



National Foundation for Educational Research

# RESEARCH INTO ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

**Final Report**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The historical roots of adult and lifelong education in Wales go deep, and include the eighteenth century, religiously inspired, circulating schools of Griffith Jones and the Sunday School movement, as well as the more secular developments of the Workers' Education Association and local adult education in the early twentieth century. Coleg Harlech was established to provide a residential setting for liberal arts education for adults failed by traditional educational routes. After the second world war a strong emphasis was placed on providing opportunities for those who had not benefited from initial education and initiatives such as the Open University (1971) and the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) sought to broaden participation in adult learning.

Adult learning is now generally recognised as an important element in the achievement of social inclusion and individual well-being, as well as having potential for enhancing individual and national prosperity. Cullen *et al* (2000)<sup>1</sup> define this as '*the active engagement by citizens in the construction, interpretation and, often, re-shaping of their own identity and social reality.*'

Recent governments have often stated a commitment to lifelong learning, the need for which the DfEE (1998)<sup>2</sup> summarised as follows: '*... so as to enhance (people's) lives, improve their employability in a changing labour market and create the skills that our economy and employers need.*'

The aspiration in Wales for extending adult and lifelong learning is emphasised in the paving document of the National Assembly for Wales, *The Learning Country*.<sup>3</sup>

We want Wales to be a learning country where high quality, lifelong learning provides the skills people need to prosper in the new economy, liberates talent, extends opportunities and empowers communities.

However, there has always been a tension between the view of adult education mainly as a means to personal cultural enrichment and the utilitarian perception of it as a key to open economic doors to better jobs and higher incomes. A certain scepticism

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<sup>1</sup> CULLEN, J. BATTERBURY, S., FORESTI, M. LYONS, C. and STERN, E. (2000). *Informal Learning and Widening Participation* (DfEE Research Report 191.) London: DfEE.

<sup>2</sup> DfEE (1998). *Learning and Working Together for the Future*. London: DfEE.

<sup>3</sup> NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES (2001). *The Learning Country*. Cardiff NafW.

towards the potential of adult learning to bring social prosperity is voiced, for instance, by Gorard (2002):<sup>4</sup>

*...there must be considerable doubt whether a highly qualified (and therefore perhaps highly paid) workforce is actually attractive to investors ... the current economic focus of adult learning detracts from its potentially transformative nature for the individual...*

Gorard also argues that access to e-learning and other technological learning channels depends on the financial power to buy the necessary hardware, which will exclude the very sections of the population which the proponents of that technology are trying to reach.

Such differences of opinion make adult and continuing education an area where thorough and rigorous research is essential. In order to inform its policies and actions, The National Council - ELWa commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to carry out research on adult and continuing education (ACE). This report presents the findings of that research.

## **1.2 Aims of the Research**

The aims of the project were to:

- ◆ establish a baseline picture of the present position of ACE in Wales;
- ◆ provide a definition for ACE;
- ◆ conduct a review of documentation on ACE in Wales, other parts of the UK and beyond;
- ◆ undertake a best practice review of ACE.

## **1.3 Research Methodology**

A variety of research methods were used to obtain the range of data required by the specification. The methodology adopted a progressively focused approach, moving from desk research in a review of relevant literature and documents to field visits to a series of very different qualitative case studies of examples of ACE in Wales and England which had been recommended as representative of good practice.

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<sup>4</sup> GORARD, S (2000). *Adult participation in learning and the economic imperative: a critique of policy in Wales*. Studies in the Education of Adults Vol. 32, No. 2, October 2000, pp. 181-194.

## **Documentation review**

The first phase of the project was a library search which identified and obtained relevant literature and data sources for the documentation review. The parameters for this search were research articles and books dealing with ACE in the UK, Europe and beyond, written in English or Welsh, and published from 1993 to the present. This search was supported by liaison with several organisations involved in ACE in Wales, such as the National Assembly, NIACE, the Local Government Benchmarking Club/Syniad Benchmarking Centre, and Estyn, in order to obtain supplementary documentation and data with particular relevance to Wales. Current funding and delivery mechanisms were reviewed through liaison with The National Council – ELWa staff.

The sources were read and evaluated to examine the quality and value of each source, with close regard to the relevance of the material to the situation in Wales. Key issues were drawn out to provide:

- ◆ a theoretical definition of ACE and framework for the development of ACE in Wales;
- ◆ a detailed baseline picture of the current situation regarding ACE in Wales which gives attention to issues of funding, the current range and aims of provision, the nature of providers, the nature of the learners, Welsh-language provision and geographical variations;
- ◆ a detailed discussion of ACE issues, drawing on examples of recent research.

## **Case Studies**

The second phase of the research involved an investigation of best practice in ACE through conducting case studies.

Four examples of best practice were identified through means such as inspectors' reports. Three of these case studies were drawn from outside Wales.

Secondly, three other ACE providers in Wales were identified and visited for consultation with key staff there.

NFER researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with staff of the provider organisations and some participating learners. These interviews provided qualitative data on issues such as the recruitment and motivation of learners, barriers to participation, funding issues, delivery methods of ACE provision, the impact of ACE

courses on individual learners and the community, the measurement and accreditation of progress and issues of progression.

### **Recommendations**

Finally, a number of recommendations for the future development of ACE in Wales were drawn up, based partly on information obtained through the literature review, but mainly from the evidence from the case studies.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Recent governments have encouraged the development and expansion of Adult Continuing Education (ACE) because it is perceived as the means through which individuals can enhance their lives, improve their employability in a changing labour market and acquire skills essential to the economy and employers. Widening access to learning is central to educational policies in the UK and other European nations (Lines *et al* 2003). Government rationale for increasing participation in adult learning is set out in the document Education and Skills: Delivering results – a strategy to 2006 (2001):

*A sound education opens doors, not just to increased learning power, but also to the enjoyment of art and culture and the stretching of imagination and horizons...Better educated and more highly skilled people are more likely to be in work, earn more and contribute to our economy and society. Knowledge and skills provide individuals with their surest route into work and prosperity, helping eradicate the causes of poverty and division in society.*

However, ACE is not a new concept, as outlined in the historical summary presented below.

#### **2.1.1 The roots of adult education**

The origins of adult education can be found in the influence of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century - a period of openness towards change - and movements for popular education during that period. During the nineteenth century, although primarily male centered, a separate focus developed on the needs of adults within popular education. Adult and further education developed primarily from the mechanics institutes in the early nineteenth century which led to the establishment of technical schools. *'Mechanic institutes were originally established to provide tuition for working people in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic but, as the availability of free elementary education improved, they broadened their range to include scientific and technical subjects'* (Holt *et al* 1999). A European movement which reflects the ethos of this period was the establishment of Folk High schools in Denmark in 1844 which originated because of the need to develop residential forms of schooling in dispersed rural areas. The founder, N.F.S. Grundtvig, sought to provide self-governing residential institutions that would provide both *'the peasant and the citizen'* a place to obtain *'knowledge and guidance for use and pleasure'*

(INFED 2003). By 1914 the Folk High school movement had expanded to countries such as Norway, Finland and Sweden, as well the United States and Britain.

In Wales, the religiously inspired schools established by Griffith Jones and the Sunday School movement may be considered as early examples of adult education, and these were followed by the more secular developments of the Workers' Education Association and miners' institutes. However, it was not until after World War Two that governments fully recognised the value and potential of adult education.

By the second half of the twentieth century, the idea that education should become a lifelong process and that the whole population should continue their education in adult life, had '*achieved almost universal acceptance*' (Titmus 1989). A more sceptical view was argued by Hampton (1996) who argues that, up until fairly recently, learning provision for adults was still marginalised and regarded as an educational backwater. It was seen as important to those involved but irrelevant to government policies and to people uninterested in learning. The European Training Foundation (1999) suggests that the under-development of ACE is related to a number of issues including limited resources, a lack of interest by professional educators and a shortage of incentives and recognition from citizens and governments.

### **2.1.2 Widening participation**

Widening access to ACE has become a central focus of relevant policy. For example the *Learning Age* (1998) stresses that increasing access to and participation in learning is a difficult challenge requiring contributions from all sections of the education and training systems, including voluntary and community sectors (Lines *et al* 2003).

It has been suggested that the development and growth of ACE is due to the economic significance of improved qualifications and vocational training (Hampton 1996), but this view places limitations on the role of adult education and may not be compatible with the perceptions of those participating. Despite this concern, the increasing importance currently being attached to adult education has highlighted an increase in participation levels.

The increasing focus upon adult education has both highlighted and influenced the participation rates of many countries. Belanger and Valdivielso (1997), for example, state that ACE in many countries enrolls more individuals than initial public education and higher education systems combined.



A recent survey of adult education has revealed that, by comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom, fewer adults in Wales have recently been or are currently participants. Some 39 per cent of the adult population are said to be recent or current learners (Aldridge and Horrocks 2002).

### **2.1.3 Research and ACE**

Research relating to ACE has acquired growing significance in a number of European countries and further afield as a result of developments in policy (Field and Taylor 1995). This issue is prominent in the thinking of the European Commission where areas such as adult basic education and adult liberal and general education have been addressed in a number of conferences (Twining 1994). In Wales itself, a large-scale benchmarking project is currently being undertaken looking at services across Wales. The Syniad Benchmarking Centre facilitates the project with support from the Association of Directors of Education Wales, NIACE Dysgu Cymru and the Principal Adult Education Officers Group. A benchmarking club has been established by 13 participating local authorities as a means of supporting this project that aims to map existing forms of ACE, address the requirements of best value and develop an improvement programme.

### **2.1.4 Terminology**

The varied terminology used in the debate on adult education can create some confusion. In the United Kingdom, the establishment of the advisory council for ACE helped to popularise the change in terminology from ‘adult education’ to ‘adult and continuing education’, which had previously been used to refer to vocational education. This shift brought vocational and general adult education into a comprehensive, integrated system of continuing education (Federighi 1999). Several other terms such as ‘lifelong learning’ and ‘adult learning’ are also used to describe the education of adults. This report will use adult and continuing education (ACE) as a general descriptive term, but ‘lifelong learning’ and ‘adult education’ may also be used in references where these terms are employed by various authors.

The purpose of this review was to identify the issues that enable the realisation of a theoretical definition of ACE and offers a framework for its development in Wales.

This report explores the issues involved in defining such a broad concept, examines the objectives and characteristics of ACE, identifies features for future development and details ACE in practice. It also presents seven case studies of ACE in practice,

and concludes with recommendations for the wider implementation of these different aspects in Wales.

## **2.2 The Definition of Adult and Continuing Education**

ACE is a term that has been used to describe a wide range of provision, often with differing objectives and delivered by a variety of providers. For this reason, defining such provision is a complex task. The existing literature suggests that three issues should be considered when developing a definition. These are:

- ◆ What is an adult?
- ◆ What counts as learning?
- ◆ What is ACE?

### **2.2.1 What is an adult?**

There are many, often competing, definitions of adulthood. Tight (1996) suggests that, in its simplest form, adulthood may be defined purely in terms of age. The concept of age, as a determinant of adulthood, refers to both the education system and the legal system.

Compulsory full-time education in England and Wales ends at the age of 16, after which people are usually defined as adults. Hillage *et al* (2000) argue that this distinction is blurred by the existence of opportunities for further and higher education, work-based learning and other forms of lifelong learning.

As a result, age-related notions are often challenged and international definitions of adult learning tend to avoid using initial education as a basis for defining the onset of adulthood. An example is that of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which imposes a divide at 25 years of age.

Additionally, Hillage *et al* (2000) maintain that a definition can be based on participation rather than age because it is not always the case that people will leave initial education at sixteen. For example, those with severe disabilities may never achieve full adult status (Tight 1996).

Adulthood may also be defined in terms of legal status, that is, when an individual acquires legal rights and responsibilities. In the United Kingdom, acquiring adult status is a process that in essence begins at 16, at the end of compulsory education and

is completed at age 21 with the attainment of all legal rights and roles and responsibilities (Hillage *et al* 2000). Nonetheless, Tight (1996) suggests that people are generally assumed to become adults at eighteen when they get the right to vote, although aspects of adulthood, such as marriage and full-time employment can occur before this age.

From this, Paterson (1979) argues that adulthood can be seen as a status involving certain responsibilities entered into at a specific age. Tight (1996) concurs that when people grow older they achieve physical maturity. They become capable of looking after themselves, move away from their parents, have their own families and exercise a greater role in making their own choices. According to Tight (1996) it affects how others see a person and creates a '*status distinction*'.

Adulthood may thus be considered as a state of being which both accords status and the rights to individuals and simultaneously confers duties or responsibilities upon them (Tight 1996).

It is clear, therefore, that adulthood is a complex issue that cannot be defined satisfactorily on the basis of only one of the concepts discussed above.

### **2.2.2 What counts as learning?**

Hillage *et al* (2000) state that learning is a complex phenomenon that can be thought of as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities. A definition should therefore encompass the diverse 'types' of learning available within ACE. These include:

- ◆ accredited and non-accredited courses
- ◆ taught and non-taught courses
- ◆ formal, non-formal and informal learning.

### **2.2.3 Accredited / non accredited courses**

Both accredited and non-accredited courses fall within the remit of ACE. This has generated a considerable debate regarding the merits of learning for a qualification and learning for its own sake.

There is substantial evidence of the growing popularity of accredited courses as a means of realising the aims and objectives of ACE. Tuckett (1996) notes the increase in the numbers of people wanting to pursue accredited courses over the last 15 years. Evidence for this was provided by a NIACE survey (Aldridge and Horrocks 2002)

which found that one-third of recent and current learners were studying with the aim of gaining a qualification of some sort. In support of this, a study undertaken by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (n.d.) found that 65 per cent of adult respondents listed getting a qualification as a major factor in choosing a particular course.

Accreditation has become particularly well developed in the UK as a means of enabling individuals to build up a bank of attainment credits that can be transferred within and between modules. As a result, methods have been developed to measure learning outcomes and national guidelines have been established in order for awarding bodies to be recognised as accredited institutions for the purpose of offering credit for education and training (Federighi 1999). The need for flexibility within the system has been recognised. An example of this is provided by a women's education project in Rochdale which has aimed not to impose accreditation, but instead to develop it alongside and in consultation with students (Black 1996). For this reason, Rochdale has opted for Open College Network Accreditation whose framework allows learners to select units and accumulate and transfer credits according to the needs of each individual, *'thus providing flexible routes to gaining full qualifications and enabling qualifications to be achieved in small steps over a manageable period of time'* (NOCN 2003).

The development of national assessments and qualifications as an indicator of learners' competence and achievements is seen as important for future developments by a number of different bodies, such as, the DfEE (2001), The National Assembly for Wales (2001) and the Roeher Institute (1994).

The importance of accreditation to the learner is centred upon achievement, as it is perceived as evidence of learner accomplishment. Faraday (1996), in an evaluation of provision for learners with difficulties and disabilities, found that there have been significant benefits for learners where their learning had been accredited. In support, Thompson (1995), in a review of women in adult basic education, collected data suggesting that this particular group of learners regarded accreditation and certification as a welcome by-product of their participation.

Nonetheless, it is suggested that research in the area of formal, accredited courses is extensive because measurement of this type of learning is a less complex task than for more informal types of learning. That is, formal outputs of a learning process, such as exam results, are easier to collect and analyse than actual outcomes including what people have learned and the differences it has made to them, (Hillage *et al* 2000). This

issue may have encouraged researchers to avoid less formal learning as a basis for research projects.

