

CALL Bulletin

Number 13 – February 2010

ADULT LEARNING TAKES A BEATING – CAN IT SURVIVE?

In early December the Business Innovation and Skills Department published their spending plans for the next financial year 2010-2011. The document 'Skills Investment Strategy' can be found on http://www.dius.gov.uk/further_education/funding_and_investment/skills-investment-strategy

The plans are disastrous for adult learning. All Adult Responsive funded courses will take a 3% cut on funding rates. The Adult Responsive Funding funds all those programmes that lead to qualifications but are not directly linked to employers - the usual FE college menu of programmes. Funding rates are the money that providers receive per student. Train to Gain funding rates will be cut by 6% and adult apprenticeships by 10%.

The adult responsive funding includes Skills for Life, literacy, numeracy and ESOL. There is a cut in this amounting to £30m numbers whilst student numbers have to increase by 20,000. Skills for Life receives an additional resource in the funding formula. Each Skills for Life student instead of being counted as 1 has been treated as 1.4. This 'uplift' is being reduced to 1.2. A Principal has told CALL that this could amount to a £20 million cut.

The deepest cut is for the stream of funding called 'Developmental Learning'. This funds everything that does not come under Adult or Employer Responsive funding. It funds some work in the community by colleges, some work with students with learning difficulties/disabilities, some trade union education and lots of low level literacy, numeracy and lots of ESOL that don't make up the Government's Skills for Life targets. These are courses which take people to the level where hitherto more secure skills for life courses start. They are often essential progression routes. This funding has been under strain for the last 2 years. In 2008-9 this suffered a 50% cut; in 2009-10 a 44% cut. Next year it will be cut from £330m to £186m and numbers from 583,000 to 212,000. These will hit hardest those who need learning the most. Other measures include Minimum Performance Levels being implemented more rigorously. These are the pass levels that courses need to achieve if they are going to be refunded. College targets for fee income will also be under scrutiny. Fees for Level 3 and above programmes will reach 50% of costs in 2010 so it will cost more to undertake college courses that might improve one's job chances and pay. *(continued next page)*



What you can do

- Tell CALL what is happening in your area about adult learning. Has your programme been cut or going to be cut? How do you feel about that? What affect is going to have on you? Contact Dan Taubman: dtaubman@ucu.org.uk or Gemma Painter: gemma.painter@nus.org.uk
- Write to your MP and/or Parliamentary Candidates about what is happening to adult learning in your area - tell them what adult learning means to you.
- There will be local elections in many areas this May. Ask local councilors what they are doing about adult learning. Are they fighting proposed cuts?
- Contact your local college, university and local authority UCU and UNISON branches to find out what is happening to adult education in your college or university, and if it is being cut, how you could support in fighting this. Contact UCU dtaubman@ucu.org.uk or Chris Fabby UNISON c.fabby@unison.co.uk.

ALL is your campaign. You can get campaign groups going locally by: arranging a local debate or event about adult education; lobbying your local MP's surgery; writing to your local newspaper. For more ideas about local activities and downloadable campaign materials see the [materials page of the CALL website](#).

The latest news we have, is that the way that the cuts to the Adult Responsive funding are being implemented colleges are receiving only between 75 – 90% of last year's allocation. The AoC has just completed a survey of 147 colleges. This shows an average budget cut of 16 per cent, amounting to the loss of £191 million from providers' 2010/11 budgets. A breakdown of the survey shows that almost a third of the 147 respondents expect a 25 per cent cut in their adult funding for 2010/11, with the same number looking at cuts of 15 to 24 per cent, and 40 per cent receiving cuts of 10 to 14 per cent. Just three respondents expect cuts of less than 10 per cent. The AoC believe that may mean some 7,000 jobs are at risk across English colleges. The brunt of the potential redundancies, enough to staff seven medium-sized colleges may fall on people delivering frontline courses designed for employment. The survey has revealed that courses in engineering, construction, electrical installation, catering, and security are all being cut.

Overall even BIS reckon this will mean the loss of more than 130,000 adult learning places. At a time of the greatest economic crisis in 80 years and unemployment above 2.5 million, it is nothing short of scandalous. Surely this is a time when the government should be investing in the future by increasing funds for adult learning, not cutting them.

UCU General Secretary Sally Hunt described the cuts as a 'hammer blow' to staff and students. She said: "these cuts make a mockery of the government's much-vaunted commitment to education. Many of the courses likely to be affected are skills for life programmes which are designed for people with few or no qualifications in literacy and maths. The level of adult learning cuts anticipated could impact on colleges' work with young people as many vocational tutors also teach 16-19 year olds.

