

Welcome

Welcome to the sixth edition of Revolutions from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

In this edition we highlight two important BIS consultations, launched by Skills Minister John Hayes, which will have major implications for the future of informal adult and community learning. We also publish articles from the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and the Local Authorities Forum for the Education of Adults (LEAFEA) which issue a rallying call asking everyone to respond to the consultations. Other stories in this edition include:

- Refreshing the Revolutions newsletter
- Transforming Lives launch event
- BBC First Click campaign to get older people online
- Race Online 2012
- New resources for practitioners
- A new evidence base to support informal learning
- Promoting a Café Culture at work

Refreshing the *Revolutions* e-newsletter

As you probably know, we introduced the Revolutions e-newsletter back in 2009 as a way of keeping everyone informed about the various projects and resources that arose as a direct or indirect result of *The Learning Revolution White Paper*.

Over the coming months we plan to widen the reach of Revolutions and join up informal adult and community learning with other areas of activity that contribute to the Government's Big Society vision.

The newsletter will still feature news from all parts of the informal adult and community learning landscape. But we're keen to know about other topics you'd like to see in a new-look newsletter for a wider audience – what about digital inclusion, offender learning, wider voluntary sector issues or news about specific groups such as learners with disabilities or young adults who aren't in education, employment or training?

We'd also like to know which features of Revolutions you've found useful and which haven't worked as well. And should we have a name change to reflect the newsletter's wider scope?

Please [email your thoughts to us](#)

Use the BIS consultations to help shape the future of informal adult and community learning

John Hayes, Minister for FE, Skills and Lifelong Learning is inviting everyone with an interest in adult education to share their ideas on skills and funding policies in England. Adult and community learning is a very important part of this learning landscape. As John Hayes said in a speech made soon after he took up post: "The transformation that's required to build a truly inclusive society is not only economic, it's social too. And that's why I see learning not as something that can be carved up into useful and less useful pieces but as a continuum. And that's why we have made it clear that we appreciate adult and community learning."

Responses to 'A Simplified Further Education and Skills Funding System and Methodology' will inform our autumn investment strategy, focusing on how we can deliver a more 'fit for purpose' funding system and help focus the learning offer on the needs of learners and employers, with specific questions on minimum provider contract sizes and whether we should extend the single budget approach to the

Adult Safeguarded Learning funding stream, among others.

Responses to the consultation 'Skills for Sustainable Growth' will inform the debate about the choices we must make as we implement a plan to reduce the country's large financial deficit. They will also inform a 5 year strategy on skills – in the widest sense of the term 'skills' – which will set out the Government's principles for the skills system and a framework for policy. As well as a series of questions about reinvigorating adult and community learning, you'll probably be interested in the sections on the principles underpinning a new skills strategy, funding and entitlements, helping people choose their learning and measuring success, among others. The strategy will be published in the autumn after the Spending Review.

Have your say

Both consultation exercises will be very important for the future of informal adult and community learning. So please let BIS know what you think!

To read a copy of Skills for Sustainable Growth (see pages 24 to 26 in particular) and to comment online, go to <http://www.bis.gov.uk/Consultations/skills-for-sustainable-growth-consultation?cat=open>

To read a copy of A Simplified Further Education and Skills Funding System and Methodology and to comment online, go to <http://www.bis.gov.uk/Consultations/fe-funding-consultation>

Both consultations close 14th October 2010.

Please raise awareness of the two consultations, facilitate discussions about the questions and encourage responses from the organisations you work with.

Views from our partners

We asked two organisations to share their thoughts on the consultations.

First, an article from Ian Forward, Vice-Chair, Local Education Authorities Forum for the Education of Adults (LEAFEA) and Head of Kent County Council's Community Learning and Skills service

Developing a Learning Continuum for adults

Local Authority adult learning services have a developmental and potentially influential role to play in realising a key ambition of the coalition Government. In a letter to the outgoing chair of LEAFEA, John Hayes Minister for FE, Skills and Lifelong Learning articulates his belief that learning is a continuum and 'all forms of learning are relevant in a civilised society, irrespective of whether learning is for its own sake, or to improve skills and employability.' He goes on to express his wish that people will in future be able 'to experience the best possible learning services in their communities'. The letter also contains a clear invitation for adult education providers to work with Government to drive forward the adult learning agenda and develop the vision.