Despite the positive aspects of accreditation, it is clear that non-accredited learning, based on more traditional notions of participating in learning for its own sake and not for credit, are often considered of equal value and have also witnessed a growth in popularity (Tight 1996).

Aldridge and Tuckett (2000) found, in a survey of adult participation in learning, that 34 per cent of recent or current learners were not aiming for qualifications. Similarly, according to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) (1998), in 1998 two-thirds of those who had enrolled on adult education courses maintained, assisted or contracted out by LEAs in England were for evening courses which did not lead to formal qualifications. Additionally, in support of these findings, in a study based upon participation in industrial South Wales, a community education manager stated '*...We know many of our students come to us not wanting accreditation, they have a different agenda...for learning which is enjoyable in itself*' (Gorard *et al* 1998).

Thompson (1995) states that non-accredited courses have a great deal of value because the quality of achievement is about how far learning has enabled transformation, not just paper qualifications. In an evaluation of the Adult and Community Learning Fund in England, McMeeking *et al* (2002) found that '*the greatest impact of the programmes was on the learner's personal development, including their self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation, and ability to think for themselves,*' - sometimes referred to as 'soft outcomes.' In addition, in a study of informal learning in England, many learners felt that the social interaction involved in this type of learning had contributed to their well-being and increased self-confidence (Lines *et al* 2003).

The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) (2001) have in fact suggested that tests assess a limited range of outcomes and may decrease motivation and confidence levels thereby negating a primary purpose of ACE.

#### **2.2.4 Taught and non-taught courses**

The consideration of both taught and non-taught courses self-directed learning is an important aspect of discussions on ACE.

Beinart and Smith (1997) define taught and non-taught learning as the following:

- ◆ taught learning includes any taught courses designed to lead to a qualification, or to help develop skills which might be used in a job
- ◆ non-taught learning includes studying for qualifications without taking part in a course, supervised training while doing a job, trying to improve knowledge or a skill base without taking part in a course.

Non-taught learning can primarily be seen as 'self-directed'. Responsibility for learning and control over the learning experience is transferred to a great extent from the provider or institution to the individual learner, as both time and space normally separate the learner and tutor, with the end result being self-directed learning (Tight 1996).

The purpose of adult education and training then becomes, in large part, the development of such abilities in the individual learner (*Tight 1996*).

Self-directed learning has become increasingly popular as an alternative delivery method. An American longitudinal study of adult learning indicates that a substantial number of adults (46 per cent) are engaged in self-directed learning to improve their basic skills or prepare for their General Educational Development Certificates (Reder and Strawn 2002).

In the UK, the University of East London provides a useful example of supported self-directed learning. The methods used have been developed to enable individual students to study for qualifications independently, through specialist support staff and group sessions. Experiences of self-directed learning have, however, led to some criticism of the concept. For example, in Germany it has been recognised that if learners are to have control over learning processes themselves they must be able to study on their own which is a skill which in turn has to be developed (Federighi 1999).

### **2.2.5 Formal, non-formal and informal learning**

Hillage *et al* (2000) argue that the nature of learning can be differentiated by distinguishing between formal, non-formal and informal learning. Each of these is examined below.

#### **Formal learning**

Formal learning is undertaken within formal institutions, or institutionalised into an education system (Oliver 1999). The Labour Force Survey (1996) defines formal

learning as any training conducted in a classroom or training session. Formal learning has traditionally been a focus of research because its form facilitates clearer definitions of adult education.

### **Non-formal learning**

Non-formal learning is organised, systematic learning provided outside the framework of the formal system which provides selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population (Coombs and Ahmed 1974).

*In the context of new development strategies, non-formal education is being viewed as more relevant to the needs of the population...since it attempts to focus on teaching people to improve their basic level of subsistence and their standards of nutrition and good health...Further, since the non-formal education process usually requires the participation of its recipients in determining the nature and content of the educational programmes, these will always tend to focus on the needs and priorities of the community (Fordham 1980)*

### **Informal learning**

Informal learning is learning that occurs frequently through the process of every day life or daily experiences. It is 'Learning that takes place outside a dedicated learning environment, which arises from the activities and interests of individuals or groups which may not be recognised as learning' (McGivney 1999).

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) refer to informal learning as '*the lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills and attitudes and insights from daily experience and exposure to the environment – at home, at work at play...'*

From this standpoint, Tight (1996) argues that the idea that any adult could be described as non-learning is '*nonsensical*' because most adults learn from everyday experiences. Nevertheless, although the literature confirms the existence of informal learning, it is deemed difficult to estimate the degree to which adults participate because it is often not recognised as learning and not reported in surveys (Hillage *et al* 2000).

However, the distinction between formal and non-formal learning is becoming increasingly less clear as formal systems continue to seek to widen access utilising non-formal approaches. There is, for example, a considerable interest in providing community-based learning opportunities, particularly for those who are in danger of being socially excluded (EBSN 2002). A review by HMI (1991) identified the

traditional strengths of adult education as being '*the ability to respond quickly to identified needs, a wide variety of provision at many different levels and a range of local delivery points*'. These features help attract those into learning who may not otherwise be prepared to participate in formal study.

### **2.2.6 What is ACE?**

Tight (1996) argues that 'the widespread use of the term *continuing education* has developed in the UK partly in response to the perceived restrictiveness of narrower interpretations of adult education, to which it may be seen as an alternative'.

No one universal definition exists to describe ACE (ELWa 2002). A number of factors have to be taken into account, which makes it a complex phenomenon to define. The definitions provided by the literature reflect this complexity.

In its simplest form, ACE can be seen in terms of a lifetime of learning where its limits are defined by adulthood or in terms of a '*...learning society in which everything affords an opportunity for learning and fulfilling one's potential*' (ELWa 2002).

Belanger and Tuijnman (1997) suggest that ACE is the full range of learning activities in which adults voluntarily engage, or by Venables (1976) who proposes that it includes all learning opportunities which can be participated in after full-time compulsory schooling ceases.

In order to define ACE adequately, a broad and all-inclusive description is necessary. Examples of such definitions are given below.

ACE is '*any educational processes undertaken by adults, whether liberal, general or vocational, and located in spheres of adult, further or higher education or outside the institutional framework entirely*' (Jarvis 1995).

*Adult education refers to* 'any learning activity or programme deliberately designed...to satisfy any learning need or interest that may be experienced at any stage of his or her life by a person who is over the statutory school leaving age and whose principal activity is no longer in education. Its ambit, thus, spans non-vocational, vocational, general, formal and non-formal studies as well as education with a collective social focus' (OCED 1997).



The OECD (1997) argues that these definitions encompass both training and education, vocational and non-vocational provision, learning for a qualification and education provision outside educational institutions as well as within. Additionally, it is important to include aspects relating to adulthood and learning as a continuum.

### **2.2.7 A working definition of ACE for Wales**

Taking all the above references into consideration, an appropriate definition should include the following points:

- ◆ ACE is undertaken by any person who is deemed to be an adult by their society
- ◆ Learning is any organised process that enables a transformation in a person's life whether that be learning a new skill or gaining softer outcomes such as self-confidence
- ◆ ACE includes all types of learning, including learning for accreditation and learning simply for the sake of learning. All formal, informal and non-formal modes of learning should be taken into consideration
- ◆ ACE can be provided in any setting from colleges to public houses
- ◆ ACE includes a number of delivery modes including distance learning and self-directed learning.

The following working definition is therefore proposed for use in the Welsh context:

*Adult Continuing Learning involves an organised process which enables a person to acquire new skills, competencies or attributes; it is undertaken by any person deemed to be an adult by the criteria of their society such as those who have completed compulsory basic education and acquired at least some of the legal rights of adulthood; it includes all types of learning, such as learning with and without accreditation in formal, informal and non-formal modes; it includes a variety of delivery modes, including tutor-directed and class-based, distance learning and self-directed learning; it can be undertaken in a wide range of settings, from traditional classrooms and workshops to museums and libraries, churches, public halls, public houses and the home.*

## **2.3 Objectives of Adult Education**

### **2.3.1 A range of objectives**

Oliver (1999) proposes that the aims or purposes of terms such as ‘lifelong learning’ and ‘continuing education’ are not completely unproblematic.

*One person may argue that the principal purpose is the general spiritual and intellectual uplifting of people in order to become better and more fulfilled citizens in a genuinely participative democracy. Others may suggest that lifelong learning has essentially utilitarian purposes in terms of helping to ensure a frequently re-trained and re-educated workforce able to adapt easily to fresh economic imperatives and help ensure the prosperity of the nation state (Oliver 1999).*

This statement suggests that there are several possible objectives of ACE ranging from enhancing the national economy to more individual and community benefits. These will be discussed in turn.

### **2.3.2 Economic objectives**

Two reports which include policy frameworks for lifelong learning, developed by the DfEE in 1996 and 1998, offer several reasons for the promotion of adult education. However, Moreland (1999) argues that the underlying premise of the reports is the economic imperative.

Edwards and Usher (1999) maintain that globalisation and the integration of national economies are responsible for greater emphasis being placed upon the competitiveness and efficiency of organisations and nations. European governments and the European Commission have increasingly focused on lifelong learning as a means of rising to the challenges of global competition (Field and Taylor 1995).

As a response to globalisation adult learning in Britain is now a major area of government policy and the learning agenda reflects the assumption that a highly skilled and flexible workforce is needed to compete in the world market (Barr 1996).

ACE is proposed as a means for helping to prepare this flexible workforce. Additionally, alongside the world market is an emphasis in the labour market - a movement from a manufacturing economy to a service and information-based economy. The National Centre for Education Statistics (2002) states that within this transition there is a shift in emphasis from natural resources and human capacity to human resources and human capital. That is, the skills and ability of the population that can be developed through continuing education.

*Changes in skill and qualification requirements bring into focus the need for education, training and learning more generally as the means of updating skills and acquiring new qualifications (OCED 1996).*

### **2.3.3 Overcoming social exclusion**

*Vocational and adult education and training is regarded in different European Union countries as crucial to the maintenance of employment, economic growth and the social integration of disadvantaged groups (Van Wieringen and Attwell 1999).*

Van Wieringen and Attwell (1999) argue that adult education performs two functions. On the one hand, it has a socio-economic function because education and training are seen as major determinants of economic growth, and on the other hand it is seen as having a socio-cultural role. Education and training are expected to contribute to the social and cultural developments of participants enabling them to exercise the rights and duties of 'democratic citizenship'. Skills are needed in order to enable people to participate in society and as a result education and training systems in Europe are seen as having a certain responsibility for those groups at risk of social exclusion.

*Opportunities to develop skills and qualifications are argued to be central components in combating social exclusion... (Edwards and Usher 1999).*

### **2.3.4 Enhancement of the individual and the community**

McNamara (1998) suggests that as well as its economic justification, ACE is also a means for society to realise individual needs and enable each individual to reach their full potential. Adult learning facilitates the lifelong growth of everyone as an individual and a social human being (Federighi 1999).

Literature suggests that ACE is particularly effective in producing, as discussed previously, 'soft outcomes'. These are results which are difficult to measure, but include increased confidence and self-esteem. The National Adult Learning Survey (1997) found that wider benefits of learning included improving aspects of learners'

quality of life by raising self-esteem and self-confidence. Research has also established the positive impact of learning upon health. A study undertaken by McGivney (1997) where doctors and other medical workers referred patients to an adult education worker found that over half of those engaged in learning reported psychological benefits such as increased confidence, greater motivation and a reduced sense of isolation. An ongoing US study has found that education may influence health through differences in income, lifestyle behaviours, problem solving abilities and values, (Rudd 2002).

In addition to the individual benefits discussed above, the National Adult Learning Survey (1997) also discovered wider advantages of participating in adult education such as improvements in the health and well being of individuals and communities. Research undertaken by Schuller *et al* (2002) found that education had a clear impact on improving mental health by acting as a therapeutic activity with preventative qualities that minimised and addressed the effects of depression.

It is maintained that ACE provides opportunities for people to '*acquire and develop the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to improve the quality of their own lives and of the communities in which they live and work*'. Adult education is seen to contribute to the socio-economic life of local communities (ELWa 2002).

The objectives of ACE are therefore wide-ranging. All objectives need to be considered by government and other providers when developing relevant policy as suggested below.

*If a government invests rather more than might be reasonably expected in lifelong learning, it may be for an enhanced creativity of the individual citizen or it may be to serve the interests of the state, or it may be a combination of both types of benefit (Oliver 1999).*

The next section discusses aspects of delivery and demand relating to adult learning.

## **2.4 Delivery of ACE**

### **2.4.1 The Accessibility of ACE Provision**

In developing strategies to extend access to ACE, relevant bodies have drawn upon evidence provided by scoping studies such as that undertaken by McNamara (1998) who found that, out of the factors influencing a student's choice of learning location or college, the most important was accessibility. A study of informal learning

undertaken by Lines *et al* (2003) found that the accessibility of learning provision was a key consideration for learners, as many relied on public transport.

This focus on accessibility is a primary importance to many providers. For example voluntary organisations, such as the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), which are major providers of community-based, accessible adult education, attempt to make ACE available in modes and times that are likely to increase accessibility to local communities. Accessibility has also become a generic principle underpinning most local authority provision for adults (Powell 1996).

Many further education colleges have assessed the use of their resources and acquired outreach and resource centres in a variety of settings in order to enhance flexibility of provision (Dixon and Haldane 1994). Aldridge and Tuckett (2002) suggest that colleges have emerged as the most common location for learning. Colleges are also the main vehicle for encouraging participation by previously excluded groups (Hillage *et al* 2000).

An example is offered by North Shropshire College, where flexible and accessible study was designed for those who are unable to study regularly in college and for those in isolated rural communities. The college provides courses that allow students to study when and where they wish and at their own pace to suit their own lifestyle. Due to the college serving a predominantly sparse rural community many of its outreach centres are used as tutorial bases providing a college centre in most communities. Most of the study is student-centred, but support is provided, often through monthly tutorials that provide opportunities for students to make contact with their tutor or other people in the group.

These principles can be seen in the use of unconventional settings for adults, such as museums, galleries and churches. This stems from the realisation that adults are not a homogenous group, and because access to learning for more disparate groups is required, the conceptual framework previously considered suitable and accessible for all should be redefined (Jones 1995). It is suggested that the potential benefits of the vast resources provided by museums need to be recognised as having potential to provide an alternative location for learning (Chadwick and Stannett 1995).

It is increasingly acknowledged that workplaces can provide accessible opportunities for learning. A survey on adult participation found that workplaces were one of the three most common locations for learning (Aldridge and Tuckett 2002). In the UK there is a long tradition of job-related continuing vocational education. Smith and

Spurling (1999) suggest that vocational learning dominates participation in learning in the years after completion of initial education. This was highlighted by the National Adult Learning Survey (1997) which revealed that 44 per cent of those not in full time education had undertaken only vocational education in the last 3 years, compared to 7 per cent who had undertaken only non-vocational education and 23 per cent who had participated in both. In support, Galusha (1998) states that training represents the vast majority of learning activities participated in by adults. Likewise, a Commitment to Learning Survey (Park 1995) found that many adults considered work-related or on-the-job training as the best way to learn necessary skills.

As a result, workplaces are developing as providers of ACE and there is a growing recognition that *'to become more efficient and effective, it is suggested that workplaces become or need to become learning organisations'* (Edwards 1999). This not only means providing opportunities that are relevant to the training or education requirements of their organisation, but also becoming a base for wider learning needs. For example, an action research project undertaken through a partnership with York College and fellow members of a local public sector employers' network resulted in a model of delivery being put in place to provide basic skills training in a wide range of workplaces (Quality in Practice n.d.).

