

Welcome

Welcome to the third edition of *Revolutions* from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). As well as bringing you the latest news on individual Learning Revolution projects, *Revolutions* helps you to make links between different projects to create a stronger informal learning infrastructure and signpost more learning choices for adults.

In this edition we look at union learning centres that are delivering informal learning to hard-to-reach workers, their families and friends in new venues such as supermarkets and a Sikh temple.

We also take a look at how The School of Everything is helping organisations like Harrow Council reach out to new learners and how our partners like NIACE are creating more tools and resources to help informal learning flourish.



High quality learning in the workplace

Unionlearn is supporting trade unions to set up and run learning centres to bring more informal adult learning opportunities to their members and the wider community.

The Learning Revolution White Paper committed unionlearn to open up 50 union learning centres but that target has already been overtaken, with more than 60 centres in workplaces, union offices and Trade Union Education Centres now open to wider community use.

Centres vary a great deal, from large centres servicing hundreds of members, to smaller outreach centres and 'pods' that deliver learning to hard-to-reach workers, their families, friends and the wider community.

Unionlearn's national union development officer Joe Fearnough explains, "We committed in the White Paper to open 50 union centres to wider community use and we've exceeded this already. The centres are providing informal adult learning in a range of sectors and settings including supermarkets, community centres, football clubs and even a Sikh temple."

"Our union learning representatives, and there are over 23,000 thousand across the country, are running these centres to engage some of our hardest to reach members with informal adult learning. Informal adult learning is a real 'hook' to get people into the centres and many of them then get involved in formal learning and training."

The centres are supported by a range of partner organisations, including employers and local providers, who work with unions to make sure that learning is delivered to meet the needs of local union members and the wider community.



To find out more about union learning centres or unionlearn's wider involvement in the Learning Revolution contact Joe at jfearnehough@tuc.org.uk or [click here](#)

Become a Pledge Ambassador

Do you want to go even further to show your commitment to learning? Then why not become a Pledge Ambassador?

Ambassadors will work inside, and in many cases outside, their organisations to champion The Learning Revolution Pledge and help open up spaces for self organised learning.

Ambassadors may be teachers or managers in adult education, community learning champions, Transformation Fund project leads or staff. They also include employees in sports, arts, health and many other umbrella bodies, staff in third sector organisations or faith groups and representatives of organisations like the University of the Third Age, Voluntary Arts Network or Cafe Scientifique. Ambassadors can be anyone who is passionate about adult learning.

Being a Pledge Ambassador doesn't just mean that you'll make a real difference to people's lives and contribute to community wellbeing. It will also be a positive addition to your CV and enhance your organisation's reputation.

We're creating dedicated space on the Learning Revolution Ning site to help ambassadors connect, communicate and collaborate.

And look out for the Learning Revolution Pledge guide designed to help you make the most from signing up to the Pledge.

To register as your organisation's Pledge Ambassador email your contact details to revolutions@bis.gsi.gov.uk



Reaching learners the easy way

Harrow Council is one of the latest organisations to join the School of Everything (SoE), bringing more than 1,000 new learning opportunities to the site and gaining a massive potential user base at the same time.

The main attraction to the site for Harrow was its national presence which will allow the council to broaden its catchment base. An added bonus was that the council supplied the SoE with years of accumulated data which the SoE team uploaded within a couple of hours.

Karen Bhamra, Harrow Council's programme development officer adult, community and family learning, says she's "slightly bowled over" by the speed and ease with which the information was uploaded. "We see so much potential in being part of the School of Everything," she says. "This could be the start of something big for us."

To visit the SoE website, [click here](#)



Help to get started

People who want to set up their own informal learning group will soon benefit from an online toolkit to help get them started.

BIS has commissioned NIACE to produce an online toolkit for learning clubs and groups – including music groups, book clubs, photographic and craft groups, motorcycle and walking clubs – in fact, any group of people who want to come together to enjoy learning new things.

Whatever the size or subject of the group, there will be guidance in the toolkit to help get things off the ground and running smoothly.

The project is being led by Ian Yarroll, NIACE regional programme director for the Midlands. He says, "Groups of all sizes and interests will be able to use the toolkit to find out about advertising, attracting new members, getting speakers and handling money."

The toolkit will be available online soon.

Bringing learning to people in care

Skills Minister Kevin Brennan has launched a set of materials that will help improve access to informal learning for people in residential care, day care and sheltered housing settings.

The materials have been produced as part of a BIS-funded Learning Revolution Project called *Enhancing Informal Adult Learning for Older People in Care Settings*.

The project found that continuing to learn can have an overwhelmingly positive impact on older people's health and confidence - in fact it can often dramatically improve quality of life.

The materials – available online and in hard copy – give practical advice and guidance for care

managers, education providers and local authorities.

This guidance will help people who make decisions about care settings understand what a big difference learning can make.

Kevin Brennan, who launched the materials at a parliamentary reception, said, "People are now staying active for longer, both physically and mentally. This means it is important to keep on learning later in life. A recent report from the Government Office for Science echoes this in recommending people continue learning, connect with others, take notice, stay active and give – all results of informal learning and part of the great work we see BIS and NIACE doing with older learners from all walks of life."

To access the materials for *Enhancing Informal Adult Learning for Older People in Care Settings* [click here](#)

Project spotlight

Bookbite, an exciting Transformation Fund project developed by Booktrust in partnership with WRVS and UK online centres, is inspiring older people to use the web, read more and write their own stories.

Head of Bookbite, Louise Chadwick, explains, "Booktrust already provides free gift book packs to babies and children at key transition points in their lives through Bookstart, Booktime and Booked Up to encourage reading for pleasure. We wanted to do something similar for older people, to really engage them in reading, writing and ICT, so working with WRVS and UK online centres we created Bookbite magazine and website."

The magazine includes short stories and poems with links signposting readers to websites, encouraging them to use technology to read more. It also has contributions from famous authors with tips on how readers can write their own stories.

The website includes reading and writing hints and tips, resources and discussion forums.

The magazine has been delivered to the homes of 100,000 older people and WRVS volunteers are acting as Bookbite champions across England.

Louise says, "We've discovered already that 62 per cent of people using the magazine and website are keen to leave a record of stories about their life and experiences behind for family and friends and many of them are using Bookbite to do this.

"The project is still in its early days but feedback so far shows that our audience is engaging with Bookbite and that it's encouraging informal adult learning."

For more information, [click here](#)



