

# Adult Learning in Scotland

## Statement of Ambition



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# Ministerial foreword

This is an exciting time for education in Scotland. As Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning I have established and chair the Further Education Strategic Forum, the Scottish Higher Education Forum and the National Strategic Forum for Adult Learning. Together with my involvement in the Early Years Collaborative and Curriculum for Excellence, these give me an insight and an overview of pathways and experiences across all aspects of my portfolio. Together, they reflect my broad remit and bring it to life.

The common purpose for these three strategic groups, along with the other education initiatives, is to make Scotland not only the best place in the world to grow up in but also the best place to learn. We want to ensure we are fit for purpose in a changing educational and economic world. And at the heart of our ambition is the principle that everyone in Scotland has the right to access high quality learning to meet their needs and aspirations – throughout their lives.

For children and young people this is enshrined in Curriculum for Excellence. High quality learning opportunities also underpin our ambitions for improving the life chances of young people, as set out in the recently published National Youth Work Strategy: **'Our ambitions for improving the life chances of young people in Scotland' (2014-2019)** Adult Learning can help develop the person, the family, their community and society generally. In the Statement of Ambition we are agreed on three core principles.



- adult learning is **lifelong** beginning in the Early Years, supported by Curriculum for Excellence and covering the whole age span of post-compulsory education.
- adult learning is **life-wide**. It covers the personal, work, family and community aspects of living.
- adult learning is **learner-centred**. The educational process builds around the interests and motives of the learner.

Less than a year after establishing the National Strategic Forum for Adult Learning, I am very pleased to publish our Statement of Ambition for Adult Learning in Scotland. Forum members have worked well together within a remarkably short timescale in setting out our ambition to achieve transformational change through learning. Strong evidence that it is a consultative and collaborative approach that works best in Scotland.

I have had the privilege of meeting with adult learners, practitioners and key stakeholders to discuss what matters to them and what matters for the future of adult learning; to listen to creative ideas; and to identify routes to progress.

This statement is the result of listening to learners and those who are committed to the importance of adult learning for individuals, for families and for society. It aims to inspire, through adult learning, the people of Scotland to develop their dreams and aspirations, building hope and realising ambitions for individuals and communities.

Together let's make our ambition a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Russell'.

**Michael Russell MSP**

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

# 1 Adult Learning in Scotland

- 1.1** Adult learning is essential to enable and encourage adults in Scotland to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to play an active and productive role, both personally and societally.
- 1.2** Adult learning opportunities may be formal or informal and take place in a range of settings but they must be accessible according to the needs and aspirations of the individual or group.
- 1.3** Adult learning settings include, among others, educational establishments, the workplace, communities and online learning at home.
- 1.4** Scotland's people are now living longer, healthier lives and adult learning has a key role to play with this changing demographic.
- 1.5** At the heart of Curriculum for Excellence is the development of lifelong learners. Experience of successful learning encourages further engagement in learning.
- 1.6** Adults' experience of past learning may encourage or discourage further engagement in learning activities. There are challenges in balancing the role of being a learner with the range of responsibilities of adult life. There may be additional challenges due to financial hardship, age, abilities, cultural or social backgrounds which create difficulty in accessing learning opportunities.
- 1.7** Change in personal life, family life, working life or community life can be a stimulus to new learning. These changes can occur at any age. Successful and relevant learning provides a means to negotiate life's transitions and can reduce stress, conflict and, potentially, the need for state intervention.
- 1.8** Effective guidance for adult learners requires that all relevant agencies work together to ensure common understanding and the provision of accessible information and advice.
- 1.9** Effective adult learning is at the core of a Scottish knowledge-based society. It drives the development of an improved personal skills base, increases the focus on achieving better outcomes for communities, and provides improved life chances.
- 1.10** Adult learning is key to employability – the combination of factors and processes which enable people to progress towards, move into, or stay in employment and to progress within the workplace.
- 1.11** Adult learning provides the foundation for initiatives to improve health and social care and establish a more open and inclusive society. It builds the capacity of individuals and groups to meet the challenges necessary for the development of a socially just and responsible Scotland.
- 1.12** Adult learning within the family provides modelling for children and young people. Inter-generational learning has the power to create a more cohesive society through challenging stereotypes and valuing the experience of both young and older people.

## “Adult learning is essential to enable and encourage adults in Scotland”



**1.13** Building on the assets and potential of the individual, the family, the workplace and the community is fundamental to our ambition. As communities realise their own strengths or assets they develop resilience and the capacity to contribute significantly to their own economic and social development.

**1.14** Adult learning providers including local authorities, the third sector, trade unions, colleges, employers, national organisations and others should involve learners and communities as active partners in planning and delivering adult learning. They should also support communities to influence, shape and co-produce services. The Community Learning and Development [Competence Framework](#) and [Code of Ethics](#) underpins this practice in community-based adult learning.