Developing learning environments that are easily accessible is one aspect of delivering the flexible learning opportunities which have become central to the changes in the provision of learning opportunities for adults (Edwards 1997).

Fretwell and Colombano (2000) argue that the use of alternative modes of delivery, such as distance learning, can play a major role in helping to reduce barriers to learning.

#### **2.4.2 Distance learning**

Distance learning is not a new concept, but has witnessed a new surge of interest. Organisational use of distance learning methods was first introduced in the nineteenth century. Until the 1950's correspondence courses, relying on paper-based and surface mail communication, were the sole method of distance learning, but as technology improved, more sophisticated distance learning techniques were developed (University of Plymouth 2003).

Oliver (1999) suggests that distance education is a means through which learners can study in a flexible manner, by studying at a distance from the originator of the

teaching material. Students can study at their own time and pace, at a place of their choice and without face-to-face contact with their teacher. An Adult Education and Training Survey (1994) undertaken in Canada found that distance education helped to eliminate barriers facing people living in isolated communities (Burke 1998). Another source observed that: *'When properly conceived, distance education strategies seem to have virtually no limits in serving every possible segment of the population in a wide variety of ways'* (Connick 1997)

In the last 20 years open and distance learning has spread to many countries and become an important part of most modern education systems. It is used in all contexts, post-16, technical and vocational, private and public sector (Oliver 1999) This method of delivery is being utilised by a range of different providers in order to provide ACE in less formal, more accessible environments. Perry (1976) states that *'the last two decades have witnessed an international upsurge of research in distance education, largely stimulated by the creation of the British Open University and of similar institutions in other countries'*.

Fretwell and Colombano (2000) argue that The Open University represents a successful example of distance learning with more than 40,000 students studying interactively on-line, at home and in the workplace, with multi-media teaching supports such as CD ROMS. The number of students on-line has since increased to more than 150,000 (The Open University 2003). Other organisations such as *learnirect* and the WEA are also prominent figures in the provision of distance learning.

According to Dixon and Haldane (1994) this pattern of flexibility, facilitated by access to various learning locations, provides a suitable foundation for the integration of new learning technology to deliver curricula as developed by distance learning techniques. Technology is an essential component of most open learning initiatives. George and Gibbins (1999) suggest that to a certain extent, technology has become the solution to some learning and teaching situations requiring flexibility. Gross (1997) explains that as a result, a variety of alternative delivery/distance learning methods have been developed. These methods include live interactive television, computer conferencing and telecourses.

Hudson (1998) who examines adult learning via web-based courses provides an example of distance learning through technology:

Web-based courses are a means of access for those who otherwise could or would not attend in-person courses due to commuting costs, time constraints of work, and/or family responsibilities. Lawson (2000) states *'the internet is ideal for distance learning because it can be accessed at times most convenient to the student, it can direct learners to other related website information and it enables students to engage in informal networking thus easing learner isolation which can be problematic in traditional distance learning situations'*.

As well as delivering effective distance learning, greater student interaction, when compared with traditional classroom settings, is also an outcome of web-based courses. One student commented *'...on the course forums all you have to do is ask for information or place an idea to debate with others. The posted question ends up with many more comments than the same question posed in a traditional classroom...'*

### **2.4.3 Provision through partnerships**

Providers of learning opportunities for adults are based in both private and public sectors and include employer-based organisations and voluntary community organisations. ACE is provided by a range of providers in a variety of settings in order to meet the varied characteristic and learning needs of learners:

*...lifelong learning will not occur entirely in standard educational institutions. If, as a concept, it carries implications of the involvement of the whole of society, then it is likely to incorporate all types of learning under a wide variety of different situations (Oliver 1999).*

Some providers of ACE work in partnerships in order to provide learning opportunities. The EBSN (2002) suggests that by forming a wide range of partnerships with organisations, there is a much greater chance of reaching those traditionally excluded from education.

Various organisations have emphasised the importance of community partnerships. The LSDA (2001) states that the infrastructure for the delivery of adult education must feature local learning partnerships. The Basic Skills Strategy for Wales (2001) stresses the importance of partnerships with, for example, employers and community agencies in order to achieve successful delivery.

Public bodies such as LEAs and voluntary organisations such as the WEA have a long history of working with people and community organisations to provide learning opportunities within community settings (ELWa 2002).



One programme manager included in an evaluation of the Adult and Community Learning Fund emphasised the importance of establishing a partnership and perceived it as '*an essential basis for a successful enterprise*'. Many programme managers believed partnerships to have many advantages that included providing expertise, support and resources (McMeeking *et al* 2002).

An example of a partnership developed to provide adult education is given by West Midlands Community Housing Association which decided that greater tenant involvement, whilst addressing the basic skills deficits of the adults in the area, could be obtained through a partnership with the local college and basic skills support. The training programme included management skills and newsletter writing skills. Each aspect of the course was also designed to address basic skills (EBSN 2002).

#### **2.4.4 Marketing methods**

In order to increase the participation of hard-to-reach groups, it is important to utilise a variety of marketing methods including word-of-mouth and outreach.

Aldridge and Tuckett (2002) argue that word-of-mouth through family, friends and colleagues appear to be the most common way through which people find out about learning opportunities. In an evaluation of the Adult and Community Learning Fund, McMeeking *et al* (2002) found that the most effective method of marketing the programmes was personal contact through word of mouth, especially if a past or present learner provided the information to family and friends.

Outreach or promotional programmes which reach out to provide information to potential learners in the community through personal contact are also considered to be a successful means of reaching those often excluded from learning opportunities (Roehrer Institute 1994). McMeeking *et al* (2002) maintain that effective outreach strategies involving programme staff visiting groups in the community to provide them with information and visual displays gave people the opportunity to meet providers and reinforced the credibility of the marketing method.

An example of an outreach project is provided by an organisation focusing on basic skills evaluated under the Adult and Community Learning Fund. This organisation arranged an open day for the whole community, which not only provided games for the children but also gave community groups an opportunity to publicise their activities (McMeeking *et al* 2002).

A study on informal learning found that most venues visited were using a variety of methods to market and promote courses and learning opportunities through adverts and articles in local newspapers, mailouts, leaflets and posters, among others (Lines *et al* 2003).

## **2.5 Recruitment to ACE**

### **2.5.1 Motivation for learning**

Over the last 15 years there has been an increase in people identifying career-related reasons for wanting to study (Tuckett 1996). The National Adult Learning Survey (1997) reports on the motives for people's decisions to participate in particular types of learning. The main reasons for taking part in taught and non-taught learning were primarily work focused (National Adult Learning Survey 1997). For example, some of the reasons given included:

- ◆ with future work in mind, for example developing a career
- ◆ no initial work connection, but a potential to impact on working life.

A study undertaken by Aldridge and Horrocks (2002) found that three in five respondents gave work-related reasons as their motivation to participate in learning. Other reasons given were related to education and/or progression (54 per cent) and half of the respondents gave reasons related to personal development.

It should also be noted that respondents' motives are not always consistent. In the Campaign for Learning Survey (1998) only 10 per cent of the sample believed that learning could be useful in improving job prospects.

In a study aiming to discover adults' perceptions of informal learning, Lines *et al* (2003) found that progression was not a prime indicator for taking part in courses and activities: '*Personal gains in skills, knowledge, confidence and social opportunities were more significant...*'

These findings were echoed elsewhere: '*The purposes for adult education include individual or social development, academic qualifications, recreational activities...and vocational education and training*' (Emersley 1996).

### 2.5.2 Participation

Tuckett (1996) argues that, although there was widespread recognition even in the 1980's that Britain needed to take active measures to construct a 'learning society' for all its adults, participation in learning remains a minority activity.

It is worth noting, however, that participation has been rising. Hillage *et al* (2000) report increased participation in further education for those aged 19 years or over between 1994 and 1995 and 1997 and 1998. For example, between 1997 and 1998, 2.3 million out of 3.5 million students studying further education courses were aged 25 years or older (FEFC 2000). Drawing on from data collected in the National Adult Learning Survey, Beinart and Smith (1997) report that three-quarters of the adult population had at least one significant episode of learning in the previous three years. In the United States, findings from the National Household Education Surveys suggested a significant increase in participation (National Centre for Education Statistics 2002). In 1991 approximately one-third of adults engaged in some type of formal learning activity over the course of the year. By 1999 this had increased to almost half of the adult population.

These inconsistencies can, in part, be explained by the structures of the surveys conducted. Reported participation rates can vary according to how adult education is defined. Hillage *et al* (2000) state that it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of participation in adult learning because it is dependent on the definition of its users. For example, in a NIACE survey, only 40 per cent of adults who were aged 17 or older had taken part in either full time education or had undertaken some form of education in the previous three year period (Sargant *et al* 1997). Using a more inclusive definition, a National Adult Survey found that 68 per cent of the population had taken part in some kind of learning activity during the previous three years, which included taught and non-taught and vocational and non-vocational learning (Hillage *et al* 2000). A further example is provided by the Labour Force Survey (1996) which reported one in seven adults actively engaging in a formal learning activities in the period of study against the National Adult Learning Survey (1997) which, by using a wider definition, described two in three people as being either being currently or recently involved in some form of learning activity.

Reported participation also appears to vary according to types of learning. The Campaign for Learning Survey (1998) found that 47 per cent of adults had participated in taught learning during the previous twelve months, while during the same period, 56 per cent had participated in non-taught learning (Hillage *et al* 2000).

*The balance of evidence suggests that learning activity among adults is rising. However, there is a group of persistent non-learners and participation is not uniform among all groups of the population (Hillage et al 2000).*

### **2.5.3 Characteristics of learners**

According to Tuckett, (1996) the findings from numerous studies on adult learners are consistent. Adults are more likely to be offered and to take up learning opportunities if they are young, middle class and enjoyed an extended initial education.

The National Adult Learning Survey (1997) revealed that those more likely to have recently taken part in learning activities were males, younger people, people in paid work, people in non-manual employment, and those who stayed longer in full-time education and gained higher qualifications (McGivney 1999).

There is a wealth of data indicating that participation or non-participation in adult learning is, to an extent, governed by particular characteristics. Hillage *et al* (2000) identify a number of variables that influence participation in adult education. These are:

- ◆ age
- ◆ gender
- ◆ ethnicity
- ◆ labour market status
- ◆ occupation
- ◆ previous educational experience
- ◆ social class.

Each will be discussed in turn.

#### **Age**

Research undertaken by Aldridge and Horrocks (2002) discovered that, in general, older people are less likely to participate in learning. Unsurprisingly over 80 per cent of those aged 17 to 19 were current or recent learners at the time of study compared with only 6 per cent of those aged 75 or over. Learners, when compared to non-learners, tend to be from younger cohorts and these differences, to a large extent, appear resistant to change (National Centre for Education Statistics 2002).

The correlation of age with participation rates is not constant across all types of learning and age cohorts. Although it has been found that participation in work-based

learning declines as people approach retirement age, participation in non-vocational learning remains constant for people of this age (Hillage *et al* 2000). Smith and Spurling (1999) note that there is a decline in participation in learning across all age groups, particularly in the years leading up to and following retirement. They suggest that this decline is principally a feature of work-based learning. Likewise, a summary of the NHES Adult Education Surveys (National Centre for Education Statistics 2002) found that the increases in participation among adults between 1991 and 1999 was fairly widespread, except for those adults aged 35 to 44, who had particularly high levels initially. The main reason is thought to be economic, that is, as people grow older, they feel that not enough working lifetime remains to justify work-related learning. Another reason is the possible loss of confidence among some older learners in trying to keep up with younger learners.

### **Gender**

There is conflicting information regarding the influence of gender upon adult participation in learning. The Labour Force Survey (1996) indicates that more women than men are engaged in learning. McGivney (1999) argues that in England and Wales, many men including the long term unemployed, manual workers and those with poor literacy are significantly under represented in many forms of formal education and training provision.

Conversely, a NIACE survey (1994) found that a slightly larger number of men than women participated in learning. Analysis of the data collected from the National Adult Learning Surveys suggests that gender is not a key predictive variable of people's participation in learning (Hillage *et al* 2000).

As well as the inconsistencies relating to gender representation in learning in general, differences in participation between males and females appear not to be consistent across all types of learning. For example, McGivney (1999) found that women outnumber men three to one in local adult educational provision, but that men took disproportionately large shares of employer-funded opportunities and are strongly represented in courses leading to qualifications (McGivney 1999).

As already mentioned, men appear to dominate work-related learning. The National Adult Learning Survey (1997) observed that men are more likely than women to undertake self-directed, non-taught learning and to engage in learning for labour market purposes. A study undertaken by Dearden *et al* (1997) concurs that men have a substantially higher probability of undertaking employer-provided and work-related

learning. A DfEE report (1997) found that twice as many men as women had been involved in the Training for Work programme.

LEA provision and community-based adult education courses, whether general, academic or vocational are heavily dominated by women. Women have also been found to outnumber men in open and distance learning and are more likely than men to be studying for GNVQ, GCSE and A Level qualifications and working towards Open College Network accreditation (McGivney 1999). As Elsdon (1995) notes it is worth pointing out that women have a higher rate of involvement than men in voluntary organisations which can provide learning opportunities.

The review of literature reveals that there are gender differences in subject choice. In the adult education sector, women tend to enrol in a range of general and self-development programmes, whereas male learners limit their choices to IT, languages and mechanics. Sargant *et al* (1997) found that men were particularly drawn to practical subject areas such as computer skills, professional and vocational qualifications, even though computer skills and foreign languages were the most popular for both sexes. Men appear to be more focused on learning specific skills.

### **Ethnicity**

Smith and Spurling (1999) observe that patterns of ethnic minority participation are complex because different ethnic groups have differing participation rates in learning at different stages. Although there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that ethnic minority groups are under-represented in learning, data from the National Adult Learning Survey shows no evidence of any widespread ethnic differences once factors such as income and social class are taken into consideration. A further detailed analysis of the National Adult Learning Survey (1997) confirms that ethnic origin does not appear significantly to affect learning behaviour (Hillage *et al* 2000).

In a NIACE study undertaken by Sargant *et al* (1991), the majority of people from minority ethnic groups were found to participate at levels comparable with professional and managerial groups in the wider community, with the exception of the Bangladeshi community who appeared to be less aware of learning opportunities than other groups.

### **Social class**

A survey undertaken by Aldridge and Horrocks (2002) reveals that the learning divide between social classes is 'alive'. Those in the lower-middle class (57 per cent) and

those in the middle and upper classes (53 per cent) are most likely to be current or recent learners. In contrast, those in other social groups are much less likely to participate in learning. In support, a NIACE survey undertaken in 1994 (Tuckett 1996) suggests that educational opportunities are concentrated on the middle classes.

### **Labour market status and occupations**

Work requirements are a key influence on people's expectations of their future learning. For example, the National Adult Learning Survey (1997) found that 54 per cent thought it was fairly likely that they would participate in job-related training in the next two or three years, but only 38 per cent believed that they would take part in non-job-related training.

Evidence suggests that those who work are far more likely than the unemployed or inactive to access or participate in formal and informal learning activity (Hillage *et al* 2000). The NHES adult education surveys (2002) found that participation rates in learning are relatively low among adults who are not connected to the labour force or to high status positions within the labour force. Those in professional or managerial positions have high levels of participation in adult education (National Centre for Education Statistics 2002). The National Adult Learning Survey (1997) indicated that among people from an unskilled manual background, the proportion of those who have participated in at least some learning within a recent three-year period is approximately 50 per cent, compared to 90 per cent of managers and professionals (Smith and Spurling 1999). These findings confirm the important role that employment plays in motivating participation in learning (National Centre for Education Statistics 2002).