The government needs to realise the impact these cuts are going to have. We face the very frightening prospect of many courses having to close and provision being vastly scaled back. This will be a hammer blow to staff and students and make it much harder for people to get back in to education.

The government has rightly identified education as a key driver of social mobility. However, making swingeing cuts to adult learning now would be an outrageous affront to the millions of people it has promised it would not let down."

Chris Fabby UNISON FE National Officer said:

"UNISON is extremely concerned about the impact of the £200m efficiency savings/adult funding cuts on colleges. Even before this announcement we had seen a knee jerk and unjustified reaction by some colleges; cutting courses and jobs, closing campus nurseries. UNISON will be meeting the Minister for Further Education, Kevin Brennan MP, very shortly. We will be making it clear that these cuts, at a time of rising demand, simply don't make sense. Colleges are needed now more than ever by their communities. They are helping people who are made redundant retrain. They are on the frontline in the battle against the recession. This is why Government should be maintaining investment in all parts of adult learning. UNISON is determined to campaign with our colleagues in CALL against these cuts. We will be doing everything in our power to try and protect jobs and courses".
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UCU Parliamentary Lobby to defend jobs, defend education

On Tuesday 26 January 2010 UCU held a lobby of parliament to let MPs know what is happening in further and higher education and to make sure the voices of UCU members are heard in the 'corridors of power' in the run up to the general election. We also launched our alternative vision for education, with its post-16 education manifesto. For the full document click on the link below:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/k/c/Manifesto.pdf>

ESOL 'Question Time'

Members of Tower Hamlets College UCU organised an ESOL focused 'Question Time' pre-election public meeting at the London Muslim Centre in Whitechapel on 04/02/10. The panel - local councillors, parliamentary candidates and academics - all expressed unequivocal support for safeguarding ESOL and the political party representatives all pledged to follow this up with their parties. If you would like information on how to organise your own ESOL Question Time, contact the UCU event organisers at Tower Hamlets College:
michelle.holmes@tower.ac.uk;
saleh.ahmed@tower.ac.uk;
john.buddis@tower.ac.uk

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Simon Beer, NIACE London Regional Officer said:

"Both Parties have talked about protecting frontline services when times are hard but the reality of the government's Skills Investment Strategy is that adult learners will be hit unfairly. This is a concern when trends for the UK in terms of volume of population means there will be three million more 50 – 75 year olds by 2020 and 500,000 fewer 18 – 25 year olds. NIACE accepts that we 'live in straitened times' but the government should be held to its responsibility to provide learning opportunities for adults who are experiencing poverty, are socially excluded or are outside the labour market."

Shane Chown NUS Vice President (Further Education):

"We remain cautious as to the impact that a £30million reduction in Skills for Life funding will have on learners' ability to access and gain a quality education when coupled with the expectation of 20 million more places. This lack of attention paid to quality of learning experience and attainment may prove to be counter-productive to the agenda. For the first time there will be more funded Employer Responsive places in FE than Adult Learner Responsive places. This flags up concerns around the availability of courses on offer to adults wishing to up-skill, re-skill or take a course out of interest. Funding cuts of this magnitude will put additional pressure on students by creating insecurity about availability of courses, the cost of courses and the ever-present threat of staff and course cuts could make entering further education anything but the life-changing experience it should be."

Matt Atkinson Principal City of Bath College:

"At City of Bath College we have seen a continuing reduction in participation in adult learning and this looks set to increase with the cuts to the development learning line in the Skills Investment Strategy. In our locality adult learning has been a key element of community cohesion. The provision brings people from a whole range of social backgrounds together and it is certainly the case that the College has been able to successfully promote community cohesion through learning. Whilst we appreciate the need for a refocusing of resource in difficult economic times we must remember that we are facing an ageing population and greater social divides. We must not underestimate the power of adult learning to address so many of the issues our communities face."

Tom Schuller NIACE Director Independent Commission for Life Long Learning:

"The current position is indeed gloomy. The cuts will do nothing to improve equity or efficiency. But let me strike a different note. My perception is that we have at least an embryonic consensus that part-time study has to be at the centre of any system, and not pushed to the periphery. Public pronouncements are one thing; real commitment and resources quite another. But I sense a potential shift in the tone of the debate. So my message, as we wind up for a general election, is this: let's make sure that every candidate is asked a simple question: do you support equitable funding for part-time students?"

