



EAAL Scotland Impact Forum Adult Learning and Skills

10.30am – 3pm, 25 April 2019
Scotland's Learning Partnership
Ingliston Road, Edinburgh
EH28 8NB

Notes of Meeting

1. **Present:** Isabel Pattie (Midlothian Council); Mark Ravenhall (Learning & Work Institute); Jim McHarg (North Ayrshire Council); Margaret Allan (National Learners Forum); Marion Allison (CLD Standards Council); Derek Catto (West Lothian Council); Alan Sherry (Kelvin College); Jennifer Akugbo (Edinburgh Council); Lindsay McDonald (Education Scotland); Fiona Dowie (Edinburgh Council); Morag Grant (Edinburgh Council); Laura McIntosh (Education Scotland); Shirley Howitt (Learning Link Scotland); Fiona Boucher (SLP); Lee Callaghan (SLP); Tracy Waddell (SLP).

2. **Apologies:** Jackie Howie (Learning Link Scotland); Loretta Mordi (Museums Galleries Scotland); John Field (Emeritus Professor University of Stirling); Oonagh McGarry (Scottish Borders Council); Ian Leith (Associate); Clark Whyte (Clackmannanshire Council). Emma Whitelock (LEAD Scotland);

3. Welcome and Introductions

Marion Allison, Chair of Impact Forum

Marion warmly welcomed everyone to the Impact Forum on Adult Learning and Skills and introduced Katharine Mullock from The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Katherine is a labour market economist in the Skills team, who focuses on helping countries develop policies to adapt to changing skills and needs arising from technological change, globalisation and population ageing.





4. Future Ready Adult Learning Systems (annexe1)

Katharine Mullock, OECD, Co-author of Getting Skills Right-Future Ready Adult Learning Systems

Katharine presented the Forum with the findings and report from OECD. The report, *Getting Skills Right-Future Ready Adult Learning Systems*, (Annexe 1) presents the key results from the Priorities for Adult Learning (PAL) Dashboard which facilitates comparisons between countries along seven dimensions of the readiness of adult learning systems to address future skill challenges.

As the world of work is changing and the extent to which individuals, firms and economies can harness the benefits of these changes, it critically depends on the readiness of adult learning systems to help people develop relevant skills for this changing world of work. The report highlights in which areas action is needed and of how these actions could be implemented.

Katharine presented the Forum with some follow up questions for discussion



Follow-up questions for Scotland/UK



How to improve participation of disadvantaged groups, especially the low-skilled and (long-term) unemployed? Who should provide advice and guidance for these groups?



How could the design of existing incentives be improved to help individuals up- and re-skill for shortage occupations?



How can employers, especially SMEs, be supported in developing and delivering effective skill development plans?



Which groups need additional financial support for training? Through which (existing) channels could they be supported?



How can governance of UK skill policy be improved? Which organisation (if any) could take leadership in this area?





Points From Forum Discussion

- The report mentions the importance of guidance and there has been a steady decline of this in Scotland.
- Demography is either a threat or an opportunity. Scotland has a fixation on youth unemployment and yet the issue is about a skills deficit and productivity.
- There is a challenge to keep adult learning on the government's agenda and being proactive in influencing policy.
- The importance of soft skills in adult learning and a need for pre-engagement training for adults in Scotland.
- Devolved budgets to Councils allows politicians to move funding and adult learning never benefits from this and can result in a crisis.
- A holistic view of adult learning is very important for inclusion. With an ageing workforce and rising workers in temporary contracts, the opportunity to learn is helping to keep people engaged.

5. Discussion Focus 1

Sharing Impact of Adult Learning-how well do we do this?
What can we improve?
Success Factors

- There is a critical need for a positive definition and common language to describe the sector of adult learning, particularly for political clout with politicians.
- Adult Learners' Week is only once a year and seriously underfunded to make an impact.
- The quality of adult learning should be documented and shared.
- An investment in Adult Learning for social prescribing in key policy areas such as health and wellbeing

6. Financing Adult Learning

Equity and Adequacy-how well placed are we?
Mega Trends-Are we responding or leading?
What policies could foster financial investment in adult learning?
What incentives do we need?

- The population demography is changing due to trends and globalisation, which brings challenges to adult learning.



- Scottish wide policies need to change to reflect adult learning.
- Funding should be available for key points in people's life's and particularly at transition periods for all ages.
- Balance of funding is unequal – 85% of funding goes to 16-25 year olds.
- Education is a human right and lifelong learning is a part of this.

7. **What do we need to do to scale-up?**

What is needed to upgrade our adult learning systems?

What is the role for the future world of work, for new technologies, globalisation and an ageing population?

- A new adult learning strategy for Scotland will strengthen and support future adult learning systems.
- Scottish Government need to provide adequate funding for adult learning.
- The Learners' Voice needs to be included and at the heart of all systems.
- There should be an Action plan as part of the Strategy.
- Adult learning should be building on political capital and the status higher up the political agenda.

8. **Final Words**

Jim McHarg, Chair Policy Forum

Jim closed the Impact Forum by mentioning the Joseph Rowntree Consultation– Scotland without Poverty, newly published and makes recommendations to the Scottish Government. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/scotland-without-poverty> (Annex 2)

He also informed the Forum about the current consultation towards an Adult Learning Strategy, which is being developed by the Scottish Government and the importance over the next few months for people to comment and help in shaping this.

Jim closed by thanking Katharine on a highly informative input and the discussions that this led to. The changing demography shows that Adult Learning is critical for the economy and future workforce.

9. **Date of next meeting:** Monday 20th May, 10.30am, SLP Office