### **Previous educational experience**

The age at which people finish their initial education is very influential on their learning patterns later in life. McMeeking *et al* (2002) found that few of the clients involved in Adult and Community Learning Fund programmes had achieved success in previous educational experiences and these had often been so negative, they had been discouraged from undertaking any further type of learning. The National Adult Learning Survey (1997) indicates that non-learners are twice as likely as learners to have left school without any qualifications (Hillage 1999). The NHES adult education surveys (2002) confirm that participation rates are lower among those with lower educational qualifications.

A US study of adult student persistence relating to learning also found that educational experience was associated with persistence. Adults who had been involved in previous efforts to learn including self-study and vocational skill training, were more likely to persist than those who had not (Comings *et al* 2002). However, it must be noted that previous educational experience will also be affected by the characteristics discussed in this section.

#### **2.5.4 Barriers to participation**

From participation data it can be seen that there is an under-representation of particular groups in ACE. These ‘hard-to-reach groups’ are often excluded because of specific or perceived barriers.

The existing literature identifies a range of barriers to participating in ACE. The National Literacy Agency (1998) categorises the main barriers to participation as follows:

- ◆ dispositional      The belief that education is irrelevant or seeing it in a negative light
- ◆ informational      A lack of appropriate information
- ◆ institutional      Including the negative impact of application forms and traditional classroom settings
- ◆ situational      Factors such as lack of time, money and childcare needs preventing participation.

In a study regarding informal learning, Lines *et al* (2003) found that time and costs were given as major reasons for not participating in the learning activities and courses provided. In an evaluation of the Adult and Community Learning Fund, McMeeking *et al* (2002) found that programmes took action to remove barriers to recruitment and retention by providing travel costs, basic tools for learning and childcare facilities.

Warren (1994) suggests that open or flexible learning is the means through which barriers of geography, time, disability, childcare responsibilities and confidence difficulties can be overcome. As a result, delivery methods such as distance learning have gained great popularity within ACE provision.



## 2.6 Funding Issues

### 2.6.1 Sources of funding

Several different sources of funding for Adult Continuing Education were identified through the literature review. These include public funding, the use of the personal taxation mechanism, and funding from employers.

#### Public Funding

A broad range of funding is available from public sources for adult continuing education. In the United Kingdom these include:

- ♦ funding Agencies: this includes funding from bodies such as the Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) in England and the National Council –ELWa in Wales
- ♦ local authority funding: this includes provision financed by local authorities through their own resources or through grants from other bodies, for example agencies which promote lifelong learning as part of regeneration strategies
- ♦ higher education: funding through initiatives to widen access to HE courses.

#### Employer Funding

Research undertaken by Eurydice/CEDEFOP (2001) noted that *'it is broadly recognised that employers should fund training for their employees from which they will benefit'*. Among the methods which have been used in the EU to support and encourage employers to provide training and other learning activities.

- ♦ a levy, defined by statute, which employers are to pay such as the system operating in France
- ♦ the Spanish system whereby employers and employees contribute towards a levy to support training
- ♦ *'incentive and recognition schemes'* such as the Investors in People system in the UK.

In addition strategies have been introduced by employers to provide a broader range of opportunities for their employees. For example, the Ford Employee Development and Assistance Programme has been developed to provide staff with opportunities: *'to participate in a wide range of developmental activities including personal career and non-career related education and training'*. The scheme is administered jointly by management and unions and this provision is clearly demarked from job-related training. However, although the employer contributes towards the cost of the training, the activities are undertaken outside working hours.

## **Funding for Individuals**

Several European countries have introduced mechanisms to support individuals to study at a variety of levels. These include:

- ♦ measures to support those who wish to return to compulsory or upper secondary education in Denmark. This provision is funded by public authorities, with some contributions from individuals
- ♦ the use of *Bildungskontos* (training accounts) in parts of Austria where learners are reimbursed for the cost of accessing certain kinds of learning
- ♦ the use of individual training initiatives in Portugal
- ♦ Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) in the United Kingdom.

However, the use of this funding is restricted by criteria of eligibility. For example in the UK *'training which is a statutory requirement for the individuals' employer and recreational courses is excluded'* from that for which ILAs may be used.

It is doubtful whether these mechanisms could be applied to all contexts of adult continuing education, as any provision for which public funds or tax rebates could be claimed would be defined by clear criteria about what constituted eligible learning.

### **2.6.2 Recipients of Funding**

#### **Providers**

The recipients of funding for adult continuing education include a broad range of providers. These can include:

- ♦ FE institutions
- ♦ HE institutions
- ♦ training providers
- ♦ community learning providers.

In the majority of countries providers are required to offer learning opportunities which meet set aims which reflect the priorities of the body from which they derive their funding, which normally reflect the priorities of public policy. In addition, the quality of the provision must meet rigorous standards.

## Individuals

In addition, methods have been developed to enable individuals to access funding for a variety of learning activities.

*The Individual Learning Account (ILA) model in the United Kingdom is based on the general principle that individuals are best placed to gauge their own educational needs and that investment in learning should be a shared responsibility. ILAs were implemented in September 2000 and are administered by the ILA Centre run by a private company. By the end of 2000, nearly half a million people had opened an account with the minimum amount of EUR 40 and had received a government subsidy of EUR 237, available for the first million account holders. Anyone over 19 years old can open an account. Once an account is opened, holders receive an ILA card and an annual statement summarising the learning undertaken. Account holders can receive 80 per cent discounts in certain courses such as computer literacy skills up to a total value of EUR 316 per year. 20 per cent discounts are available on a wider range of courses up to a total value of EUR 158 per year (Eurydice/CEDEFOP 2001).*

In February, 2002 new Individual Learning Accounts Wales were launched after the original programme was suspended. These were paid to people aged 18 or over who were resident in Wales and whose highest prior learning attainment was at level 2 or below (defined as GCSE grades A-C or NVQ level 2 or equivalent). Those eligible could receive funding of up to £200. The amount of support would be determined on the basis of an assessment of needs on the basis that:

- ♦ individuals in receipt of Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance receive 100 per cent of the course costs up to a maximum of £200
- ♦ individual in receipt of the Working Families Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Disabled Person's Tax Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit receive 80 per cent of the course costs up to a maximum of £160
- ♦ other individuals whose highest prior learning attainment was at level 2 or below were entitled to 50 per cent of the course costs to a maximum of £100.

Similar schemes have been or are being developed in other European countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands:

In the Netherlands, an individual learning account is one that may be opened in the name of a worker or job applicant to fund courses or training. Money may be paid into it by the worker, the employer or other interested parties. Eight such projects have started since February 2001. The individual account is the result of an agreement between the organisation responsible for the project, an employer and an employee... For each account opened, the state will contribute about EUR 445.

### **2.6.3 Types of funding**

A wide range of approaches are used to enable providers to deliver adult continuing education. These include funding courses on the basis of cost –a method whereby the funding is measured on the basis of the time during which learners were engaged in the learning activity. Under this system funding can be calculated on a hourly or daily basis. Funding can also be linked to outcomes, such as the number of enrolments, attendance or assessment results.

In England, a national funding formula for post-16 education and training has been developed by the LSC (Holt *et al*, NFER, 2002) which seeks to include the elements of cost, achievement and deprivation among its components. The five elements are:

- ♦ the national base rate which reflects the basic cost of delivering a programme taking account of its length
- ♦ a programme weighting which takes into account the additional costs of providing some programmes
- ♦ achievement, based on an assessment of whether a learner achieves the intended qualification
- ♦ disadvantage, which seek to encourage and support learners from disadvantaged background
- ♦ area costs based on the additional costs of delivering provision in certain areas.

In Wales funding for further education is mainly based on four types of funding units. These are:

- ♦ Recruitment units (RUs) awarded to institutions for the number of individual students and, for example, the number of students from areas of social deprivation
- ♦ Learning Units (LUs) awarded on the basis of the qualification being sought by learners, their mode of study, additional support required and the nature of the area served
- ♦ Attainment Units (AUs) awarded to the types of qualifications achieved by learners
- ♦ Support Units (SUs) awarded to allow institutions to make their mainstream environment accessible to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### **2.6.4 Discussion of funding issues**

A wide variety of methods can be used to fund the delivery of adult continuing education. These include:

- ♦ funding on a cost-recovery basis where the total cost of providing an activity falls on the individuals participating or on bodies which sponsor them to take part in the learning activity
- ♦ subsidies to cost recovery (where participants are required to make contributions which meet some but not all of the cost of delivery)
- ♦ provision which is provided free (or at a discounted rate) to some participants on a means-tested basis
- ♦ provision which is free to all participants and funded wholly by another body

Each of these options would generate a debate about the nature, aims and objectives of adult education. For example, introducing a cost-recovery mechanism could discourage less affluent groups from participating in lifelong learning. Similarly, the introduction of means testing could act as a deterrent to certain groups. However, any form of subsidy or support is dependent upon the willingness of a sponsoring body to commit funds to enable that activity to be delivered.

Funding mechanisms have been developed to enable individuals to pursue learning activities which directly meet their own training needs, the training needs of employers, or targets which have been identified by public policy. For example, the development of concepts such as Key Skills offers a means by which individuals can acquire core competencies which can be applied in a variety of contexts, including the workplace.

### **2.6.5 Criteria for funding**

The issue of funding for informal community learning has to be addressed in the light of these considerations. Very often informal learning is undertaken by individuals out of interest, as a leisure activity or for personal or psychological reasons. As is seen in this report, measurement of outcomes is often difficult and raises important questions about the kind of competencies which could be measured and whether all kinds of progression can be measured. For example:

- ♦ is it appropriate to measure attendance when many people wish or need to balance participation in learning activities around other priorities in their lives?
- ♦ how can factors such as increased confidence and sociability be measured?
- ♦ would the data collected about informal learning outcomes prove to be so anecdotal as to be an unsatisfactory basis upon which to base decisions about funding?

For example, a gardening club was delivered as part of a Local Authority's community learning provision. The majority of the members of the club were retired. Among the benefits which they derived from participating in the club were:

- ♦ pleasure in pursuing an interest
- ♦ physical fitness/health
- ♦ mental agility
- ♦ knowledge
- ♦ social cohesion/social inclusion
- ♦ community/social enterprise.

While these kinds of activities are valuable and meet some of the aims outlined by public policy for lifelong learning, they fit uneasily into a system which seeks to provide a common system of funding for all post-16 learning. At the same time the eligibility of certain kinds of learning activities for public funding must be carefully considered (Lewis, 1993).

One way forward would be to introduce strict criteria to govern all types of learning which is funded through a set formula. However, the issues of the measurement of 'soft' outcomes, especially where the target groups are people who have not traditionally accessed learning, have had previous negative experiences of education or training or who have to overcome other barriers to accessing learning, would remain to be resolved. In addition, the cost of delivering certain activities could then fall on individual participants (on a cost recovery basis) which might result in those activities being abandoned (and a loss of provision which could be socially valuable) or it could mean that key target groups would not be reached.

## **2.7 Key Findings of the Literature Review**

### **2.7.1 Introduction and expansion of ACE**

- ♦ ACE is promoted by recent governments as a means through which individuals can enhance their lives and acquire skills essential to employers and the economy
- ♦ research relating to ACE in the UK and further afield has witnessed an expansion as a result of developments in policy
- ♦ levels of participation in ACE have witnessed an increase in many countries. However Wales has lower levels of participation when compared to the rest of the UK.

### 2.7.2 Definition

- ◆ The debate surrounding the development of a definition for ACE involves in inclusion of three factors. These are:
  - ◆ what constitutes an adult?
  - ◆ what counts as learning?
  - ◆ what is continuing education?
  
- ◆ Adulthood can be defined by age, legal status, physical maturity and the attainment of certain roles and responsibilities
  
- ◆ Learning is a complex phenomenon that embraces a range of learning types. These include:
  - ◆ accredited and non-accredited
  - ◆ taught and non-taught
  - ◆ formal, non-formal and informal – although the distinction between formal and non-formal has become blurred as the focus of ACE provision has increasingly moved towards accessibility.
  
- ◆ When defining ACE, the following points should be taken into consideration:
  - ◆ ACE is undertaken by any person who is deemed to be an adult by their society
  - ◆ learning is any organised process that enables a transformation in a person's life whether that be learning a new skill or gaining softer outcomes such as self-confidence
  - ◆ ACE includes all types of learning, including learning for accreditation and learning simply for the sake of learning. All formal, informal and non-formal modes of learning should be taken into consideration
  - ◆ ACE can be provided in any setting from colleges to public houses
  - ◆ ACE includes a number of delivery modes including distance learning and self-directed learning.

### 2.7.3 Objectives

The three main objectives identified for ACE are:

- ◆ Economic benefits for individuals and employers
- ◆ Overcoming social exclusion
- ◆ Enhancing the lives of the individual and community.

### 2.7.4 ACE in practice

- ◆ evaluations of participation rates depend on the criteria applied to define ACE and different categories of learners
- ◆ the accessibility of provision is a vital factor in participation rates

- ◆ learners' principal motivations for participation derive from career-related reasons and personal gains
- ◆ barriers to learning can be categorised into the following:
  - ◆ dispositional, for example, negative views to education
  - ◆ informational, for example, a lack of appropriate information
  - ◆ institutional, for example, the negative impact of traditional classroom settings
  - ◆ situational, for example, time, financial and childcare difficulties.
- ◆ delivery methods such as distance learning have been the focus of many new initiatives as a means of overcoming barriers.
- ◆ varied and innovative marketing methods are essential to reach non-traditional learners
- ◆ ACE is provided by a multiplicity of institutions in order to meet the needs of all learners
- ◆ Partnerships are identified as an effective means of extending ACE provision and increasing the opportunity to reach excluded groups.



### **3. BASELINE OF EXISTING LOCAL AUTHORITY PROVISION IN WALES**

#### **3.1 Introduction: the legislative framework**

Schedule 2 of the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992, defined the provision which colleges of further education may deliver. This included:

- ♦ a course which prepares students to obtain an approved vocational qualification
- ♦ a course which prepares students to qualify for the General Certificate of Secondary Education or the General Certification of Education at Advanced Level or Advanced Supplementary Level
- ♦ an approved course which prepares students for entry to a course of higher education
- ♦ a course for basic literacy in English
- ♦ a course to improve the knowledge of English of those for whom English is not the language spoken at home
- ♦ a course to teach the basic principles of mathematics
- ♦ a course for proficiency or literacy in Welsh
- ♦ a course to teach independent living and communication skills to persons having learning difficulties which prepares them for entry to another course.

LEAs could also provide courses which fall within the remit of Schedule 2 and they also were empowered to deliver learning provision which falls outside that defined in Schedule 2.

The National Assembly for Wales has issued guidelines to local authorities concerning the use of ACE money which may be spent on provision which falls within the following categories:

- ♦ GCSE
- ♦ GCE A/AS Level
- ♦ Access to higher education
- ♦ Access to further education
- ♦ Basic education
- ♦ Vocational courses
- ♦ Languages
- ♦ Physical education, sport and fitness

- ◆ Practical crafts or skills
- ◆ Role education
- ◆ Other types of adult education.

