

Note from meeting of Impact Forum Sub-group on the theme of Adult Learning & Work

23 May 2016

Present: John D'Arcy (Chair), Niall Casey, Brendan Murray, Emma Dunseith, Lorraine Boyd, Hilary Hanberry, Trevor Neilands, Colin Neilands

Apologies: Ann Marie Doyle, Ann Osborne

Current Issues

- meeting the impact of the rise of Corporation Tax - will this be reflected in updated Skills Barometer?
- Employability Skills still biggest issue identified by Invest NI, but with important proviso that so-called soft skills (critical thinking, teamworking, appropriate workplace behaviour etc.) are as important as qualifications
- Future Skills - need to invest in workplace training as majority of job replacements are from those already in work - higher level apprenticeships are one way to address this upskilling
- Joseph Rowntree Trust's latest report on poverty has emphasis on 'working poor' and the need to look at quality of jobs offered and not just quantity - <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-northern-ireland-2016>
- what is the current impact of adult learning in the workplace and how can providers enhance this impact?
- companies are needing to adopt new delivery mechanisms for training - largely digital
- the big problem is that adult learning is always in the position of addressing the deficit situation - foundation education ultimately needs to be address but it would be a distraction for the Impact Forum to start in on that debate
- there is a deficit of work experience possibilities for some young people, further reducing their chances of full employment
- what about successful models elsewhere? e.g. Finland

What should Impact Forum aim to achieve by Oct 2016 with regard to this theme?

- awareness raised of the contribution of adult learning to employability and on-the-job training
- improved baseline to support evidence-based policy

- collation and promotion of broad variety of examples of good practice and individual learner stories - so Ministers can actually quote these
- generally raise enthusiasm for lifelong learning, showing its contribution to life and work
- explore the role that awards can play in awareness and enthusiasm raising - both need for new awards and greater promotion of existing awards

(there was some discussion as the nomenclature - adult learning/education tends to conjure specific images in the public's (Government's) head that does not match the breadth of learning experiences that we are trying to promote)

Suggestions for content of IF meeting on this theme

- Neil Gibson, Director of the NI Centre for Economic Policy at UU
- AONTAS
- Examples of good workplace learning
- Ask IF members to share their provision - as a cumulative paper, not for presentation
- Subgroup to meet again after the plenary IF meeting to advance its outcomes

Next Meeting of the Impact Forum

Thursday 22nd September in the Open University

Actions

Colin to approach Neil Gibson and AONTAS re presentations

Niall and Hilary to identify possible examples of good workplace learning

Brendan to forward details of recent Scandinavian visitors to DEL