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Forthcoming Events

**Saturday 27 February 2010
10.00am – 4.00pm**

**Swarthmore Education
Centre, 2 – 7 Woodhouse
Square, Leeds LS3 1AD**



Adult Learning: The Future
Swarthmore College in Leeds is hosting a one day conference on the future of adult learning with speakers and guests from across the education sector.

Speakers: Dan Taubman, UCU; Hilary Benn MP; Ann Walker, WEA; Kevin Campbell Wright, RCU

Application forms can be obtained from Kirsten McCaskill in the General Office at Swarthmore. Tel: 0113 2432210

Or download one at www.swarthmore.org.uk

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Keith Elliott, Principal of City of Bristol College:

"My college is faced by a 17% cut to its adult learning budget which, on current estimates, could result in the loss of a quarter of its ALR-stream students and significant job cuts. Our respected part-time aeronautical engineering courses are among those at risk. I am astonished by these cuts. They are in complete contradiction to the Government's statements on frontline services."

Alan Tuckett, Chief Executive of NIACE, said:

"The announcement of the reductions in FE funding for adults in England come on top of year after year of cuts. The overall effect of this has been devastating, as government has shifted funding from provision responsive to local and individual needs towards employer focused provision....In a society facing the challenge of an ageing demography, when we need to create a knowledge-based economy where the capacity to learn is critical, and given the government's ambitions for further and higher education, these short-sighted cuts beggar belief."

AND YET MORE CUTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education is taking the biggest hit in the public spending cuts. For 2010-11, cuts of £135m have been added to 'efficiency savings' of £180m, with a further £600m to follow over the next 3 years. It need not be like this: Germany, France and America have all pumped additional funding into higher education as part of their economic recovery programmes.

UCU has already identified over 5,000 jobs at risk in higher education and believes the cuts will lead to thousands more. University chiefs said recently that 30 universities risked going to the wall. The union has further warned that unless the cuts are reversed, over 14,000 staff risk losing their jobs and our students will face much bigger class sizes. Universities have been told that student numbers will be capped this year, and that if they exceed their allocation, they could face financial penalties. There will be only 10,000 extra student places in 2010-11 and yet applicants have soared by over 100,000 compared to 2009 (a 23% increase for all applicants). The number of applicants aged 25 and over is up 63.4% from 2009. The result of this may be that faced with an excess of young HE entrants with good A level results, many adult mature students face greater difficulty getting an HE place next year. The full figures from UCAS are at:

http://www.ucas.com/about_us/media_enquiries/media_releases/2010/080210b

ELQs

Despite the overwhelming opposition of the higher education sector the Government has continued with its policy of withdrawing public funding for students studying for equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQs). However, as a result of political pressure Ministers agreed to an annual review of the impact of the ELQ policy in English higher education. In December 2009 HEFCE published their initial report. It is important to remember that during the first year of the ELQ policy (2008-9) there was only a gradual reduction in public funding and, therefore, the initial HEFCE review only provides a partial view of the early impacts of the policy (NB: by 2010-11 the full £100 million will be withdrawn from the sector). As a result, the HEFCE report says: "We will not be in a position to make a judgement about the impact on any subject
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Forthcoming Events

Thursday 18 March 2010

Developing Learning for Active Citizenship

A national event is being organised by the Department for Business Innovation (BIS) and the WEA to be held in Birmingham to raise the profile of learning for active citizenship. Practitioners, organisers and managers in further education, adult and community and workplace learning will take part in an opportunity to share experience, skills and methods in order to identify ways of boosting learning for active citizenship. The event will also be used to build a national network of active citizenship educators/facilitators.

The event is in connection to the Active Citizenship project that WEA Yorkshire and Humber region are leading to develop new active citizenship courses.

The event is free to attend.

Click [here](#) for further details. The closing date for applications is Thursday 4 March 2010.

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until we can analyse the data on completed years of study returned by institutions to HESA at the end of 2009. Analysis of the impact on particular subjects will be a major feature of the second review of the impact of the ELQ policy."

Despite the limited evidence base the report identifies a number of worrying trends. For example, the statistical results suggest that overall fundable numbers have reduced and overall un-fundable numbers have increased. In addition, there is a noticeable decrease in part-time fundable numbers and an increase in part-time un-fundable numbers.

WEA Report: Speak up for lifelong learning

In the run up to the general election, along with many of our partners, the WEA will be making sure that adult education and lifelong learning is firmly in the minds of our existing and aspiring politicians.