### **3.2 The Aims of Local Authority Adult Continuing Education**

Because LEAs are empowered to deliver a broad range of adult continuing education an immense variety of learning can be included under this heading. This has led to the development of a number of initiatives which seek to assist LEAs to provide and develop their provision. For example, in 1998 NIACE Dysgu Cymru produced a manual outlining Local Authority duties and powers, the aims of adult continuing education, a profile of those who were participating and issues such as assessing needs, determining priorities and partnership working (NIACE, *Gearing Up to Lifelong Learning*, 1998). *65,000 Reasons* (2002) identifies the aims of LEAs providing adult continuing education. The report found that most of those who enrolled did so for one or more of the following reasons:

- ◆ for personal development
- ◆ to meet new friends
- ◆ to learn a new skill
- ◆ to get qualified
- ◆ to have fun and relax
- ◆ to develop career potential
- ◆ to support their children's development
- ◆ to treat themselves.

It is also clear that some LEAs have developed a conceptual framework for their adult continuing education provision. For instance, one Local Authority in West Wales defines the aims of its provision as being to:

*...improve the quality of life in the County by supporting a diverse range of opportunities for adults to develop their personal, cultural, community and economic interests through taking pleasure in learning, irrespective of their age, disability, gender or place of residence within the County. To contribute to the County's economic prosperity by encouraging more people to see that a non-vocational learning opportunity is often the first step towards a new career, future or higher education.*

This reflects the view shared by many LEAs that adult continuing education should be viewed more broadly than as a means of developing work-related skills or of obtaining additional qualifications. Although informal learning or ‘learning for leisure’ is sometimes justified as a means of encouraging individuals into other forms of learning, it is also clear that promoting learning for its own sake remains an important factor in what is currently being delivered.

### **3.3 Permitted Methods of Funding Adult Education Provision**

This section of the report examines mechanisms through which LEAs in Wales are permitted to deliver adult continuing education, the current funding arrangements and allocations to LEAs for adult continuing education, the range of the current provision offered by LEAs, and a consideration of the nature and background of those who are currently engaging in learning activities.

At present, the funding mechanism permits LEAs to select four different methods to deliver adult continuing education. These have been defined by The National Council - ELWa as:

- ♦ maintained provision, (‘courses controlled and managed by the local authority, or by a local authority –maintained institution of FE for adults’)
- ♦ assisted provision (‘courses controlled and managed by another organisation, but which the local authority supports either financially or by providing premises or other facilities free of charge or at subsidised rates)
- ♦ contracted out provision (‘provision that the local authority purchases under a formal contractual agreement from another FE provider’)
- ♦ contracted in provision (‘provision where the learner is enrolled at an FE institution but is taught at a local authority site under a third party agreement’).

### **3.4 Current Funding Arrangements in Wales**

NFER researchers sought data from a variety of sources in order to measure current expenditure on adult continuing education in Wales. However, determining the total amount spent by each Local Authority on adult continuing education has proved extremely difficult, largely because the expenditure is not ring-fenced, the amounts allocated to LEAs can be combined with other budgets, and LEAs have different methods of using the money they receive. For example, LEAs devote different proportions of their funding to meet the costs of support staff and services. This does not, however, mean that LEAs would be unable to provide the National Council -

ELWa with accurate information about how the money that they receive from the National Council –ELWa is spent.

### 3.5 Current Funding Allocations

In 2002-03 a total of £4.721m was allocated by the National Council – ELWa to LEAs under the heading of adult continuing education. The amount for 2002-03 was based on a historic figure for each Local Authority in Wales which has developed since 1992. As is shown in Table 1 there are considerable differences in the amount allocated to each Local Authority in Wales.

**Table 1**

**Total allocation for adult continuing education for each Local Authority in Wales, 2001-02**

Blaenau Gwent	£419,000
Bridgend	£194,000
Caerphilly	£390,000
Cardiff	£1,362,000
Carmarthenshire	£139,000
Ceredigion	£22,000
Conwy	£9,000
Denbighshire	£129,000
Flintshire	£3,000
Gwynedd	£9,000
Isle of Anglesey	£15,000
Merthyr Tydfil	£58,000
Monmouthshire	£3,000
Neath Port Talbot	£326,000
Newport	£476,000
Pembrokeshire	£190,000
Powys	£164,000
Rhondda Cynon Taff	£257,000
Swansea	£122,000
Torfaen	£144,000
Vale of Glamorgan	£200,000
Wrexham	£120,000

*Source: ELWa 2001/02*

These figures are based upon the expenditure of the eight LEAs which existed before local government reorganisation in 1996 and reflect the different arrangements made by those authorities for adult continuing education after the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992. The funding allocation ranges from £3,000 for Monmouthshire to £1.362m for Cardiff. With the exception of two LEAs (Monmouthshire and Merthyr Tydfil) no Local Authority in the former county of Gwent nor in the former Glamorgan counties currently receives an allocation below £100,000. Allocations to most of the LEAs in North Wales are substantially smaller than those to LEAs in South Wales.

The NFER obtained data on existing provision from The National Council - ELWa in order to establish what LEAs are currently providing through ACE funding. For some LEAs, the data only included references to partner organisations. For example, one Local Authority referred to '*Sefydliad y Merched*' and '*Women's Institute*'. Another stated that some of the funding was used to support a community education librarian. Other LEAs stated that all of the money was used to support the work of the WEA and another said that the funding was allocated to support community provision by a local college of further education. In addition, some LEAs use a portion of the money that is received from The National Council - ELWa to provide summer schools for adults.

The range of provision which was identified included the following:

- ♦ A level courses
- ♦ Adult basic education
- ♦ Air traffic control
- ♦ Art and crafts
- ♦ Basic skills
- ♦ Clubs
- ♦ Complementary therapies
- ♦ Computing
- ♦ Contemporary therapies
- ♦ Cookery
- ♦ Creative leisure
- ♦ EFL
- ♦ ESOL
- ♦ Family projects

- ♦ GCSE courses
- ♦ General interest
- ♦ Health and fitness
- ♦ Heart and stroke club
- ♦ Key Skills
- ♦ Languages
- ♦ Leisure
- ♦ Music
- ♦ Natural history
- ♦ Office and business skills
- ♦ Personal development
- ♦ Practical skills
- ♦ Role education
- ♦ Special needs
- ♦ Welsh for adults.

Of these, languages, arts and crafts (including practical skills and other definitions), and health and fitness are the most commonly-provided activities.

#### Range of current provision by region

The information was examined on the basis of each region in Wales.

**North Wales.** (Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham).

The current range of provision in North Wales includes courses delivered through the WEA North Wales, and non-vocational provision purchased from colleges of further education and the Women's Institute. In addition, one Local Authority provides courses on basic skills and Welsh for adults.

**Mid Wales.** (Powys and Ceredigion).

The range of provision in Mid Wales includes arts and crafts, languages, computer skills and basic skills.

**South East Wales.** (Bridgend, Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Newport, Cardiff).

LEAs in South East Wales provide courses leading to GCSE and A level qualifications, basic skills, arts and crafts, computing, ESOL, 'general interest',

'family projects', health and fitness, key skills, music, and languages including Welsh.

**South West Wales.** (Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot). The provision in South West Wales includes arts and crafts, keep fit, languages including Welsh, computing, basic skills, key skills, and music.

### **Types of courses delivered**

As a means of obtaining additional data, NFER researchers conducted a search of the websites of each of the 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales. Although very few LEAs included detailed information about their adult learning provision the search gave an indication of the broad range of courses which are offered.

A Local Authority in South Wales offered courses in:

Cake decorating, child care, complementary therapies, computers, dance, dressmaking and soft furnishings, English, Maths and other essential skills, flower arranging and floristry, food and wine, gardening, general arts and crafts, health, fitness and beauty, history and religion, interior design and do-it-yourself, jewellery, languages, music, needlecrafts, office skills, painting, drawing and print making, personal development and skills building, photography and video, pottery and ceramics, sculpture, special interest, sports and writing, drama and readers' groups.

A Local Authority in West Wales offered courses in:

Alternative medicine, alternative therapies, aromatherapy, art, astrology, badminton, ballroom dancing, basketry, calligraphy, cards and crackers, carpentry, computers, confidence building, cookery, crafts, cross stitch, crystal healing, decoupage, dressmaking, embroidery, energy, English, floral art, flower arranging, flowers, fly tying, French, furniture, golf, herbal, history, internet, Italian, keep fit, learners, line dancing, massage, maths, meditation, needlework, painting, patchwork quilting, photography, pilates, pottery, reading, reflexology, rock band, royal icing, sewing, soft furnishings, Spanish, special needs, spelling, step aerobics, stress management, tai chi, tone and stretch, upholstery, Welsh, women, woodwork, writing, yachting and yoga.

## **PARTICIPATION**

### **Participation in the different forms of Adult Continuing Education**

The number of enrolments in each category of provision provides an indication of the extent of current participation in adult continuing education in Wales. According to figures supplied by The National Council - ELWa, in 2001 a total of 62,407 enrolments were recorded in Wales. Of these, 18,580 (29.8 per cent) were enrolled in maintained provision, 6860 (11 per cent) were enrolled in contracted out provision, 4721 (7.6 per cent) were enrolled in assisted provision and that more than half (51.6 per cent) were enrolled in contracted-in provision.

As indicated in Table 2 there are considerable differences in the number of enrolments (in the four categories) between the 22 LEAs in Wales.



**Table 2 Enrolments, per category, for Welsh LEAs**

<b>Local Maintained Authority</b>	<b>Contracted</b>	<b>Assisted Out</b>	<b>Contracted In</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Blaenau Gwent	0	221	0	2013
Bridgend	897	700	499	3615
Caerphilly	1754	0	623	4114
Cardiff	6981	-	0	12332
Carmarthenshire	1419	0	0	3714
Ceredigion	493	0	0	1143
Conwy	0	0	117	117
Denbighshire	0	0	730	730
Flintshire	0	0	522	522
Gwynedd	0	0	0	0
Isle of Anglesey	30	0	0	30
Merthyr Tydfil	27	370	125	815
Monmouthshire	0	0	0	2392
Neath Port Talbot	0	3723	0	6417
Newport	155	0	0	5569
Pembrokeshire	1995	0	0	3431
Powys	899	734	415	2181
Rhondda Cynon Taff	327	1112	0	4446
Swansea	1374	0	0	1374
Torfaen	113	0	61	2957
Vale of Glamorgan	2116	0	471	3337
Wrexham	0	0	1158	1158

Source ELWa 2001/02 The information presented in this table is based on available historical data rather than on current data.

All enrolments in LEAs such as Swansea were in maintained provision, while in eight LEAs there were no enrolments in maintained provision. In several authorities, more than a fifth of enrolments were in contracted-out provision and in the case of Neath Port Talbot this figure accounts for more than half of the total enrolments.

The four LEAs where all enrolments were in Local Authority-assisted provision are situated in North Wales. However, there is no geographic pattern in terms of maintained, contracted-in or contracted-out provision. The LEAs where more than half of the enrolments were in maintained provision in 2001-02 were Cardiff, Anglesey, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan. The LEAs where more than half the enrolments were in contracted-in provision in 2001-02 were

Blaenau Gwent, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen.

### **Background of the participants**

In 2002 NIACE, supported by the National Council –ELWa produced a comprehensive study into participation in adult continuing education in Wales (NIACE, *Towards a Learning Future* 2002). Its intention was to describe the position in Wales and establish a benchmark for future comparison. This study provides useful evidence about the background of those who are currently taking part in the various forms of adult learning opportunities which are available in Wales. However, the study does not provide specific information about the background of those who attend specific Local Authority provision in Wales.

### **Participation in adult continuing education in Wales**

NIACE found that of a sample of 1000 adults in Wales 39 per cent had participated in ‘recent learning’ and that a further 22 per cent had participated in some form of learning over three years before. However, 39 per cent had not been involved in any learning since leaving school or did not know when they had last taken part in a form of learning. There are small differences in terms of gender. The study showed that 41 per cent of men and 38 per cent of women were currently involved in some form of learning. More women (41 per cent) than men (37 per cent) responded that they had not participated in any form of learning since leaving school, to their knowledge.

### **Participation according to social class**

The research concluded that according to social class ‘*the learning divide is alive and well*’. More than a half (53 per cent) of respondents in social groups AB and in social group C1 (57 per cent) were or had recently been involved in some form of learning. However, the figure for social group C2 was lower (33 per cent) and for social groups DE it was 26 per cent). The percentage of the respondents in social groups AB who had not been involved in any learning since leaving education to their knowledge was 19 per cent. The percentage in social group C1 was slightly higher (23 per cent). However, the figure rose to 40 per cent for respondents in social group C2 and represented more than half (58 per cent) of those in social groups DE.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The research was based on the following socio-economic classifications: A –Upper/Middle Class (higher managerial, administrative or professional), B –Middle Class (intermediate managerial, administrative or professional), C1 –Lower Middle Class (supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional), C2 –Skilled Working Class (skilled manual workers), D –Working Class (semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers), E –Casual or Lowest Grade Workers.

### Participation according to age

The survey found significant variation according to age.

**Table 3: Percentage of sample who were either studying or had studied recently by age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
17–19	81
20–24	66
25–34	49
35–44	49
45–54	36
55–64	29
65–74	19
75+	6

These figures demonstrate that participation in learning declines according to the age of the learners, especially among those aged 65 or over. However, almost half of the respondents in each age group below the age of 45 had been engaged in some form of learning recently.

**Table 4: Percentage of the respondents who had not participated in learning activities since leaving full-time education by age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
17–19	18
20–24	21
25–34	27
35–44	29
45–54	41
55–64	43
65–74	61
75+	69

The percentage of the respondents who had not engaged in any form of learning since leaving full-time education increased significantly among those aged 45 or over and accounted for more than one half of those over the age of 65 and more than two-thirds

of those aged 75 and over. Significantly, however, this percentage was much lower among younger age groups.

### **Participation according to whether employed**

The NIACE survey found that 58 per cent of those who were unemployed had been engaged in some form of learning during the past three years compared with 49 per cent of those who were working full-time and 51 per cent of those who were in part-time work.

### **Regional differences within Wales**

According to the NIACE survey there were some variations in participation in different parts of Wales. The highest rate of current participation was found in North Wales and South-East Wales (42 per cent) while the figure in Mid Wales and South-West Wales was 32 per cent. The figure for South-West Wales was 17 per cent. The percentage of those who had not been engaged in any form of learning was highest in South-West Wales (52 per cent) compared with 43 per cent in Mid Wales, 36 per cent in North Wales and 35 per cent in south-east Wales.

### **Comparison of Wales with other parts of the United Kingdom**

The survey data notes that the current participation in Wales (39 per cent) is lower than in England (42 per cent), Scotland (44 per cent) and Northern Ireland (40 per cent). Moreover, participation in Wales is considerably lower than in some English regions such as the south-east (48 per cent). South-west Wales and Mid Wales have a lower percentage of the population engaged in learning than any of the English regions (32 per cent).

### **Future intentions**

NIACE found that more than a third (38 per cent) of those surveyed intended to take up some form of learning in the future. There was little difference in the percentage of men (37 per cent) and women (38 per cent) who replied in this way and the percentages who said that they were very unlikely to take up learning were identical (48 per cent).