That the Government wishes to abandon the planning and funding silos that have confounded and constrained community learning services in recent years could not be clearer. This together with John Hayes' understanding that various types of learning episodes are required to meet the needs of adults as they move through life's journey presents a truly welcome about-turn in approach. We now need to demonstrate that the continuum analysis is well understood and often well enabled by local authorities providing or securing informal adult and community learning for their citizens.

The learning continuum concept has the potential to restore the status and value of learning for its own sake to a point in the (now distant) past when there was a consensus that adult education is worthwhile as an activity in its own right and is also worthy of public investment. We can move beyond the ambition of the Learning Revolution (which for some often appeared to suggest a silo of informal learning largely unconnected to skills and employment) because within the continuum there is recognition of the economic value of learning in adult life. People with the learning habit are receptive to skills acquisition and training which has a beneficial impact on workforce development. There is also a growing body of evidence that the point at which members of an ageing population become dependent - and therefore a drain on public funds - can be delayed through learning activity that promotes wellbeing. (To anyone unconvinced by this I'd recommend asking any group of older participants in a yoga, art or local history class whether they agree with the proposition. The continuation of learning throughout life is good for individuals, their families, wider communities and the

Treasury.

LEAFEA is strongly encouraging heads of adult learning services, senior officers and members in Local Authorities to respond to the two consultations. It is particularly important that we communicate our ideas and suggestions on how a learning continuum can be built locally, how public funding can be targeted on those least likely to engage and how partnerships with the voluntary sector and community groups can be developed to grow capacity and increase demand in more deprived areas.

There is, needless to say, much at stake. Scarce public funding is more likely to be directed where there is both commitment to change and clarity of purpose among professionals and service providers. Building a strong case for the learning continuum, and ACL's role in helping to implement it, could help secure a sustainable future for adult learning for generations to come.

Next, Peter Templeton, Director of Education & Strategy at the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), shares his views

Support the case for informal adult and community learning in the current consultations

John Hayes' foreword to *Skills for Sustainable Growth* is very welcome. Learning should be about more than skills alone, should challenge orthodox assumptions and build a big society. I'm glad he says:

"We need to recognise that formal vocational training is not appropriate or needed by everyone. To help create a 'big society', we need to empower communities to develop the informal life-long learning opportunities in which they want to participate."

This is excellent news from the point of view of informal adult education but, of course, the consultation is taking place in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review and close scrutiny of every government budget. I think it is crucial that anyone interested in adult education looks at the consultation and responds to it quickly to reinforce the benefits of informal life-long learning.

I really believe in adult education working at the most local level – that's been a characteristic of the WEA for a century. The consultation talks about 'local leadership' - a broad guiding coalition engaging local authorities, employers, colleges and universities, civil society organisations and others. This should pool resources and avoid duplication. However, we need to emphasise that the voice and influence of organisations working below the level of these agencies – particularly in the voluntary and community sector – must be able to influence this local leadership.

Because of this, the notion of a 'minimum contract size' is also crucial. Any system needs to be accessible for voluntary and community organisations whose defining strength is often being small scale, local and innovative. This is part of the funding simplification proposals, but we need to be sure that the big don't squeeze out the small in any new arrangement and that new providers can enter the system fairly and without excessive risk. The voluntary sector must be able to secure funding in an equitable way. I think we need to make sure that comes across in the consultation as it would support the minister's vision.

Without careful consideration, the welcome funding simplifications could actually leave part-time adult learning vulnerable to loss of funding or subject to inappropriate requirements needed for formal vocational training. It is clear that this isn't the intention but we need responses to reinforce the need to maintain a separate funding stream for informal lifelong learning as a small but really vital part of the FE budget and to use it to empower communities and help disadvantaged adults.

Most of all, in times of austerity, we need a funding and policy framework that *sustains* adult learning, especially in the most disadvantaged communities. I hope many people will consider these issues and respond to the consultation to support John Hayes' clear commitment to this work.

***Transforming Lives* Event**

On 7 September, NIACE launched its [*Transforming Lives*](#) publication at the prestigious British Library. The *Transforming Lives* report details key findings from informal adult learning projects supported by the BIS £20m Transformation Fund. The report includes thematic reports on nine specific topics: citizenship; arts and culture; broadcasting and technology; supporting families; health and well-being; disabled learners; young adults not in employment, education and training; older learners; and education for sustainable development.