In September 2009 the adult learning sector welcomed Learning Through Life, a report which makes ten recommendations for a stronger national lifelong learning strategy. We're supporting the proposals outlined in the report and asking MPs and prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) to do the same. We're not asking for more money and our message is simple: "Lifelong learning receives only modest public investment but offers far-reaching positive consequences for individuals, society and the economy - delivering 'outcomes' across the agendas of all government departments. Please protect funding for adult education and lifelong learning and consider adopting the recommendations for a new national strategy as outlined in Learning Through Life".

If you enjoy attending adult education classes or feel you have personally benefited as a result of adult education, please join us in making sure that lifelong learning receives its due place in the minds and plans of our next government, locally and nationally.

We've put together a 'Speak Up for Lifelong Learning' campaign pack with nine factsheets offering ideas and information on how you can get involved in conveying the message - from sending a postcard to holding a meeting with parliamentary candidates and some like-minded friends or colleagues. Adult education and lifelong learning is good for everybody - let's give it a helping hand into and beyond the election. Click on the WEA web site www.wea.org.uk to order the campaign pack

WEA Past Events

WEA Folkestone Candidates' Meeting (see right)

The WEA-organised parliamentary candidates meeting in Folkestone at the end of November went well. More than 50 people attended and had over 3 hours of discussion with the candidates from the 3 main parties. Tom Schuller, NIACE Director of the Independent Commission on the Future of Lifelong Learning was there and introduced the Commission's report "Learning Through Life" to frame the discussion. Lynne Smith, WEA Deputy President, and a long-time volunteer for the WEA, arranged the event. She said the discussions on the day were intelligent and productive, with some challenges for the three party candidates thanks to an audience mix that included members of the public, local council representatives and other adult and community education organisations. All the candidates were positive and encouraged people to hold similar events elsewhere.

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Folkestone Candidates Meeting, November 2009



Tom Schuller, NIACE Director of the Independent Commission on the Future of Lifelong Learning; Colin Barnes, WEA President; Ian Forward, Kent County Council; Richard Bolsin, WEA



Parliamentary candidates: Donald Worsley, Labour; Lynne Beaumont, Liberal Democrats; Damian Collins, Conservatives



Audience members

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Other Past WEA Activity

From Petersfield WEA branch Sheila Dainton writes to CALL: "as a local WEA branch, we really do not have the capacity to run a full-scale campaign related to CALL aims. However, we are doing what we can to promote the cause. This includes: writing to our prospective parliamentary candidates asking them to pledge their support for lifelong learning; informing students in WEA classes about the campaign and making the WEA's Speak Up for Lifelong Learning campaign packs available; ensuring that CALL activities are on the agenda of East Hampshire's Community Learning Forum, which meets three times a year. In September last year our branch also obtained a grant, via the WEA, to organise a local event in support of the Learning Revolution Festival".

WEA Forthcoming Events

North East - Right To Learn Election 'Hustings'

The North East Right to Learn Campaign and the WEA are arranging an election 'hustings' on the future of adult education. Candidates from the three main parties in the three Newcastle upon Tyne constituencies will be invited, and these include Nick Brown, MP, Minister for the North East. This free public event will take place on Tuesday 13 April 2010 at Central Library, Princess Square, Newcastle upon Tyne, 5.30-8.00 pm.

London

In London the Mary Ward Centre and Working Men's College have also organised a hustings at the end of March. Details on the CALL web site when available.

North East - Adult Education Conference

Tom Schuller, who chaired the NIACE Inquiry into Life Long Learning, will be a keynote speaker at the WEA's North East regional Spring adult education conference on Friday 23 April 2010 at the International Centre for Life, Newcastle upon Tyne, 10.00 am - 3.30 pm. The conference will focus on the implications of the General Election for adult learning, as well as exploring how volunteering initiatives such as community learning champions, 'learning revolutionaries' and WEA membership can be strengthened and sustained. Further information available on the WEA website in due course. There is likely to be a small charge for attending this conference.



CALL believes in the provision of:

1. equality of access to high quality education for all learners (regardless of: class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, asylum status or employment status), including a statutory right to workplace learning.
2. universal access to basic skills, ESOL and ICT courses and a first level three qualification regardless of age
3. learner, teacher and community involvement in all levels of decision-making about their learning wherever it takes place
4. learning for personal wellbeing and development and the maintenance of local authority adult education
5. a path out of poverty and disadvantage including widening participation in higher education and the provision of a second chance later in life
6. a stable, motivated and rewarded workforce of professional practitioners.

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