The report found that previous engagement with learning tended to spur learners to further study:

*The data reinforces the view that current participation affects future intentions to learn. 77% of current learners report that they are likely to take up learning in the future. In contrast, 84% of those who have not*

*been involved since leaving full-time education say they are unlikely to take up learning in the future.*

Those in social groups AB and C1 were most likely to take up learning opportunities in future (50 per cent) whereas the figure for those in social group C2 was 34 per cent and in DE it was 27 per cent. Conversely, 70 per cent of those in social groups DE and 62 per cent of those in social group C2 said that they were unlikely to start learning. Less than half of those in social groups AB (44 per cent) and social group C1 (47 per cent) said that it was unlikely that they would be starting any form of learning.

More than half of those aged 17–44 said that it was likely that they would be learning in the future. This percentage fell, however among older age groups (31 per cent among those aged 45–54, 20 per cent among those aged 65–74 and four per cent among those aged 75 or over).

### **Factors influencing participation**

The NIACE survey also examined people's reasons for engaging with learning activities. The main reasons identified were work-related, education and personal development. The benefits which people felt that they had gained included:

- ◆ self-development
- ◆ increased self-confidence
- ◆ meeting new people.

The reasons for not engaging in learning included lack of interest or motivation, work or other pressures on time, age, and a feeling that there was no need to learn. Significantly, whereas only one per cent of males referred to child care problems preventing them from learning, the figure was 14 per cent for women.

## **4. GOOD PRACTICE IN THE DELIVERY OF ACE: CASE STUDIES**

### **4.1 Case Study 1**

#### **4.1.1 Background**

This programme was developed by a unitary authority in South Wales that serves a mixed socio-economic area. A significant proportion of the population live in old industrial valley communities.

The programme of classes offered by the LEA provides an introduction to IT skills. The classes were intended to be delivered in schools with the principal aim of engaging parents with children at the schools. Because schools' IT facilities vary, the provider has adopted two methods of delivery:

- ♦ using computers provided by the school
- ♦ using laptop computers.

Research interviews were conducted with a tutor and group of students from each scheme, together with the Adult Education Officer responsible for the programme in the local authority.

Although the programme primarily targeted parents, the two tutors interviewed stated that other people, notably grandparents, also participated. Community participation was also possible, but it was suggested that this depended upon the extent to which the headteacher promoted the school as a venue for community learning.

#### **4.1.2 Recruitment and marketing**

The LEA used a variety of recruitment and marketing methods including placing advertising brochures in all council buildings and in other venues, ranging from hairdressing salons to doctors' surgeries. Leaflets were also distributed to households and adverts placed in local newspapers. In addition, a significant amount of recruitment was undertaken by word of mouth.

Students for this programme were recruited through an adult learning week attended by adult education tutors that took place at a local cinema. In addition, the school was used as a means of recruiting learners: *'The school provided information on the programme which was then sent to homes through the pupils,'* explained one tutor. All students who attended the programme had become aware of it either through a

letter from the school or through information passed on by a member of staff at the school.

A range of reasons were provided by the students for enrolling in the classes, but all suggested that they were keen to learn about computers because of a concern that their children were more advanced in this area and a fear that they would not be able to help their children or grandchildren unless they themselves developed their IT skills. Many participants who were retired saw the course as a means of keeping active.

#### **4.1.3 Overcoming barriers to learning**

The Adult Education officer said that generic barriers to adult learning were evident in all parts of the county. These included accessibility issues due to the difficulty of travelling, childcare issues, financial pressures and a reluctance to travel to unfamiliar places. The tutors also suggested that lack of awareness of ACE provision and low confidence levels also posed barriers to participation. According to one tutor there was a reluctance to take part in courses involving IT because: *'...for most adults, it wasn't part of their own education and this makes them very nervous'*.

The Adult Education officer considered that outreach work in the community and an emphasis on addressing all learners' needs was essential for overcoming these barriers. 'Computers for the terrified' was considered by all interviewees to be an effective way of achieving this.

The tutors felt that the course provided easy, local access because the parents could drop their children at school and then attend the class which was delivered in a familiar environment. One tutor suggested that *'...people would come to this class more because they know each other – they see each other in the school yard'*.

All learners felt that the course was ideal if they had children. The presence of a sympathetic and supportive tutor was also mentioned as a means of overcoming any confidence barriers.

#### 4.1.4 Delivery

The tutors used a range of delivery methods within the programme, including:

- ♦ tutor exposition
- ♦ tutor and student demonstrations
- ♦ group discussions
- ♦ step by step instruction
- ♦ the use of handouts.

The tutors also believed that the delivery style needed to be flexible enough to enable them to tailor the course to individual needs. Although the number of learners in a class often made this difficult, the tutors believed that their methods largely achieved this aim.

Two examples given of tailoring to specific needs included:

- ♦ rewriting resources for dyslexic students
- ♦ not using the less confident students for class demonstrations but giving them more one-to-one attention.

All of the students said that the level of individual support which they received was sufficient to meet their needs.

In addition to developing computer skills, a range of other activities were also provided, including making Christmas cards, as a means of varying the course content.

The classes were often delivered in partnership with other organisations and bodies. The Adult Education Officer suggested that partnerships were often the most effective means of delivering such provision and had a number of advantages. These included:

- ♦ bidding for external funding - in order to secure such funding, a partnership was essential
- ♦ supporting students – some partner bodies paid students' class fees.



Partner bodies included:

- ♦ the local college
- ♦ the Youth Offending team
- ♦ a local Early Years partnership
- ♦ Surestart
- ♦ The local CCET
- ♦ Clybiau Plant Cymru

#### **4.1.5 Impact and Progression**

In order to meet the needs of the target group, the provider deliberately sought to avoid formal assessment at the beginning of the course. However, because the course was an accredited OCN course, certain criteria had to be met.

Informal methods were used to establish a baseline. On entry to the course, tutors engaged in an informal chat with the students to gauge their level of proficiency in computer skills.

Both tutors thought that all adult education was measurable, but that there was a need for appropriate tools. One tutor felt that measuring confidence levels was a real challenge, but suggested that an appropriate measuring tool could include attitude scales being used with the students at the beginning and end of the course in order to assess any change, that is, how confident does a student feel about using a computer on a scale of 1 to 10.

The self-assessment checklists were considered to be particularly useful because they were a means of encouraging students and because they also provided a method for the tutor to check that they had covered the course properly. It was suggested by one tutor, *'As well as me checking their progression, they can check their own'*.

The students suggested that assessment at the beginning of the course was not appropriate because they felt that they knew too little, but they had few concerns about being assessed at the end of the course. Accreditation was perceived as a means of confirming that they had achieved something.

The student certificates were handed out to parents and other learners in school assembly so that the children could develop the awareness that learning is a life-long process.

Progression was seen as an integral part of ACE provision. The Adult Education Officer suggested that the most important factor in ensuring progression was informing all learners of the possibilities for moving on. Thus they informed learners about available courses and provided building exercises for the next course so that the learners felt confident that they had the necessary level of skills. All but one of the students said that they were interested in pursuing the next level in computer courses.

The Adult Education Officer and the tutors thought that individual learners and the local community had gained a number of benefits from the programme. These included:

- ♦ increased self esteem and confidence relating to using a computer that could extend to other parts of their lives
- ♦ increased knowledge which opens doors to new learning opportunities and hobbies
- ♦ the acceptance of learning
- ♦ the social benefit of meeting new people.

There were also associated benefits for the community. It was suggested that a positive attitude towards learning encouraged the community to become more '*learning centred*' which would facilitate informed and participatory community development.

The students themselves said that participating in the course had increased their confidence and incentive to learn. They felt that the classes were small and supportive and that larger classes in the local college would not have such a positive impact.

#### **4.1.6 Monitoring and evaluation**

The LEA monitored learners' progress through a number of methods including evaluation forms, staff meetings and sample assessment tests.

The tutors used three evaluation forms which were completed at different stages of the programme and which collected a variety of information relating to issues of location, recruitment and content.

#### **4.1.7 Funding and management**

ACE within the authority was provided mainly through franchise agreements with the college but some provision also received funding from the LEA. Funds have also been accessed from the Early Years Learning Grants, but this is generally for higher level courses.

These different avenues of funding sometimes created a discrepancy in course fees for students since the fees charged by the college were often different to those charged by the LEA for similar courses.

The learners were asked whether they would be able to participate if fees were increased. Approximately half felt that they would not be able to pay but the others thought that they would find the money to enable them to participate in courses which really interested them.

#### **4.1.8 Key Factors**

Regarding the key factors which made the programme effective, the Adult Education Officer and the tutors offered similar views. These included:

- ♦ the provision must be seen as non-threatening, informal and supportive so learners are not intimidated
- ♦ the provision must be community based
- ♦ effective and prepared tutors
- ♦ effective marketing so that people are aware of adult education provision
- ♦ a recognition of different learner needs.

### **4.2 Case Study 2**

#### **4.2.1 Background**

The programmes under discussion were developed in an urban area of South West Wales with a tradition of heavy industry. The employment base of the area has changed substantially in recent decades resulting in pockets of deprivation.

Those interviewed included a Project Officer and a Community Education officer, who were both responsible for the development, promotion and marketing of ACE courses, as well as tutoring. The Project Officer also contributed to the development of '*slightly more usual programmes with no stable funding*'.

Three initiatives were examined. These were:

- ♦ A marketing project that involved a member of the Adult Education Department and three entertainers such as magicians and storytellers who travelled on public transport with the aim of increasing public awareness of ACE provision. One of the entertainers would attract attention by telling a story, for example, and then the member of staff would provide information to the passengers about local provision
- ♦ A programme that focused on health and beauty, which was delivered in partnership with Debenhams, The Bodyshop, and the Action Team for Learning. This was designed as a first step course encouraging unemployed women into Adult Education
- ♦ A programme of activities delivered in public houses. Using laptop computers, a tutor worked in classes in public houses with the aim of reaching young men who were not accessing learning in any form.

#### **4.2.2 Recruitment and marketing**

Each programme was aimed at different target audiences. However, the organisers found that very often a wider range of people were reached than only the narrow target group. For example, the programme delivered in public houses attracted a number of young women. On the first programme described above, because of the bus routes chosen, elderly groups became the largest recipients of the information provided.

The two officers interviewed were involved in general marketing and recruitment through outreach work which included distributing leaflets in key locations.

#### **4.2.3 Overcoming barriers to learning**

The barriers to learning which were identified by the providers included:

- ♦ negative perceptions of learning
- ♦ childcare issues
- ♦ transport problems
- ♦ a lack of confidence
- ♦ lack of awareness of the provision.

However, it was suggested that the initiatives were overcoming some of these barriers. The Community Education Officer argued that the provision made in public houses overcame accessibility barriers because the venue was appropriate and that a

combination of encouragement and an enjoyable course would help to break down the attitudinal barriers.

The Project Officer proposed that providing information on the buses was another means that could be used to inform people: 'The best way of selling things is through word of mouth. By making things interesting or unusual, such as a storyteller, people will want to tell others about it.'

#### **4.2.4 Delivery**

The programmes provided used a range of delivery methods. However, because these were generally non-traditional methods, the emphasis had to be on enjoyment '*...as a first step through the door*'.

The beauty course was provided in two parts. The first part focused on job searching, how to write a CV, and interview techniques. For the second part, Debenhams provided the participants with £100 and a personal stylist to help them buy appropriate clothes for interviews. The emphasis was placed upon '*pampering and fun, rather than learning*'.

The courses were tailored to individual needs and learners were able to influence the content. For example, the beauty course was adapted to meet the needs of young unemployed men with a fitness module introduced in place of the beauty segment.

#### **4.2.5 Impact and progression**

Assessment was seen as a continual process with a need to refine the assessment methods used. Although the providers acknowledged the merits of accreditation they felt that there was a need to recognise 'small steps' and to introduce measures which would increase the confidence of students. They therefore emphasised the value of non-accredited courses: '*Non-accredited learning is important because it is not constrained by having to gain qualifications. There is more time to work on other aspects of the whole learning experience*'.

Progression was monitored through questionnaires, although some projects had more formal monitoring systems such as the tracking system used by Action Teams for Jobs which supported the health and beauty project. Support and advice was always available through a guidance worker and all participants had access to a weekly guidance session. In addition the providers were in the process of introducing course

entry and exit guidance as means of creating a consistent, supportive progression and were also refining the guidance provided to learners while they were learning.

The impact of ACE on individuals was to be seen in an increase in confidence and also in their ability to pursue a broader range of job opportunities. It was also felt that the participants would benefit from being better-informed and from having the confidence to access services.

#### **4.2.6 Monitoring and evaluation**

Assessment on entry to particular courses was undertaken informally, for example at coffee mornings, and the information gathered on prospective learners was used to adapt the programme to particular needs. Learners' views were also monitored through a series of questionnaires that were designed internally. Providers also used external material such as that produced by NIACE. A telephone survey of past and current learners was also being considered as an information-gathering tool.

#### **4.2.7 Key Factors**

Key factors identified by the two officers included:

- ♦ the need for the learning to be flexible in order to reach more diverse groups
- ♦ the need to value informal learning
- ♦ the need for innovative approaches to enable providers to reach those with negative experiences of learning
- ♦ the need to address specific barriers such as transport issues or childcare problems.

### **4.3 Case Study 3**

#### **4.3.1 Background**

This project had been developed for an estate in South Wales which had high rates of socio-economic deprivation. Initially, the aims were to investigate how the learning provider encouraged women into learning. However, since the launch of the programme, its aims have been extended to become a three-year action research programme which seeks to enable learners to acquire research skills and to undertake research projects within the community. The projects undertaken to date have included studies of:

- ♦ the MMR vaccination
- ♦ breastfeeding
- ♦ anti-social behaviour.

During the third year of the programme learners would progress to a Further Education Development degree.

One aim of the project was to enable the women to function and achieve independently so that they could become more active in the community. The model on which the project is based looks at areas relating to 'quality of life', including their roles as citizens, rights and health. The project encouraged the women to question their perceptions and roles within the community.

Those interviewed included the Project Co-ordinator and a group of third year students.

#### **4.3.2 Recruitment and engagement**

The project targeted women living on the estate. Enrolment was free and the providers encouraged as many people as possible to join in order to attract a broad range of learners.

The project was a relatively recent initiative and although learners had already joined new members were continually being recruited. The majority of those who enrolled on the project had been recruited through word of mouth.

The Project Co-ordinator said that participants were almost 'tricked' into joining as they were encouraged to meet to chat about issues on the estate which led to a progression into each stage of the project. The students interviewed were the first ever participants and had been recruited by an outreach worker who visited the local adult education association. Many had decided to participate because they had been members of the association for some time and had previous experience of the kind of courses which it provided. All of them wanted to find employment that would enable them to make a difference.

It had been found that some of those who had joined had not realised the time commitment which would be required of them.

### **4.3.3 Overcoming barriers**

Barriers to inclusion were a major concern for the organisers. They felt that the main issues were:

- ◆ self-perceptions of ability
- ◆ negative experiences of school
- ◆ lack of childcare
- ◆ lack of support
- ◆ unsupportive families.

Providing a supportive and reflexive environment was seen as being vital to overcome barriers. At the same time the transport, childcare and financial support issues were addressed as means of overcoming more practical barriers to participation.

The learners felt that the provision of childcare was very helpful, but sometimes found practical difficulties in arranging for their children to attend the crèche. The support provided by the head of the project was seen to be essential to retention, alongside the funding they received.

### **4.3.4 Delivery**

From the outset it was decided that the project members would work in small groups as this was considered to be the most appropriate way of working. In addition the aims of the project were revised periodically in order to meet the needs of the learners.

