdf)



## Engaging over 200,000 people and further highlights from the last year

Last year's Festival of Learning saw more than 200,000 people take part in 2,500 events. This is just one of the achievements highlighted in a short brochure published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). It shows how BIS has helped thousands of individuals, organisations and self-organised groups develop their passion for lifelong learning over the last year. Working with its partners, the Department wants to continue to promote learning as a positive force to enrich the lives of individuals and bind us together as families, friends and communities.



[www.bis.gov.uk/tlrhighlights](http://www.bis.gov.uk/tlrhighlights)

We wanted to share some of the impressive statistics from the Festival to show just how successful these events are at engaging communities and encouraging people to get involved in learning.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) coordinated over **1,000** events in museums, libraries and archives services attracting almost **78,000** participants. A survey by the MLA of 1,000 participants revealed the really positive outcomes of festival activity.

Festival events unquestionably developed people's appetite for learning, with more than **90%** enjoying the learning experience.

53% of participants described the events and activities as *informative* and 23% reported that even short activities had helped them acquire new skills, highlighting the value of taster sessions to help people get started in learning new things

Perhaps the most important finding of all was that that 98% of respondents were inspired to do something new or had subsequently taken up further learning - a fantastic outcome.

### Opening up spaces in museums, libraries and archives

The MLA's £100k Challenge Fund offered small grants to encourage museums, libraries and archives to open up their spaces for self-organised learning groups.



Following evaluation of the Fund outcomes, the MLA has just published *Opening Up Spaces*: bringing new people into museums, libraries and archives by supporting self-organised learning, showcasing the most innovative and exciting open spaces projects in museums, libraries and archives across the country.

You can download or read the publication at <http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/publications> Meanwhile, here are a couple of the *Opening Up Spaces* case studies to whet your appetite.

### Celebrating local lives

The Working Class Movement Library contains a huge collection of rare artefacts which document the lives of ordinary people over the last 200 years. It used its MLA Challenge Fund grant to help inspire a broader range of local people to use its facilities. The results have included group choral performances to audiences of 2,000 local people, with self-written lyrics celebrating the history of local dockers. Unexpectedly, the project attracted a wave of young people into the library, all amazed by the range of

artefacts in the collection.

### **Make and Mend**

Make and Mend, a self-organised learning project supported by the Challenge Fund, has given local craft communities access to Leeds Museum's exquisite costume and textile collections. Many of the people taking part had no idea this collection existed, let alone that they could work with the materials. The programme has really taken off and now has an online portal, *Craftsville*, which enables self-organised learners to share ideas and tips. The group is determined to take full advantage of the resources and space available to them and have co-ordinated a craft celebration day in October 2010, at the museum, to showcase craft community activities.



### **The ning site – bringing informal adult learning to life**

The ning online community was created and supported back in 2009 by our Pledge partner Becta with the aim of providing a dedicated space for knowledge exchange about informal adult learning. The website was developed as a temporary solution while the School of Everything was being developed, but its popularity amongst our stakeholders has allowed it to become more of a permanent fixture.

What makes the ning site special is its interactivity, which encourages the adult learning community to get together to ask questions, share experiences and offer advice. Whether it's in the forum, the blog section or via the personalised page options, the user can really get involved. The site even has a specially created section so that Pledge Ambassadors can share their experiences, post videos or pictures and ask other users for ideas and views.

The site has attracted 896 members and we would love your support to push this past the magic 1,000 mark. Help us spread this message further by telling colleagues, friends and family about the support available to organisations to develop their informal adult learning offering at [www.thelearningrevolution.ning.com](http://www.thelearningrevolution.ning.com).

Equally, if you have any suggestions for ways to improve the ning site and make it more accessible to new users, please email [christine.lewis@becta.org.uk](mailto:christine.lewis@becta.org.uk)

### **Community Learning Champions: an update**

The Community Learning Champions (CLCs) scheme has received a boost, 700 nationally recognised CLCs have been registered on the CLC register while the first 36 Development Funded projects have been working hard since December 2009 to recruit, induct and train their CLCs. They're now starting to make a real difference in their communities and they will soon be joined by a further 14 projects recently selected for funding in 2010/11.



One project that exemplifies the importance of the CLCs' work is the new project led by Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership and operating across Hampshire and Surrey. Here, champions will be inspired to develop an innovative approach to help mental health service users, offenders, ex-offenders, army personnel and their families to engage in informal adult learning, developing their interests, skills or sense of well-being.

The CLCs will be recruited from within organisations which already support these targeted groups and therefore will be trusted by other service users. The CLCs will be trained and supported to organise taster learning activities to meet learner needs and interests. They'll also provide support to help the participants progress onto further learning by linking with providers of information, advice and guidance.

Running for 12 months, the Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership will develop good practice to inform the roll out of CLC schemes more widely across the South East and nationally.

This project, like many others, will benefit from the extensive support resources available on the CLC website. Recent additions to the site include leaflets which outline the role of CLCs and a new media toolkit, which provides a step by step guide to generate media coverage for CLC projects.

For more information visit [www.communitylearningchampions.org.uk](http://www.communitylearningchampions.org.uk)

### **Project spotlight - Transformation Fund Award winners**

The Transformation Fund Awards, which took place during Adult Learners' Week, celebrated the cream of the community projects supported by the fund, inspiring learning in new places, in new ways, for new audiences.



Here's a quick overview of all the winners, selected from the 300 groups and projects for their achievements in encouraging learning, particularly for people who've had least access in the past. Click [here](#) to take a closer look at the winners.

- [Watch video Bridge Project, North East](#)
- [Watch video The Nightjar, South West](#)
- [Watch video Lifelong Learning Project, Yorkshire and the Humber](#)

#### **Group winner – Time of our lives, Margate**

This 17-strong group, aged 60-85, have developed an exhibition of what 'teenage' means to them through various art mediums.

#### **Group winner – Quest, Stafford**

Quest supports adults with varying mental health challenges, offering farm-based learning activities, including donkey walking and tractor driving.

#### **Group winner – DIY your future, Sheffield**

Asian women from the Fir Vale area have been challenging stereotypes by learning DIY skills, equipping themselves with knowledge that can benefit their families and communities.

#### **Group winner – Burmese and Karen community reporters, Sheffield**

Adults from the Burmese and Karen refugee community have developed a range of exciting and useful journalistic and community reporting skills.

#### **Group winner – Brough superior Learning Revolution team, Nottingham**

56 group members have spent more than 1,000 hours lovingly restoring a 1936 Brough Superior vintage car.

## Individual winners

Former drug addict, **Dean Croft** worked and studied with the help of Norwich City Council's LEAP project, succeeding in turning his life around. He will soon have the qualifications and skills to become a chef.

Peterborough resident, **John Garton** used opportunities provided by *Greeniversity* to prepare and present courses in wild food.

**Liam Norcott** from Manchester has developed a passion for creative writing and video production, thanks to the Real Surreal course – part of the *Just the Ticket* project.

The *Towards Independence* programme has enabled **Peter Fear** from Portsmouth to live with more confidence and even conquer public speaking.

Despite medical difficulties, **Leigh-Ann Lumsden** has learned to play the keyboard with the help of music sessions at Foxes Bridge Day Centre in Coleford.

**Ashley Lawton's** study of music technology at Sine FM's *Higher Rhythm* facility has helped his transition back into society since his release from prison.

If you would like more information on any of the articles in this newsletter, or if you would like to add a name to our mailing list, email [revolutions@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:revolutions@bis.gsi.gov.uk). And please forward *Revolutions* on to anyone you think might be interested.