The event, chaired by NIACE's Operational Director Carol Taylor and attended by more than 90 participants, was a great success despite the pandemonium caused by the London tube strikes.

The audience watched a moving piece performed by learners from the Envis project, who spoke candidly about their experience of studying the performing arts, how the project has increased their self confidence, and how they now feel better able to overcome significant personal barriers including alcohol abuse and depression.

Anne Goldman from Bourneville College of Further Education and Learning Links volunteer learning champions in South West Birmingham told us about how they use their local knowledge and ability to reach people who would not normally walk into a formal learning environment. The learning champions have mentored and encouraged people to engage in local informal learning activities, including family and intergenerational learning.

One of the highlights of the event was a series of Transformation Fund video case studies, including a film from the outstanding *Starting Point Community Learning Partnership* project. For more information visit [Transformation Fund website](#) and see the videos case studies which will be available on the BIS website shortly: [Video case studies](#)

We heard compelling speeches from other guest speakers, including:

- John Hayes, Minister for FE, Skills and Lifelong Learning, who outlined the Government's commitment to informal adult and community learning and the need for all stakeholders to participate in the current skills and funding consultations
- Liz Lawson, BIS policy lead on informal adult and community learning, who called for the sector to help build a comprehensive evidence base so that everyone has access to reliable data and case studies to make the case for ACL's wide-ranging benefits
- Peter Lavender, Deputy Chief Executive of NIACE, who spoke about the impact of the Transformation Fund projects, their ability to bring new and different people into learning through creative and wide-ranging partnerships, as well as the interesting reflection that some of the smallest projects with the least funding were able deliver some of the biggest transformations in learners' lives.
- Lorna Fitzjohn, Divisional Manager of Learning and Skills Development at Ofsted, who presented key findings from the recent Rapid Response Survey of projects funded through the BIS Transformation Fund. Lorna commented on the wide variety of activities that were inspected, declaring "*I wasn't sure whether I should bring my wellington boots or a wet suit to each visit!*"

The day was closed by Alan Tuckett, NIACE Chief Executive, who spoke about NIACE's continued commitment to informal adult and community learning and thanked BIS and NIACE staff for making the Transforming Lives project such a success.

BBC First Click campaign

In mid-October the BBC will be launching a major new media literacy campaign - First Click. The campaign aims to encourage and support the estimated 9.2 million people in the UK who have never used the internet to take the first steps to get online.

- A recent ONS report* reveals that there were 7 million households without internet access in 2010.
- When adults were asked why their household did not have an internet connection, the most common response was that they didn't need it, at 39%, followed by 21% who said a lack of skills prevented them from having the internet. Equipment costs being too high was the reason given by 18% of adults as to why their household had no Internet connection'.
- In addition, the majority (60%) of those aged 65 and over had never used the Internet. This compared with 22% of those aged between 55 and 64 and just 1% of 16 to 24 year olds. Adults aged 65 and over made up almost two-thirds (64%) of those individuals who had never accessed the Internet.

First Click is targeted at people aged 55+. Working with a range of specialist partner organisations, and through programming and activity on BBC TV and radio across the UK, the BBC will showcase what the internet has to offer. The campaign will encourage people to attend beginners' computing courses in their local area and learn simple skills such as how to send emails and surf the web.

A number of BBC programmes and celebrities will lend their support to promoting the campaign, including:

- a series of TV trails most of which will be planned during daytime programming
- discussions on BBC Radio 2: The Jeremy Vine Show
- BBC Local Radio across the UK helping listeners to get online

- Rip Off Britain will help the audience make informed choices and show viewers how to use the web to save money
- celebrities like Peggy Archer from The Archers and presenter Gloria Hunniford learning how to get online.

The campaign will be supported by on-air marketing, with TV and radio trails running for three weeks from Monday 11 October. Viewers and listeners will be directed to the BBC

First Click Advice Line, (Freephone:08000 150 950), open from 8am to 10pm, seven days a week, where advisors will direct people to local centres where they can learn how to get online for the first time. The BBC is encouraging as many partners as possible to consider how they could best provide opportunities for older people to learn, whether in a library, UK Online centre, Age UK venue or other. Advisors will point callers to the closest place to go that best suits their needs.