The students felt that the delivery methods were very effective. They said that they liked the informal atmosphere which they described as being: '*...almost more like a 'chat' than a class... sometimes you didn't even realise you were learning*'. At the same time they appreciated being in control of the project and the fact that nothing was developed or changed without their agreement.

### **4.3.5 Impact and progression**

The Project Co-ordinator said *'I do whatever is necessary. It is not just about getting them into education. We are trying to help them change their lifestyles'*.

The Project Coordinator felt that the project had had a major impact on the lives of the participants. It had altered their perceptions of their own abilities, increased their confidence and given them a better understanding of their role in society. It had made



them aware that they are citizens and that they could have an active role within the community. However, some felt that there was a negative outcome in that some people on the estate misunderstood their motives.

The women involved were amazed that they had been able to enter into higher education. One said *'Who would have thought we would be here?'* All were hoping to find jobs stemming from the many different avenues opened up by the degrees.

The students felt that their individual projects had enabled them to become more useful members of community groups. For example, one student has become a breast-feeding buddy, or an available support for a breast-feeding mother, after focusing on breastfeeding for her individual project. They all felt that they had become more aware of community issues and that because of their increased confidence they were more vocal about issues which confronted their community.

#### **4.3.6 Monitoring and evaluation**

The project is rigorously monitored by the provider. A number of outside bodies, including representatives of the Welsh Assembly Government, have shown a close interest in it.

Learners' views are monitored, including their self-esteem, through interviews and focus groups. The participants felt that they were always evaluated in some way, but they recognised that this enabled them to be given the right support and advice. The certificates and qualifications gained were seen as a means of reinforcing what they had done.

#### **4.3.7 Funding and management**

The project was funded by the National Assembly for Wales, a health action team and a higher education institution. In order to obtain funding, the project had to meet aims and objectives for improving health and well being.

#### **4.3.8 Key Factors**

The Project Coordinator felt that a number of factors made the project effective.

These included:

- ◆ providing support
- ◆ autonomy to develop the project on the part of the women involved

- ♦ the need to develop trust
- ♦ regular reports leading to reflective practice.

## **4.4 Case Study 4**

### **4.4.1 Background**

This was a course delivered in North Wales where people who suffered from a variety of forms of ill-health were encouraged to engage in the learning process. The LEA in which the course was delivered included areas which are ranked as being among the most deprived in Wales according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The programme coordinator was contracted to spend 20 hours per week in delivering the course, although she said that she regularly devoted additional time to it and thought that this was needed in order to develop a close relationship with the learners.

The main aim of the course was to assist individuals who suffered from health problems by giving them opportunities to engage in learning activities which would increase their confidence, enable them to develop certain skills and promote their general wellbeing.

### **4.4.2 Recruitment and marketing**

Recruitment was undertaken through a variety of methods. These included formal recommendations from doctors, social workers or community nurses. The involvement of local GPs was important to the success of the scheme and although there was some initial reluctance on the part of some of them to become involved in the programme, many were becoming convinced of its merits and were supporting the programme. At the same time, other forms of recruitment activities were undertaken. For example, the staff delivered leaflets to key locations and met with individuals in doctor's surgeries. It had been found that word of mouth was one of the most effective methods of recruiting learners.

A number of learners were studying several courses provided through the programme. However, few of them had pursued any learning activities before becoming involved with this programme.

Several of the learners were retired and others were claiming benefit. Many of them said that they had joined the class after being approached at the doctor's surgery or had been told about the class by friends. Some said that the main benefit that they

derived was that the class provided them with opportunities to meet new people and to do things which helped them to relax. Several learners said that they felt more confident after taking part in these activities.

#### **4.4.3 Overcoming Barriers to Learning**

According to the tutor, the barriers preventing learners from taking part in the learning included childcare issues and transport problems. However, many learners were also apprehensive about joining a learning activity because of factors such as a '*fear of the unknown*', and nervousness.

As a means of overcoming these barriers learners were provided with transport either by a minibus which was provided for learners or by taxi to and from the places where the courses are provided. Crèche facilities were also available free of charge for all of those who had attended for more than two weeks. In addition, the course organiser conducted in-depth interviews with learners to discuss any issues which might affect them and provided support, including attending sessions with learners who might be apprehensive about joining and visiting those who have not attended in order to encourage them to join. Many of the learners said that they would not have felt confident about enrolling on a course unless they had received the support and guidance of the tutor.

No fees were charged for this course and the organisers felt that some of the learners could be deterred from joining if they were required to make a payment.

#### **4.4.4 Delivery**

The organisers said that because of the nature of the client group it was essential that the provision was tailored to meet their needs and that delivery methods were flexible enough to meet changing demands. The organisers also felt that it was important to provide what learners wanted very quickly in order to engage them at the point at which they were most enthusiastic about taking part.

The delivery was organised in conjunction with partner organisations, including some with a long track record of delivering adult learning in a community setting.

A Tai Chi session was organised and delivered by an experienced tutor. The learners were mostly women who seemed to be motivated primarily by their enjoyment of the activity. Most of the activities were done in groups. The learners were not assessed

at the beginning of their course and the tutor did not think that it would be appropriate to do so. According to the tutor the main aims of the course were:

- ♦ to bring people together
- ♦ to improve their health and wellbeing
- ♦ to promote self-discipline
- ♦ to promote respect for others and themselves

IT sessions were organised and delivered by an experienced provider. Most of the participants were women and a large number of the learners were said to be over pensionable age. The tutor felt that it would be a mistake to introduce formal assessments.

#### **4.4.5 Impact and Progression**

All of the courses which were provided were accredited. However, the tutors felt that formal assessment was inappropriate and that some of the classes which they organised '*had a therapeutic purpose*' which it would be difficult to measure. According to one of them, '*... the impact on individuals is obvious by their faces. It is clear that they have a sense of satisfaction and achievement*'. Some of the learners said that they did not think that certificates were important although many said that they would accept any certificates which were offered.

Although it was difficult to measure the impact of the programme, anecdotal evidence suggested that participants in the programme did not visit their GP as often as in the past. Opportunities were available for learners to progress to other learning activities. Moreover, the organisers said that it was clear from the number of the clients who had proceeded to enrol on other courses that they had gained the confidence to take part in learning activities. The organiser felt confident in saying that the programme had the potential to change attitudes towards learning among those who participated in it.

#### **4.4.6 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The organisers had developed a questionnaire which learners were requested to complete mid-way through the course and also on its completion. In addition, tutors monitored the way each learner developed. According to one tutor, '*In normal classes progress can be seen. People can also see a change in themselves*'. The programme itself is monitored by a steering group which included representatives of the broad range of bodies involved in some way.

#### **4.4.7 Funding and Management**

The provision was funded by a variety of means including grants from the Objective One programme from NIACE, the Peripatetic Outreach Partnership and a local community agency. The funding was for a specified time period and new bids were being submitted which if approved would enable the programme to continue. At present there was no set minimum number of learners.

#### **4.4.8 Key Factors**

Key factors in the success of the programme included:

- ♦ understanding and supportive providers
- ♦ cooperation from other agencies, including GPs
- ♦ provision of transport, childcare and other facilities
- ♦ adequate funding
- ♦ tailoring the provision to meet the needs of clients.

### **4.5 Case Study 5**

#### **4.5.1 Background**

This was a programme of courses for adults learning Welsh as a Second Language. All of the adults who were pursuing the courses were supported by their employers to attend.

The interviewees included the Lifelong Learning Manager at the college of further education which was delivering the learning, the course tutor and learners. The Lifelong Learning Manager said that his main responsibility was to promote courses in the community, to raise awareness of the provision and to administer the courses, including organising venues and tutors in programme areas such as European languages, IT, Welsh and GCSE evening classes.

The tutor who was interviewed provided courses for the FE college and also for a residential centre for those learning Welsh as a Second Language.

The programme organisers felt that it was important that institutions were not forced to compete for students and thought that this was wasteful and unhealthy. They therefore welcomed the development of better cooperation between institutions in delivering adult learning opportunities. They felt that it would be wrong to measure the success or failure of all learning activities against a rigid set of criteria.

### **4.5.2 Recruitment and Engagement**

The courses which were provided were part of the broad range of provision made to deliver opportunities for individuals to learn or to develop their proficiency in Welsh. The providers sought to engage a broad range of learners. These included:

- ♦ teachers
- ♦ local government employees
- ♦ people who have moved into the area and who wish to learn Welsh
- ♦ Welsh-speakers who want to improve the standard of written or spoken Welsh.

The tutor said that there a wide cross-section of the population had enrolled on these courses at various times. These included manual workers and senior managers. According to the tutor, many people enrolled on the Welsh course:

*...because they want to integrate more with the community or the workplace and feel that they belong. Very often people with very young children are very keen to come along because they can see the benefits.*

The provision was prompted through advertisements in the evening class directory and in the press, a poster campaign and through the work of community field workers. Awareness-raising events were organised in centres maintained by the college, including in community outreach premises, and through taster sessions funded by NOF. In addition, members of a voluntary campaigning group had canvassed houses in certain areas to encourage people to learn Welsh.

### **4.5.3 Overcoming Barriers to Learning**

One of the main issues preventing learners from studying was that some of them abandoned their studies after a few sessions due to pressure of work or caring responsibilities. These factors were particularly prevalent in some of the more deprived areas served by the college. It was also found that young men were a particularly difficult group to attract into learning. The organisers did not think that the fact that some learners had to pay for the course acted as a disincentive. However, some of those who were learning with the support of their employer said that it was sometimes difficult to balance their commitment to learning Welsh with other pressures, especially those who had a heavy workload.

According to the tutor, one of the more serious barriers which learners faced before enrolling on this course was the fear that Welsh was a difficult language to learn. She did not feel that the cost factor was a problem. She felt that there was a need to

provide learners with individual support and to be able to recognise and address factors such as dyslexia.

The importance of delivering adult learning in a pleasant environment where appropriate facilities were available was noted as a key factor in encouraging more people to take part in learning activities. As a means of addressing this issue, the college had built new outreach centres in some deprived areas, assisted by European Objective One funding and was extending its capacity to develop learning in community settings such as by introducing a mobile IT facility.

#### **4.5.4 Delivery**

The providers referred to some of the issues which affected the delivery of courses in Welsh for adults. They emphasised the need to adopt a broad range of teaching styles and to ensure that learners enjoyed the activities.

A course was visited which had been arranged for employees of a local authority in north Wales. Among the teaching methods used were oral work and language games. Some of the learners who were interviewed said that they had approached their employer about enrolling on a course to learn Welsh while others had been encouraged to do so by their line managers. Some of the learners said that they had little opportunity to practice their Welsh outside of the class and that they *'felt shy speaking Welsh to their colleagues'*. They felt that allocating an individual to speak to them during the week would be a good way for their employer to provide further support. Many of the learners complimented the tutor who was *'able to make the experience fun'*. According to the learners the class offered a valuable mutual support structure as they learned the language. The learners were ambivalent about assessment. Some felt that it could *'divide the class'* and that assessment *'could be disruptive'*.

According to the organisers it was essential for the tutor to be able to *'get on'* with the learners and to be able to develop a rapport and a positive relationship with the learners.

#### **4.5.5 Impact and Progression**

The main impact of the learning activities was that they enabled individuals to develop or improve their language skills in Welsh. This broadened the range of jobs for which they could apply.

In order to assist learners to progress to other forms of learning the college had produced leaflets outlining what the next steps could be. The information was supplemented by a questionnaire to learners which sought to find out what they wanted to do next. Learners were also assessed on a termly basis through the Open College Network structure. According to the tutor, learners had progressed to study at a variety of levels, up to the A level qualification. The tutor said that if this was to work effectively, employers would have to be prepared to release employees and providers would need to have the capacity to deliver more advanced courses.

#### **4.5.6 Monitoring and Evaluation**

All learners were required to complete evaluation forms at the end of each course. These were then passed on to the Lifelong Learning Manager who analysed the feedback that they provided. At the same time, focus groups were held in order to enable learners to express their opinions.

#### **4.5.7 Funding and management**

The college had accessed European Objective One funding to develop its outreach provision. Peripatetic Outreach Provision funding had been made available to enable them to offer taster courses. This had enabled them to extend their provision into villages where previous provision had been unavailable. Funding had also been received from the Basic Skills Agency.

Learners who were employed were charged a fee for joining the class but those who were over 60 or living on benefits were provided with places free of charge.

#### **4.5.8 Key Factors**

The key factors identified for success were:

- ♦ high quality learning experiences
- ♦ appropriate use of resources
- ♦ ensuring that the provision was varied
- ♦ open learning
- ♦ a welcoming environment
- ♦ enthusiastic and competent tutors.



## **4.6 Case Study 6**

### **4.6.1 Background**

This study examines the delivery of ACE in a unitary authority in the north of England. The area ranks high on the index of multiple deprivation and a significant proportion of its population is from ethnic minority backgrounds. Interviews were held with key personnel within the Lifelong Learning Development Team. The staff included the Adult and Community Development Manager and staff with responsibilities for research and the development of the service.

Both the LEA and the local college made extensive provision for adult learners. However, according to the LEA personnel the nature and objectives of the college provision differed substantially from that which they deliver since the college focused on more formal and vocational learning while the LEA sought to develop learning communities by providing opportunities that reflected the priorities of the communities which they serve. The LEA's aims also addressed the need to broaden the range of people accessing adult learning by developing a strategy to engage with key groups of learners including:

- ◆ those with learning difficulties and disabilities
- ◆ older adults
- ◆ learners of Asian heritage.

### **4.6.2 Recruitment and Engagement**

The LEA has adopted a number of measures to recruit learners, which were developed with the aim of engaging with groups which have not traditionally accessed learning. The staff interviewed said that they did not believe that traditional methods of recruiting learners would be effective and that a great deal of the recruitment had to be undertaken through word of mouth. Advice for potential learners was available at designated access points maintained by the local authority. Some of these also served as venues where provision was delivered. Other methods used by the LEA include:

- ◆ awareness-raising events such as Adult Learning Week
- ◆ a Learning Festival
- ◆ delivering special events in identified target areas.

A family learning event was organised which was marketed as a *'family fun day'* as it was felt that the inclusion of the term *'learning'* within the title would discourage

some people from participating. The activities which were provided included bicycle repair, first aid and stenciling. Free food was also provided.

The LEA has also entered into partnership with the BBC to use its local radio station as a means of encouraging adult participation in learning. In addition to providing information about courses and other activities during programmes, part of the BBC's premises was used as a learning suite for information technology.

Members of the public had access to computer facilities which fulfilled a role as a drop-in facility as well as a venue for taught sessions. Members of staff ensured that all of those who made use of the facility were encouraged to attend a group session. The learning activities which were delivered included the use of the Internet, Microsoft office, using e-mail, digital photography, scanning and BBC on-line courses.

In another case, the LEA worked closely with Age Concern to deliver opportunities to older learners.

Another of the aims of the Adult Community Learning Development Team was to engage with people who have not traditionally accessed adult learning at their place of work. As a result, members of the team identified target groups and developed innovative strategies to contact and engage those individuals.

A member of the team approached staff at a local taxi depot. At first, the taxi drivers who were approached showed little interest in adult learning. However, as a result of regular approaches (including taking a taxi ride to talk to the drivers) he was able to interest them in taking part in a learning activity. As a result, they developed a course on self-defence delivered through a 'learning lunch', which was seen by the drivers as the most convenient time to engage with the activity. As a result of this approach the taxi drivers themselves gained confidence in developing their own learning activities, and other courses in first aid and basic mechanics were delivered at their own request.