**1.15** In June 2012, [Strategic Guidance](#) for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development was published which stated that CLD’s specific focus should be: “improved life chances for people of all ages through learning, personal development and active citizenship; stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential and inclusive communities”.

**1.16** The requirements for [Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#) mean that in each local authority area a three-year plan has to be developed that outlines how CLD will be delivered. Local authorities have to consult with partners in drawing up these plans and evidencing the assessment of need. Where needs cannot be met, local authorities will be required to outline why they cannot be met.

**1.17** Working together to negotiate and develop effective learning is a two-way process that involves significant learning for both specialist providers and for adult learners. This mutual relationship is supported by the Scottish social practice model, where adults’ life experiences are acknowledged and built on, to create a successful learning experience.

**1.18** Those using the social practice approach recognise the different values, emotions and perspectives that are embedded in learning. They are open about the power dimensions of learning and enable learners to exercise power themselves. Creating these effective learning experiences requires skilled adult learning practitioners who are themselves lifelong learners.

## 2 Our Ambitions for Adult Learning in Scotland

Adult learning in Scotland will be recognised by all as a central element of personal and community empowerment.

### It will be informed by three core principles:

- Learning should be **lifelong**, beginning in the Early Years, supported by Curriculum for Excellence through Broad General Education and Senior Phase and covering the whole age span of post-compulsory education. It should take into account the specific difficulties that some adults have in accessing learning opportunities because of their age, abilities, cultural or social backgrounds.
- Adult learning should be **life-wide**. It should cover the personal, work, family and community aspects of living which gives the scope for building a wide and open curriculum and creates a learning continuum which is not restricted by vocational imperatives.
- Adult learning should be **learner-centred**. The educational process must build around the interests and motives of the learner and seek to fulfil the purposes and goals he or she sees as relevant and important.

### Our ambitions are that:

- **Scotland becomes recognised globally as the most creative and engaged learning society.** A society where people develop through life-wide learning from the multiple contexts of home, work and their social lives and lifelong learning – often described as from cradle to grave. A society that recognises the importance of adult learning in the development of the individual, the community and the country as a whole.
- **Every adult in Scotland will have the right to access learning to meet their educational needs and their aspirations.** Barriers to participation, learning and achievement will be removed and inclusion and equality promoted. In planning, developing and evaluating provision, adult learners will be at the centre of the process and will be empowered and supported to participate fully in decision-making about their future learning.
- **Adult learning in Scotland and the outcomes that learners achieve will be world-leading.** Adult learning in Scotland will support the development of personal, family, work and community life.





# 3 The Key Features of Future Adult Learning in Scotland

Learning opportunities will be designed with, and for, learners based on their interests and the skills they bring in the context of both local and national economic and social drivers.

## **Adults in Scotland will be empowered and supported to:**

- develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and creativity needed to make positive life choices, support economic growth, enhance health and well-being, participate in their local communities and take social action
- develop their networks and bonds through participation in collective activities, thus building social capital
- improve their communication skills – including literacy, numeracy, Gaelic language, Scots Language, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and intercultural communication
- develop their digital literacy to participate in digital civic society
- develop their ethical and critical thinking, self-determination and active civic participation
- have access to, and take advantage of, flexible learning opportunities (including online learning) within their own communities and workplaces; with priority given to those who are marginalised or require additional support to engage in learning activities.

## **Learners are supported to take advantage of these opportunities within an adult learning support framework where:**

- adult learning programmes are creative and innovative and are continually improving through research, self evaluation, inspection and review
- adult learning in communities, and in the workplace, offers pathways to Scotland's further and higher education institutions and to employment and volunteering opportunities.