If your organisation is interested in running a First Click Beginners' Computer Course, then do sign up and register your details via this link:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/connect/campaigns/partner_form.shtml

For more information visit www.bbc.co.uk/firstclick which will be launched early October. Or email the First Click campaign inbox: firstclick@bbc.co.uk

¹Office for National Statistical Bulletin: Internet Access 201

Race online 2012

Race Online 2012, led by Martha Lane Fox, the UK Digital Champion, is working with partners across the public, private and community sector to inspire, encourage and support as many new people as possible to get online by the end of 2012.

A **Manifesto for a Networked Nation** sets out why we need to build a networked nation and how you can help <http://raceonline2012.org/manifesto>

The extent of the challenge

The UK has 40 million internet users, with 30 million people using the web everyday, and some of the world's cheapest broadband prices. However, there are 9.2 million adults in the UK who have never used the internet – 18% of the population.

4 million of these are amongst the most disadvantaged in our communities - 39% of these are over 65 years old, 38% are unemployed and 19% are families with children.

There is a particular need to support older people to develop the confidence and motivation to get online. Use of the web decreases with age and increases with income - whilst only 1% of 16 to 24 year olds are offline this rises to 60% of those over 65 years old.

Other characteristics of non-users include:

- 31% are in households earning less than £10,399
- 48% are disabled
- 29% of working age people in the North of England
- 21% of adults in Yorkshire and the Humber have never been online
- high concentrations of older people offline in rural and coastal areas

How you can help

The informal adult learning opportunities that you offer to adults across the country could support the 10 million adults currently not online to develop the confidence and skills they need to take that first step online.

You don't have to have advanced digital skills yourself to support other people to get online. Friends, family and trusted intermediaries all have a crucial role to play in passing on IT to those who are not yet

online. The BBC First Click campaign as featured in the previous article can help you get started.

There are now 748 partners signed up to race online who have collectively committed to help 1,754, 121 people get online. Why not sign up to be a race online partner too and make a promise to support the people you have contact with to take that first step? It's quick and easy to do.

<http://raceonline2012.org>

If everyone receiving this newsletter made a pledge to support 10 people currently off line to get online we could make a real difference to people's lives.

In return Race Online can highlight the work you do to support digital inclusion on the race online website and might also be able to help you reach out even further by putting you in touch with other race online partners across the public, private and community sector.

For more information please contact: Natasha Innocent, Public Sector Partnership Manager, Race Online 2012 natasha@raceonline2012.org

New resources available to support informal adult and community learning

BIS has brought together a wide range of resources specially designed to support anyone with a passion for creating, supporting or delivering high quality informal adult and community learning.

Whether you want to develop your skills as a learning facilitator, create a learning culture at work, find out how technology can support informal learning or open up a space for learning, there's advice and help for you.

The resources, grouped under nine headings, will help people develop, deliver and support informal learning in places like libraries, museums, community centres, unionlearn centres, colleges and workplaces.

They're now available on the [Excellence Gateway](#), the online service for everyone who works in the post-16 learning and skills sector in England.

Informal learning evidence base goes live

BIS's new informal adult learning evidence base is now live. It's the place where we can compile facts, statistics, case studies, research reports and policies that have a bearing on informal learning. It's aimed at anyone with an interest in informal learning, whether you're looking for a case study to bring a report to life or statistics to support a policy you're developing.

The evidence base is designed to show how informal learning contributes to policies across Government and the impact it has on individuals and society more generally. We've organised the information around six common public sector themes:

- Citizenship and democracy
- Culture and arts
- Digital inclusion
- Health and wellbeing
- Supporting families
- Workplace learning

We've included policy documents such as White Papers and other important reports from the last few years to allow you to explore the recent history of policy development and explore the issues that the papers describe, many of which are still relevant today.

The information we've published marks the first stage of the evidence base. More themes and data will be added over the coming months but if you think there are gaps in our policies or you have more facts, statistics and case studies please send them to revolutions@bis.gov.uk.

You can find the evidence base under the six themes by visiting: [Informal Learning evidence base](#)