#### **4.6.3 Overcoming Barriers to Learning**

The organisers were asked what they thought were the main barriers preventing potential learners from accessing adult learning provision. They all felt that people who had had negative experiences of learning would be put off by any approach which meant that they had to study at certain institutions, including schools, colleges and public libraries. At the same time, they felt that some people were reluctant to

pursue learning opportunities for cultural or psychological reasons. For example, cultural perceptions influenced take-up among Asian women; whereas some men were reluctant to admit that they lacked basic skills.

They felt that one of the main prerequisites to overcoming barriers was to ensure that those who were responsible for planning and delivering the service gained a thorough understanding of the barriers and of the reasons why certain factors operated as barriers to learning.

Equal importance was attached to the need for learning to be underpinned by a philosophy based on the principles of *'democratic learning'* whereby matters such as the contents and the methods used in delivery were negotiated with the people who were taking part. For this to be effective, the service should be monitored to see to what extent it met criteria such as:

- ◆ does it take us close to our learners
- ◆ do the learners drive the vision
- ◆ is the vision shared by the learners.

It was said that in order to engage with the kind of groups which the LEA had targeted there was a need for staff *'to build up a relationship of trust'* which would enable them to harness community knowledge. The methods included co-operating with key players within different communities.

There was a need to encourage people to work together and to reinforce the message that a collective approach was required: *'Individuals can trigger things but individuals can't change things – you need a group to do that'*. This meant that in addition to empowering individuals to take control over their own learning people should be encouraged to *'take ownership of their community's learning'* and as a means of taking this policy forward the LEA was experimenting with the notion of delegating some budgets to community groups in to enable those groups to drive the provision of adult learning opportunities.

Staff also believed that there was a need to ensure that learning was an issue which was taken seriously by all organisations. For example, they said that employers had a particular role to play in encouraging learning within communities and that some employers needed convincing of the business case for contributing to the delivery of learning opportunities, including those not directly related to their own skills needs.

The LEA personnel also said that it was important to harness the moment at which individuals were most enthusiastic about learning by ensuring that they had an immediate answer when people requested information about courses. Wherever possible, courses should be organised to enable learners to join at short notice, otherwise many of them would lose interest.

In addition, the staff said that if learning was to be extended, the provision had to be free, delivered in accessible venues where learners felt at ease and that support needed to be provided, such as childcare facilities.

#### **4.6.4 Delivery**

All staff interviewed emphasised the need for the learning activities to be tailored to the needs of individuals, and for those responsible for delivering the learning to be able to recognise when and with whom to adopt different learning strategies. This included negotiating the nature of the learning activities with learners. According to the tutors, staffing should be sufficient to enable them to provide learners with one to one support.

#### **4.6.5 Impact and progression**

None of the staff who were interviewed believed that formal assessments, either to establish a baseline or to measure progression, would be desirable in the contexts in which they worked. It was feared that these would deter potential learners. However, other methods of recording motivation and achievement were used. These included:

- ♦ recording what learners wanted to learn and achieve at the start of a course and interviewing learners at the end of a course to see whether those aims had been achieved
- ♦ developing a portfolio for each learner which recorded what courses they had pursued and observations on those courses.

The LEA officers did not believe that the distinction between '*learning for a purpose*' or '*learning for its own sake*' were helpful in the context of adult learning. They believed that '*there is always a purpose to all learning*' whether it was for personal or community development.

Regarding the main impact of the local authority provision on individual learners and on the wider community, some staff felt that there was some clear evidence that learners had benefited, for example in terms of people's ability to handle information technology and their confidence in using those facilities. However, many staff felt

that some of the greatest benefits had been in the soft outcomes which were difficult to measure. For example, many learners had become more confident and felt a sense of achievement as a result of taking part. One of the staff said:

*‘Being asked what learning activities they would like was a new experience for some of the people because they were not used to being consulted about anything ... This increased their self-confidence.’*

It was also felt strongly that the programmes provided had generated more positive attitudes towards learning. Thus while it was recognised that the skills developed through a particular learning activity were important, the staff also stressed the importance of *‘the processes that learners go through in acquiring that qualification’*.

The LEA provided support and advice to learners after the completion of activities which considered what further learning opportunities participants would be interested in experiencing. Some of the learners who had been engaged through this process had suggested other activities in which they would like to take part, thus achieving one of the aims of the provision, and these had been delivered. Moreover, some of them were now delivering other activities themselves.

It was noted that not all learners would or wanted to progress from one level of learning to the next and that many wished to go from one learning activity at a particular level to another activity at the same level. Staff emphasised the need to recognise this as a valid form of progression, including recognising the way learners developed different skills and acquired greater confidence by moving forward in this way.

In addition, the staff all believed that there was a need to recognise learners’ achievements. They referred to the way in which many learners had gained confidence simply by being invited to a ceremony to receive a certificate at the end of a course. In many instances this had been the first occasion at which those learners’ achievements had been recognised.

#### **4.6.6 Monitoring and evaluation**

The staff had devised a variety of methods to monitor learners’ views about the local authority provision. Again the need for these methods to be tailored to the needs of the individual learners was emphasised.

In one setting, people who used the information technology were required to complete a brief electronic questionnaire as they logged off. This was presented in a '*learner friendly*' format and was electronically recorded.

In another setting learners were encouraged to take part in an Adult Guidance Interview after they had completed their course. An emphasis was placed on identifying the strengths of each learner and suggesting how they could develop their skills further.

In addition, the APEL interview method (which assesses skills such as group work, personal development and the way skills, knowledge and understanding has been developed) was used as a means of measuring the effect of adult learning in some contexts.

#### **4.6.7 Funding and management**

None of the learners who enrolled on courses organised by this LEA were required to make a payment and according to the staff it was likely that the imposition of any charge would deter some learners.

LEA officers described the funding arrangements for the services which they provided. Some funding was obtained from the Learning and Skills Council. In addition, resources were provided through a grant which was received from the Lifelong Learning Standards Fund which enabled some development work to be undertaken. Funding was also obtained through the European Social Fund, the Single Regeneration Budget, and the New Opportunities Fund.

The LEA worked in partnership with partner organisations including the BBC, local community groups and Age Concern to deliver provision to older adults. At the same time LEA staff worked with bodies established to deliver community regeneration initiatives. However, one of the aims of the staff had been to engage groups which were not organised in formal groups. This meant developing links with individuals and informal networks which were then encouraged to work together. The staff said that in their view it was important for them to enjoy the freedom to experiment and to try innovative methods of delivering the service they provided if the aims of reaching the target groups were to be achieved.

#### **4.6.8 Key Factors**

Staff were asked what were the key factors in delivering effective adult learning. The main factors mentioned were:

- ♦ the importance of a learner-centred approach
- ♦ developing an approach based on the principles of democratic learning
- ♦ providing events which were designed to appeal to the target groups and which would generate their interest
- ♦ ensuring that learning activities were presented in a context which was meaningful to the learners
- ♦ celebrating success.

### **4.7 Case Study 7**

#### **4.7.1 Background**

The local education authority (LEA) in Southern England visited for this study is largely an affluent area, although there are numerous pockets of deprivation within it.

The LEA covers the whole of the county and last year had thirty two thousand learners. All areas of adult learning from basic skills to leisure learning are covered. The LEA has a very wide brief and those living in pockets of deprivation are being targeted. 20 per cent of the learners are over 65 and the number of daytime learners equals those studying in the evenings.

The LEA has completely restructured its adult learning provision. The previous model meant that the county was divided into four geographical areas, each of which enjoyed considerable autonomy in relation to delivery and management. As a result it was found that the learning programmes which were delivered lacked consistency and although there was room for innovation, it meant that there was no clear pattern to the provision made by the LEA. For this reason, the LEA moved to a cross-county curriculum model. This change ensured consistency, the planned implementation of innovative approaches and increased the LEA's ability to be responsive to the needs of learners.

The Executive manager for operations who is in charge of the delivery of adult learning across the whole county was interviewed.

#### **4.7.2 Recruitment and marketing**

Outreach workers were employed and partnerships with other bodies had been established to support recruitment. Most of the publicity was undertaken through leaflet distribution, but it was recognised that different and innovative approaches were required because many of the people whom the LEA were trying to reach could not be recruited through 'normal' routes. The LEA was also developing a proposal for a 'learning shop' which would seek to target younger participants.

#### **4.7.3 Overcoming barriers**

Financial barriers were said to be significant. The LEA did provide concessions, but there was concern that some potential learners were not aware of this provision. However it was suggested that for many people participation in learning was not hindered by financial considerations but by perceptions, including the belief that learning should be free. It was also felt that it was not a priority for some people. Indeed, the staff believed that the principal barrier to participation was that many people were simply uninterested in learning.

The LEA had adopted a number of methods to overcome barriers including:

- ◆ outreach work
- ◆ partnership working
- ◆ financial concessions
- ◆ providing a wide range of courses at different times and of different lengths.

#### **4.7.4 Delivery**

The LEA was the main provider of adult learning in the area and was redefining its strategic role in terms of partnerships with other providers with the principal aim of achieving consistency. The lifelong learning partnership in the area had brought a number of bodies together. It was felt that local organisations working in partnership represented an effective strategy.

The LEA had also moved away from planning programmes for the whole year and modified and re-planned continuously throughout the year in order to meet all needs. It described this as '*a responsive programme of delivery.*'



#### **4.7.5 Impact and progression**

Progression was planned using historical data on which progression routes had been successful in the past. The LEA also recognised that anecdotal information gained from learners was also an important source of information. Within the programmes themselves there was an inbuilt structure of progression, both horizontally and vertically. Learners were provided with a sheet which provided information about progression and part of each tutor's remit was to be a source of information for learners relating to progression.

The impact of learning on individuals was thought to be hard to quantify, but the staff who were interviewed said that it had had a major impact on the lives of some individuals, including the way in which they interacted with others in the community. Moreover, taking part in adult learning had also addressed the social inclusion agenda, particularly for groups such as the elderly.

#### **4.7.6 Monitoring and evaluation**

The LEA was subject to inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, an internal quality framework, and LSC provider reviews.

Learners were monitored through both standard methods, for example retention, and a number of different feedback surveys.

#### **4.7.7 Funding and management**

The LEA drew its funding from three sources:

- ♦ LSC
- ♦ FE provision through the LSC
- ♦ student fees.

Student fees ranged from £2.40 per hour to £1.50 per hour, depending on the course. Small increases in fees were found not to deter learners, as sports and fitness classes had been increased to £3.00 with no decrease in enrolment. Funding for courses was dependent upon a minimum student number of twelve. Sometimes this threshold could be relaxed if the initiative is new.

#### **4.7.8 Key Factors**

The LEA considered a number of factors to be necessary in order to develop an effective service. These included:

- ◆ a comprehensive service
- ◆ clear direction in terms of leadership
- ◆ a modern and innovative service
- ◆ well trained staff
- ◆ a responsive service
- ◆ a learner centred service.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACE PRACTICE IN WALES**

The following recommendations are drawn from examples of good practice which have been identified in the literature review and the seven case studies described in Chapter 4. They are proposed as guidelines for the future development of adult and continuing education in Wales.

### **5.1 Strategy**

The National Assembly Government should develop a comprehensive strategy for the development of ACE. This strategy should include as partners public bodies such as the National Council - ELWa, HEFCW, the WEA, the LEAs and the YMCA, in addition to less traditional providers such as the National Museums and Galleries of Wales and private providers and employers. The strategy should strive to ensure best value and avoid duplication of provision.

### **5.2 Definition**

The definition of ACE should be clear and relevant to the Welsh context. It should be broad enough to encompass an extensive range of types of learning, learners and delivery methods. The points set out below are included in a proposed working definition for all ACE provision and accompanying debate in Wales:

Adult Continuing Learning is:

- ♦ An organised process which enables a person to acquire new skills, competencies or attributes
- ♦ Undertaken by any person deemed to be an adult by the criteria of their society such as those who have completed compulsory basic education and acquired at least some of the legal rights of adulthood
- ♦ Inclusive of all types of learning and delivery modes
- ♦ Undertaken in a wide range of settings, from traditional classrooms and workshops to museums and libraries, churches, public halls, public houses and the home.

### **5.3 Accessibility**

All ACE provision should be easily accessible for its target groups. Car parking facilities should be a consideration in the planning of provision, while the proximity

of venues for activities to convenient public transport is another important factor. The location of outreach venues within walking distance of the target population should be considered wherever possible.

#### **5.4 Recruitment and widening participation**

Recruitment strategies for learners should be as comprehensive and varied as possible. Leaflets, open days, public events, advertising and the local media should all be used, while it should be remembered that word of mouth is probably the most effective recruiting method. The use of former learners to talk to potential students about the provision is also to be recommended.

Widening participation should be a target for all ACE providers and policy makers. New and imaginative strategies are often required to reach non-traditional learners. This can be achieved through approaching these groups in specific locations such as shops, public houses or on public transport.

An effective method of widening participation in ACE is to ascertain the needs and interests of potential learners and tailor the teaching provision to them. The response to learner needs should be central to all ACE planning.

The use of non-traditional delivery mechanisms should be encouraged in order to attract groups who might not have considered participating previously. Classes can be held in an extensive range of venues and outreach centres. Approaches such as distance learning and learning at home can extend participation and make it more relevant to learners' needs.

Other methods of broadening participation in ACE which should be developed are family learning where parents attend classes at their children's school or together with their children at another centre, and community learning where people from the same street or area come together to learn.

#### **5.5 Tutors**

It should be recognised that the quality and expertise of class and group tutors is a crucial factor in the success of ACE programmes. Providers should ensure that the tutors they employ are appropriately trained and maintain a positive relationship with the learners. The recruitment of tutors should be included in planning at a local and national level.

## **5.6 Partnerships**

Partnerships to provide ACE programmes should be encouraged since they can ensure access to a broader clientele of learner and offer a wider variety of staff expertise and resources.

## **5.7 Funding issues**

Funding should be made as long-term as possible since short-term funding for programmes and projects often leads to staffing and resource uncertainty and lack of continuity in provision.

The funding of ACE provision should include an element of accountability. Funding should be linked to the learner contact time on a programme but should also consider the outcomes of that programme. However, it should be remembered that outcomes mean not only examination or formal assessment results on an accredited course, but also the soft outcomes such as learner confidence and independence on much informal learning. In order to maintain and increase participation, it is important that the criteria for funding should not be too stringent, such as insistence on a high minimum attendance figure for a class. Funding formulas applicable to all providers can help ensure the fairness of funding arrangements.

The policy on programme or course fees for learners should be appropriate for the learning group in question. While some degree of cost recovery may be necessary for certain types of provision, it should be remembered that fees represent a considerable barrier for many potential learners from poor backgrounds. The cost of subsidies for learners' fees or transport should be included in planning provision and funding applications.

Dedicated funding for ACE provision should be available to as broad a range of possible providers as possible. However, providers should also be encouraged to seek funding from other sources, such as Objective One, community and urban renewal, or church funding.

## **5.8 Assessment and evaluation**

All ACE provision should include an element of assessment for students and course evaluation which could be linked to funding procedures. The student assessment need not be formal and should not be a deterrent to prospective learners. It could include attitude scales, for example, and simple feedback forms to obtain some measure of soft outcomes such as gains in learners' confidence.

## **5.9 Barriers**

All providers should consider effective practice in overcoming barriers to participation in ACE. Key issues for many prospective learners are signposting of provision, childcare, financial grants, advice and counselling, in addition to the transport problems mentioned above.

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