

Revolutions edition one - news from The Learning Revolution



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

When we published The Learning Revolution White Paper, we promised to keep you updated on the latest Learning Revolution news, and your Revolutions newsletter will do exactly that. We hope you enjoy this edition of Revolutions, and the ones that follow.

For more information on progress, [click here](#)

First, we want to thank the organisations and individuals who submitted Learning Revolution project proposals, whether successful or unsuccessful, and helped deliver October's Learning Revolution Festival. We'd also like to thank those who have taken part in workshops, forums or advisory groups and are involved in informal adult learning projects.

It's thanks to you that the Learning Revolution is making such rapid progress.

At the last National Advisory Forum meeting in November, Minister Kevin Brennan asked forum members to convey particular thanks to all the Learning Revolution stakeholders at grass roots level, small and large. He said, "I'm just so impressed by the passion and energy of the organisations and individuals working in this area. Their incredible drive and enthusiasm is transforming a policy White Paper into a really powerful movement."

The Learning Revolution Festival

More than 2,500 events were held during October's Learning Revolution Festival, offering a burst of exciting, interactive events and tasters designed to inspire more people to start learning and demonstrate the creativity and diversity of learning for learning's sake.

Libraries, galleries, adult education centres, community associations, family learning providers, sports clubs, science clubs, voluntary arts organisations, reading groups, University of the Third Age groups and many other organisations all got involved by showcasing their activities and giving people a potentially life-changing experience.

This school has everything

A unique online service will soon be available for everyone involved in informal adult learning.

In the face of stiff competition, the School of Everything has been chosen by BIS and Becta to provide an interactive web-based portal to help adults find local learning opportunities and self-organised groups find low cost space to meet. The portal will also provide a host of guidance and resources for both publicly funded providers and self-organised groups.

Organisations with an interest in promoting informal adult learning, such as adult education services, FE colleges, community groups and voluntary organisations, will be able to download a customisable 'search widget' from School of Everything onto their own websites. The widget will allow visitors to their site to search for local courses or activities and low cost spaces.

The School of Everything, launched in 2008, already has a successful website which is helping to bring together people who want to learn something with the teachers who can teach them. The new portal will build on the current site to offer these new features which will go live at the end of March.

These enhancements are being funded by BIS and managed by Becta, which leads the national drive to improve learning and training through technology. Becta's Christine Lewis is enthusiastic about the potential of this initiative, "The new portal will provide a one stop shop for learners, teachers and anyone else interested in informal learning. The School of Everything will help join up the fantastic kaleidoscope of informal learning activities and help many more people find exactly the kind of learning opportunity, space or guidance they're looking for."

The School of Everything and Becta are keen to have discussions with the Transformation Fund projects developing regional and local directories, with a view to aligning the work wherever possible.

To view the current School of Everything site, [click here](#)



Planning and funding informal adult learning

The revolution continues to gather pace with a new model for planning and funding in development, led by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which is working closely with the Local Government Association and local authorities.

The model, still in the early stages of development, will see the introduction of a new local or sub-regional body, called a Lead Accountable Body (LAB), which will be responsible for providing the vision and leadership to innovate, join up, widen access and find creative local solutions so that informal adult learning can be responsive to the needs of local people. Each LAB will draw up a jointly-agreed delivery plan with local partners which will form the basis for the funding agreement with the new Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

Local authorities and FE colleges across England have already been contacted to flag up the proposed changes. LSC/SFA colleagues will be working closely with them to develop the new model which is expected to become operational from August 2011.

Many examples of good practice already exist which are helping to inform the development of the model, including case studies from Gloucestershire, Birmingham and Peterborough. For further information on these developments, please [click here](#)

Championing learning

As part of BIS's £3million Community Learning Champion Support Programme, 36 new projects across England have been funded to encourage socially excluded and vulnerable people from England's most deprived postcodes to take part in learning.



Community Learning Champions (CLCs) are volunteers who promote the value of learning in their own communities and to support them, the programme offers training, regional support networks and a toolkit. A new CLC badge is also being developed to raise the profile of their role.

Minister Kevin Brennan welcomed the initiative, saying, "Community Learning Champions play a vital role in their communities, encouraging peers, neighbours, family, and friends to take up learning. They act as role models, showing it is never too late for anyone to develop new interests, learn new skills and embark on new career routes."

For more information [click here](#)

Funding new learning experiences

Creative music master classes, learning adventures for older people and access to digital technologies are all on offer thanks to an informal learning investment of £20 million during 2010-11 by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

The Learning Revolution Transformation Fund, managed by National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), has proved to be incredibly popular. After trawling through more than 1,500 applications, 317 projects were selected for funding from the £20 million fund, many spearheaded by innovative partnerships between public, private and third sector organisations.

The projects aim to inspire peoples' creativity, improve mental health, help people get fit, support active citizenship, and provide stepping stones towards further learning, qualifications and employment.



Southern Brooks Community Project

Project spotlight: The Clockhouse, Oxford

Older people from deprived areas of Oxford are discovering their creative sides.

The Clockhouse – a Leys Community Development initiative – was awarded £9,649 from the Transformation Fund to offer creative taster sessions in singing, arts and crafts people to local people aged 50 plus.

Although many older people from the Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys estates haven't used community facilities in the past, this project is helping them get out and about. The sessions are proving popular and at the same time people are developing new skills and improving their confidence. An oil painting course is now over-subscribed and The Clockhouse is inviting older Asian women to join women-only craft sessions.

People taking part in a singing group say they feel much better as a result of the sessions, are enjoying getting to know other members of the group and making lasting friendships.

For more information about Transformation Fund projects, [click here](#)

Pledge corner

Public, private and voluntary sector organisations are embracing informal adult learning by signing up to the Learning Revolution Pledge. More than 2,000 organisations have pledged through the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) website and 3,000 individual libraries, museums and archives have pledged through the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

Focus on employers

International technology company Google has pledged its support to the Learning Revolution. Google ensures that its employees can keep creating, inventing, breaking boundaries and realising new technologies. This makes it an employer of choice, with one of the lowest staff turnover rates in the IT industry (5 per cent).

PR company Paver Smith has pledged its support after launching its own PR Training Academy. By embedding learning as part of its culture it has grown by more than 40 per cent during the recession.

Merseytravel also encourages a true learning culture throughout the organisation to keep levels of morale and motivation high, particularly important in areas like transport where staff retention can be an issue.

To learn more about these companies and access the employer toolkit, [click here](#)

To make the Learning Revolution Pledge, [click here](#)

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