

## About NCFE

NCFE is a national Awarding Organisation which designs, develops and certifies diverse, nationally recognised qualifications and awards. These qualifications contribute to the success of millions of learners at all levels, bringing them closer to fulfilling their personal goals. Last year alone, over 340,000 learners from over 2,000 colleges, schools and training organisations chose NCFE as the Awarding Organisation to help them move their careers forward.

More information is available at [www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk).

## Executive Summary

We welcome the APPG inquiry into the futures of adult education in England; this is timely in view of the significant cuts that the government has made to its spending on Further Education over the past 5 years.

We highlight that recent expansion in Advanced Learner Loans policy, and plans around maintenance loans for learners undertaking Technical and Professional Education are positive steps in encouraging more adult learners to undertake courses to increase their skills or earning potential.

We also highlight the economic returns on state investment in adult education, with vocational qualifications delivered in the workplace offering a return of around £35 - £40 per £1 of funding invested.

**Andrew Gladstone-Heighton**  
**Policy Leader**  
**May 2016**

## Response

### **All Party Parliamentary Group for Adult Education** **[Closing the Learning Gap – Opening Up Opportunities for Adults](#)**

#### **1) What is working well and/or not working well with regards to adult education in England?**

The protection of the Adult Education Budget has ensured that adult education will continue in England, especially as this budget line has been cut by around 40% in the last 5 years<sup>1</sup>. We ask that the government does not subject the Adult Education Budget is not subject to further cuts, this will risk the remaining adult education that currently takes place in England.

We also welcome the expansion of Advanced Learner Loans to support learners at higher levels. Budget for the Department of Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) would ensure these Loans have an even greater take-up.

We also welcome current BIS thinking around providing maintenance Loans to support those learners on Technical and Professional Education courses with living and transportation costs. We believe that these should be expanded to include support for Apprenticeship learners.

We would state that continued reviews of qualification eligible for funding for Adult learners leads to a lack of stability in the provision available, and therefore restricts learner choice.

#### **2) What policies and/or practices best motivate disadvantaged adults to engage in adult learning? Practice may relate to activity in the classroom or beyond the classroom**

**No response given.**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/26/adult-education-funding-cuts>

- 3) Do we have an approach to adult education which is sufficiently demand-led? If not, what more needs to be done? Who or what, in your view, determines demand?

No response given.

- 4) What evidence is there on the impact, added-value and/or cost-effectiveness of adult education?

Evidence to support the cost effectiveness and value added of Adult Further Education taken from BIS research paper number 38 – Measuring the Economic Impact of Further Education (March 2011)<sup>2</sup>. It sets out the Net Present Value (NPV) of qualifications achieved:

*'The NPV is calculated by estimating the discounted benefits from achieving a qualification over the working life of the learner, and subtracting the costs associated with undertaking the qualification'*

In doing this, it is found that:

*'The NPV of qualifications started in 2008/09 is estimated to be **£75bn over the years in which successful learners remain in the workforce.***

*Apprenticeships deliver the highest NPV per qualification started; but in terms of the return on government investment - the NPV of each qualification divided by its funding costs – **vocational qualifications delivered in the workplace offer a similar return to Apprenticeships at around £35 - £40 per pound of funding'**.*

- 5) Name three major policy developments necessary to secure the future of adult learning in 2016 and over the next 5 - 10 years?

- 1) The aforementioned Maintenance Loans for learners undertaking Technical and Professional Education will be a positive step in supporting adult learners in furthering their skills levels and earning potential.

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<sup>2</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/32329/11-816-measuring-economic-impact-further-education.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32329/11-816-measuring-economic-impact-further-education.pdf)

- 2) A safeguarding of the Adult Education Budget as part of ongoing settlements between the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and HM Treasury will also help ensure that providers will continue to offer provision for adult learners.
- 3) Policy stability around qualification reform: allowing the qualifications offer for adults to develop without continued government reform of the purpose or approval criteria for Technical and Professional Education.