## 4 Key Success Factors

- 4.1** Scotland's future will be built not simply on its economic success but on the creation of an open, creative and inclusive learning society. Adult learning has a central role in this.
- 4.2** Adult learning takes place in a variety of contexts, some formal and some informal. The learning is not linear or sequential but is determined by the current needs of an individual.
- 4.3** It is therefore important that policy development always involves adult learners and that learners' views are taken into account in their personal learning, in local planning areas and at national level.
- 4.4** National policy should ensure that there is appropriate good quality advice, guidance and support in place for learners and should address barriers to learning.
- 4.5** Empowered adults are the keystone of a civic society. As such, many different policies contribute to the development of, and opportunities for, adult learning. A list of such policies is included at **Appendix 2**.
- 4.6** Anytime, anywhere learning is at the heart of a learning society. The availability of learning facilities within easy reach of where people live and work helps to facilitate learning across the lifespan and online learning can enhance this.
- 4.7** Adult learning provision in Scotland must improve outcomes for people and communities and it must provide strong evidence of personal impact as a result of learning. For Scotland to successfully and fully embrace adult learning all learning providers, employers and funders must play a full, integrated and active role in ensuring equal opportunities throughout Scotland.
- 4.8** The people of Scotland have high expectations for themselves, their families and their communities and adult learning has a key role to play in helping to shape and produce better outcomes. If adult learning is to unlock that potential, the foundations must be built on a strong understanding of learner needs and provide genuine opportunities to consult, engage and involve learners in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the learning.
- 4.9** There should be a framework of professional development learning opportunities available for practitioners involved in delivering adult learning. Practitioners will be encouraged to improve their skills through this framework in order to provide high-quality learning experiences for adult learners.
- 4.10** Adult learning in Scotland will be a model of excellence that is recognised across the world in terms of inclusion, learner focus and its role in empowering individuals, families and communities to develop, grow and prosper both socially and economically.



# 5 Next Steps

The next stage in achieving this ambition is to put in place a strategic implementation plan that encourages innovation and leads the way for adult learners.

**5.1** Learners and national providers identified the following priorities and broad issues through the consultation process, which is outlined in **Appendix 3**.

- Establish a cross-sectoral Task Group to develop a strategic implementation plan through the National Strategic Forum for Adult Learning.
- Ensure learners are involved in the process.
- Strengthen and build on the good practice of current models of Scotland's national and local Learners' Forums.
- Agree on publicity and marketing.
- Ensure suitable guidance is available for adults.
- Enhance access to learning and progression.
- Ensure high quality training and CPD opportunities for practitioners and community planning partnerships.

- Develop flexible provision with learners allowing for depth and breadth of learning as well as progression.
- Ensure quality provision across Scotland.
- Build on the key role of local Community Planning Partnerships.
- Strengthen role of cross-sectoral partnerships in planning, evaluating and delivering learning.

**5.2** There are two stages to this process. The first is to put in place a strategic plan which will in turn inform an agreed implementation plan. The strategic plan will be produced in autumn 2014 and will inform and be informed by the planning process which underpins The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and by College Regional Outcome Agreements.

The implementation plan will outline the key actions that will be taken forward in partnership and delivered over the next five years; ensuring adult learners receive the best opportunities to improve their life chances in Scotland.



# Appendix 1 National Strategic Forum for Adult Learning

## Chair:

### **Michael Russell**

MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education  
and Lifelong Learning

## Members:

### **Alan Armstrong**

Strategic Director for Lifelong Learning,  
Education Scotland

### **Ann Southwood**

Principal, Newbattle Abbey College

### **Cath Hamilton**

Education Officer, Education Scotland

### **Craig Green**

Head of Community and Information Services,  
Glasgow Kelvin College

### **Eric Whitfield**

Chair of the Adult Learning Sub-Group,  
Community Learning and Development  
Managers Scotland

### **Jackie Halawi**

Senior Education Officer, Education Scotland

### **Jackie Howie**

Lead Officer, Learning Link Scotland

### **Jane Logue**

Adult Learning Manager, West Dunbartonshire

### **Jayne Stuart**

Director, WEA Scotland

### **John N. MacLeod**

Vice Principal/Director of Studies, Sabhal  
Mòr Ostaig, UHI

### **Maria Walker**

Director of Education, Learning and Leisure,  
Aberdeenshire Council

### **Marian Docherty**

Depute Principal, Newbattle Abbey College

### **Penny Brodie**

Executive Director, LEAD Scotland

### **Phil Denning**

HMI, Education Scotland

### **Robert Rae**

Associate, Scotland's Learning Partnership

### **Sylvia O'Grady**

Lifelong Learning Manager, STUC

### **Vernon Galloway**

Lecturer, University of Edinburgh





# Appendix 2 The Policy Context

Adult learning takes place in the context of a range of policy initiatives. The following list is not comprehensive. It identifies key policy drivers that impact on community based adult learning.

- **Empowering Scotland the Programme of Government**

This sets out the Scottish Government legislative priorities.

- Within the **National Performance Framework** the following **National Outcomes are of immediate relevance:**

*We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.*

*We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.*

- **Adult Literacies in Scotland (ALIS) 2020: strategic guidance**

Outlines more detailed plans to improve the literacies capabilities of Scotland's adults.

- **The Adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Strategy for Scotland**

Strategy that outlines importance of high quality English language learning opportunities for New Scots and, where appropriate, members of settled ethnic minority communities to improve their English language skills.

- **Curriculum for Excellence**

Curriculum for Excellence aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18.

