

UK COORDINATOR – IMPACT RESEARCH AND REPORTING (WP6): WORK PLAN

BACKGROUND

Learning and Work Institute is the UK National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning. Learning and Work Institute was recently formed following the merging of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion in January 2016. NIACE was first appointed the UK National Coordinator in 2012. Jointly funded by the Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), coordination activities aim to contribute to the European Agenda by: linking adult learning to wider socioeconomic policy in the UK; raising awareness of the value of adult learning to UK citizens; and increasing the participation of low-skilled or less well qualified adults.

The UK, although a research-rich nation, currently does not have a coherent approach to gathering evidence on participation, progression, and achievement in adult learning. The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) indicated that the UK faces significant challenges in attainment in basic and digital skills¹. These challenges are particularly acute for groups such as 16-24 year olds, socially excluded adults and those out of work. Our 2015-17 programme of work as UK National Coordinator therefore focuses on the needs of these groups.

This work package (6) is an overarching strand of work that will result in a summative *State of the Nations* report. This will bring together the latest evidence on the impact of adult learning on different policy areas. It will also draw on evidence produced by the research and development work from other strands, including the Impact Forums. The *State of the Nations* report will outline the current state of play in UK adult learning to inform future policy development to help support an increase in the participation of low-skilled or low-qualified adults.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the work package is to undertake research on the contribution that adult learning can make to different areas of policy in the UK, specifically health, work and communities. The specific objectives are to:

1. Establish a reference group, who will be responsible for directing the research.
2. Undertake literature reviews focused on the impact of adult learning on i) health ii) work and iii) communities.
3. Gather evidence generated through the research and development work from other strands of the 2015-17 programme.
4. Gather evidence and feedback from Impact Forums.

¹ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2013) *The International Survey of Adult Skills 2012: Adult literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills in England*.

5. Produce a summative State of the Nations report. This will outline current state of play in UK adult learning to inform future policy development to help support an increase in the participation of low-skilled or low-qualified adults.

APPROACH

Research reference group

We will convene an expert group of researchers to oversee the compilation of a *State of the Nations* report. This group will be responsible for agreeing the research questions, scope of the research and the type of evidence that will be included in the final report.

We will seek to ensure this group includes representatives:

- from different types of research organisation (for example, Higher Education Institution, independent research and development charity, think tank, etc);
- from all four UK nations; and
- who are experts in adult learning, health, work and/or communities policy.

EPALE UK will be invited to attend meetings, so that wider networks of adult education policy makers, researchers and/or practitioners are involved.

The group will meet face to face three times during the two year programme:

- Meeting 1 – March/April 2016: Agree terms of reference for the group, research questions, scope of research and type of evidence that will be included in the final report.
- Meeting 2: October/November 2016: Review progress, consider evidence gathered to date, identify gaps and agree remaining work.
- Meeting 3 – March/April 2017: Agree final conclusions and recommendations of the *State of the Nations* report.

Literature reviews

Researchers will undertake three literature reviews, each focusing on the impact of adult learning on a different area of policy – health, work and communities. The researchers will be guided by a brief produced following the first meeting of the research reference group.

The reviews will bring together national, international and regional research evidence. The initial phase of work will focus on published literature, but grey literature will be sought from Impact Forum members.

Gathering other evidence

Learning and Work Institute staff who are leading other work packages will be responsible for feeding evidence generated through their development work into the interim and summative reports. Strand leads will be asked to consider at the outset how their work on i) digital learning, ii) young adults and employability and iii) basic skills will produce evidence that links with health, work and communities.

Researchers will present the findings of the literature reviews to each of the Impact Forums. Forum members will be invited to feedback on the evidence and provide further evidence, particularly grey literature, to contribute to the summative report.

State of the Nations report

The final summative report will present the findings from the literature review, together with the evidence from the other strands of work and evidence provided by Impact Forum members. It will draw conclusions on the current state of play in UK adult learning and include a set of policy recommendations focused on increasing the participation of low-skilled or low-qualified adults in learning.

MILESTONES

Activity	Timescale	Who
Convene research reference group	February 2016	EJ/FA
Impact Forums briefed on work package and their contribution	February/March 2016	JE/MR
First meeting of research group	March/April 2016	EJ/FA
Briefs for researchers produced	April 2016	EJ
Initial phase of literature review	April-June 2016	Researchers
Researchers present evidence gathered to date to Impact Forums	June 2016 onwards	Researchers
Researchers add contribution from strand leads and Impact Forum members into reviews	June 2016-February 2017	Researchers
Contribution to interim report	July 2016	EJ/FA
Second meeting of research group	October/November 2016	EJ/FA
Changes and additions made to reviews in light of feedback from research group and Impact Forums	December 2016-February 2017	Researchers
Full draft of State of the Nations report shared with research group	March 2017	Researchers
Final meeting of research group	March/April 2017	EJ/FA
Final changes made to State of the Nations report	May-June 2017	Researchers/EJ/FA
Final State of the Nations report published	July 2017	EJ/FA