

Skills for Prosperity – A Vision for 2020

NIACE
CYMRU

The National Voice
for Lifelong Learning

Y Llais Cenedlaethol
dros Ddysgu Gydol Oes

“Wales’ education, learning and skills systems do much to support thousands of children and adults to maximise their talents and to get on in life. They also, however, fail to support far too many people who could benefit from learning and who would then contribute more to our society and economy.

At NIACE Cymru, we strive to promote learning and influence policy and practice in order that there are more opportunities at all ages, and in many different ways, for adults to participate in learning. The social benefits if we could achieve a true lifelong learning society would be profound – strong communities, better attainment by children, a more tolerant society, more volunteering, better health and higher levels of well-being.

The economic benefits of a lifelong learning society are also enormous with better and higher skills investment leading to higher productivity and more successful businesses.”

Cerys Furlong
Director, NIACE Cymru







NIACE Cymru's Ambition

NIACE Cymru's recent publication – *The Post-16 Challenge* – outlines the economic, social and skills challenges facing Wales in the coming years. In order to respond to these, adults need the skills to survive and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The next party of Government must invest in skills for adults of all ages, to a level that ensures that significantly more adults are engaged in education and training by the end of the next Assembly term than are at present, and that adults put the skills they have to best use.

The benefits of lifelong learning, as set out in *The Post 16 Challenge* – should be recognised across every department, and government departments should work together, with organisations across Wales, to achieve a true lifelong culture across Wales.

Our twelve priorities for lifelong learning offer solutions to the challenges we face:

1 Legislate for fairness: balance funding to benefit all learners

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 places education and training for persons aged 19+ on a different statutory footing from those aged 16-19. As a result, cuts to education budgets have had a disproportionate impact on adults, regardless of the skills needs of the nation. Welsh Government should use their legislative powers to amend legislation if necessary to place all adult learning on the same statutory basis to achieve a fairer and better balanced approach that benefits all learners.

2 An international comparison of skills

Welsh Government should enter the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) to enable a fair international comparison of the skills levels in literacy, numeracy and digital learning of adults in Wales. As with the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for 15 year olds, this would provide a sound evidence base on which to develop future skills policy.

3 Funding for essential skills

Wales still has poor levels of basic literacy & numeracy and a need to enhance digital skills. Support for essential skills should be fully funded for all adults, with a new emphasis on supporting those with skills at lower levels to engage in informal learning. There is a clear link between poor basic skills and poverty. Increasing basic skills = tackling poverty. The Welsh Government should set targets to raise standards of adult learning and aim to be the best in the UK and among the best in Europe.





4 A career review for all adults

Research by the UK Commission on Employment and Skills shows that between 2008 and 2018 there are likely to be 13.5million job openings but only 7million new entrants to the labour market. People are also working longer and changing jobs more often, yet adults have little access to advice and guidance about skills and careers. Personal mid-career reviews should be made available for all adults - bringing together information on education and skills to help people decide what further skills development they need.



5 World Class Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships, traineeships & other work based learning routes should be developed and promoted as a genuine vocational alternative to academia.

A new Welsh Government must:

- Invest to allow for consistent numbers of apprentices enrolling and progressing each year
- Ensure apprenticeships are widely available to all adults, not just under-25s
 - Place rigorous checks on apprenticeship schemes, including a guarantee that an apprentice will learn for their career, not just the job they are in
 - Commit to ring-fencing the Barnett Consequential funding from the UK Government's training levy – which will apply to Welsh businesses – to be spent on apprenticeship delivery in Wales.

6 Parity for part-time learners

The next Welsh Government policy should promote part-time study, and give it parity of esteem across all forms of adult learning.

Learners should have access to flexible modes of study, and part-time learning should form a key strand of Welsh Government's strategy to widen access to further and higher education. Following the Diamond Review, Welsh Government should act to address funding disparities that currently exist between full and part-time learning in this area.



7 Community Learning Centres: making best use of community assets

The economic context over the past five years has resulted in the loss of many community centres and services, however we know that they are essential to preventing poor health and wellbeing, engaging citizens and improving community resilience. Community services such as libraries, leisure facilities and community centres should be recognised by Welsh Government as Community Assets.

To strengthen their function and reflect their importance to the community, they should be incentivised to work with education providers to become centres of learning for the whole community. This would ensure more effective use of infrastructure, and secure additional income to ensure the sustainability of these assets.

8 A better co-ordinated offer to families learning

There is a clear correlation between the level of parents' education and performance of children at school. Family learning programmes have shown to raise children's attainment as well as encouraging adults to up-skill.

Family or intergenerational learning should remain central to raising the educational standards of pupils and adults. Funding streams such as Communities First and European funding, and the Pupil Deprivation Grant should be coordinated regionally and locally to avoid duplication and improve practice.

9 Real partnership for business and skills

A nation of well educated adults benefits us all: Individuals improve their life chances and earnings; employers improve productivity and staff retention; and a prosperous economy is the enabler to tackle a range of social ills. Co-investment is central to Wales' future, with Government, individuals and employers all investing in learning. Through regional skills partnerships we can achieve real change, strengthening the relationship between business and education and training providers. A new Government should invest in campaigns to highlight the benefits to individuals and businesses of improving skills.

10 New progression routes - A Framework for Adult Learning

Wales needs a clear offer for all adults – whatever their learning goals and needs. The introduction of a Framework for Adult Learning would offer clarity over the range of programmes and initiatives and identify clear routes for progression for learners. This would reduce duplication and enable providers to work to their strengths. The Framework for Adult Learning should identify all opportunities for adults to learn across Further Education, Higher Education, Work Based Learning, Welsh for Adults, Community Learning etc.



11 Prudent patients – embed learning in the health service

The 'Prudent Healthcare' approach to the NHS in Wales is admirable and achievable, but requires a fully engaged public, capable of making informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. Adult education has been proven to have a substantial positive impact upon health behaviours, and the next party of government must ensure investment is made to embed adult learning in the health service.

12 Improve access to learning for carers

Access to adult learning for carers must be improved. The next party of government must work with the Department of Work and Pensions to exempt carers from the '21 hour rule' which restricts access to benefits, including Carers' Allowance, when more than 21 hours per week are spent in education or training.



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 @NIACECymru #ncmanifesto

This manifesto has been developed by
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