- **National Plan for Gaelic 2012-17**

The National Plan for Gaelic is the principal policy document for Gaelic. The Plan seeks to secure the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language. Under the Plan, public authorities have a statutory duty to develop their own plans.

- **Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development**

This Guidance expects local authorities to provide clear leadership and direction, and to maximise the contribution of CLD partners in the reform of public services. This reform emphasises prevention, more effective partnerships, enhanced workforce development and improving performance through innovation and use of digital technology.

- **The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013**

These regulations place a duty on local authorities to work with voluntary sector partners, learners and communities to audit needs, strengths and opportunities, to build programmes of community learning and development which lead to the development of democratic citizenship and publish plans for provision from September 2015.

- **Community Empowerment**

The proposed Community Empowerment Bill will support communities to achieve their own goals and aspirations through taking independent action and by having their voices heard in the decisions that affect their area.



- **Offender Learning**

Learning and skills acquisition can provide offenders with the tools to improve their lives. These may offer a route out of offending and towards a more productive, positive future.

- **Family Learning**

Family Learning is a powerful tool which can challenge educational disadvantage, promote socio-economic resilience and foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning.

- **Early Years Collaborative**

The Early Years Collaborative is a coalition of Community Planning Partners – including social services, health, education, police and third sector professionals – committed to ensuring that every baby, child, mother, father and family in Scotland has access to the best support available. The objective of the Early Years Collaborative is to accelerate the conversion of the high level principles set out in GIRFEC and the Early Years Framework into practical action.

- **GIRFEC**

*Getting it right for every child and young person* sets out a consistent way for people to work with all children and young people. Getting it right for every child is threaded through all

existing policy, practice, strategy and legislation affecting children, young people and their families.

- **Early Years Framework**

The Early Years Framework aims to give all children the best start in life breaking negative cycles of inequality through early and effective intervention.

- **Financial Capability**

Financial capability, poverty and employability are interlinked. Financial capability is a skill which contributes to personal resilience and health, reducing days lost to stress and depression and improving people's chances of moving out of poverty.

- **The keys to life – Improving Quality of Life for people with Learning Disabilities**

The new learning disability strategy in Scotland, following on from, and building on the principles and successes of, *The same as you?* the original review of services for people with a learning disability.

- **Equally Well – Scotland's Framework on Health Inequalities**

Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities.

## Appendix 2 – continued

- **Working for Growth**

Refresh of the Employability Framework for Scotland.

- **Achieving Our Potential**

A framework to tackle poverty and income inequality in Scotland.

- **Post-16 reform**

Aims to create better life chances for young people and support ambitions for sustainable economic development by preparing learners for work and giving them the tools they need to be productive and stay in employment.

- **More Choices, More Chances**

Strategy to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Scotland.

- **Opportunities for All**

Opportunities for All brings together a range of existing national and local policies and strategies and provides a single focus to improve participation in post-16 learning or training, and ultimately employment.

- **Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth**

Sets out a flexible, responsive, partnership approach to meeting Scotland's skills needs for economic growth.

- **All Our Futures**

Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population.

- **Learning for Sustainability**

The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

- **Cultural Policy**

Scottish Government wants to see a culturally cosmopolitan Scotland, capable of attracting and retaining gifted people, where our creative community is supported and their contribution to the economy is maximised.





- **Europe 2020**

Strategy about delivering growth that is: smart, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation; sustainable, thanks to a decisive move towards a low carbon economy; and inclusive, with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction.

- **UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning**

Lifelong learning principles, if systematically implemented, will be able to contribute to more just and equitable societies.

- **European Association for the Education of Adults**

Voice for non-formal adult education in Europe.

- **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**

Charter to protect and promote regional or minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe's cultural heritage.

- **EU High-level Report on Literacy**

Sets out ambition to improve literacy levels across Europe.

# Appendix 3 Developing the Statement of Ambition

- In March 2013 Newbattle Abbey College hosted a national adult learning conference, planned by the college in partnership with Education Scotland, WEA, Scotland's Learning Partnership and Learning Link.
- The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning gave the keynote address at the event.
- The cross-sectoral conference
  - o detailed priorities for the development of adult learning in Scotland
  - o shared innovative practice across Scotland
  - o led to the establishment of a National Strategic Adult Learning Forum chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning.
- A draft Statement of Ambition for Adult Learning was produced by the Forum and feedback was gathered through Forum membership and online consultation.
- The Cabinet Secretary met with learners on 11th March and 29th April 2014 to hear their views on the draft Statement of Ambition.
- A follow up National Adult Learning Conference was held again in Newbattle Abbey College in April 2014 to discuss responses to the Statement of Ambition and prioritise main actions for moving forward.
- Statement of Ambition launched on 21st May 2014.



