

Evidence to inform the Welsh Government's draft budget proposals for 2012-13

1. Lifelong learning promotes health and well-being

- Research¹ shows that for every 100,000 women enrolled in adult learning in the UK an estimated 116-134 cancers per year could be prevented because of greater take-up of cervical smear tests.
- Taking one or two non-accredited courses as adults is estimated to increase the chances of giving up smoking by age 42 by 14 per cent.
- Taking women without qualifications to Level 2 (equivalent to GCSEs of grades A-C) would reduce the risks of depression at age 42 by 15 per cent, worth an estimated saving of up to £200 million a year in the UK.
- Adult learning appears to slow the development of two brain lesions that are the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease.
- 14 per cent of adults who took one or two leisure courses increased their sports/leisure membership between the ages of 33 and 42 compared to the predicted 9 per cent of adults with similar characteristics who took no courses of any type.
- Participation in adult learning is related to taking more exercise. It is predicted that taking three to ten courses increases the level of exercise between the ages of 33 and 42 by 18 per cent.
- Men with no qualifications who gain a level 1 qualification are up to 50 per cent less likely to become obese².

2. Lifelong learning contributes to a resilient and productive economy

- Research³ shows that individuals who are not in the labour market, and who undertake lifelong learning leading to qualifications are more likely to be employed at a later date.
- Male workers who undertook work-related training in mid career (age 33-42) experienced four to five per cent higher wage growth over the period 1991-2000, as compared to similar workers who did not undertake any training.
- Those who were out of the labour market at the beginning of the period (1991) were more likely to be in work in 2000 if they had acquired a formal qualification in the interim.
- Businesses that do not invest in talent are two and a half times more likely to fail.

¹ Feinstein, L et al (2008) *The social and personal benefits of learning: A summary of key research findings*, Institute of Education: London.

² Feinstein, L. (2002) *Quantitative Estimates of the social benefits of learning 2: Health (Depression and Obesity)*. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning.

³ Feinstein, L et al (2004) *The Labour Market Impact of Adult Education and Training: A Cohort Analysis*, Centre for the Economics of Education: London.

- For both men and women, work-related adult learning is associated with positive willingness to work. Those in the workforce who receive training are less likely to leave.

3. Lifelong learning helps Wales manage a changing demographic profile

- A quarter of the Welsh population will be 65 or over by 2030, compared to 22 per cent for the UK average.
- Research by the Institute of Employment Studies⁴ shows that investment in learning for older people can reduce the costs of medical and social care, and improve the quality of life for older people, their families and communities.
- For people aged between 50 and 71, being disabled or in poor health is a barrier to participation in learning. However, higher proportions of learners with disabilities or health problems reported various positive benefits of learning, compared to those in good health
- The same study showed that 80 per cent of older learners reported a positive impact of learning on at least one of the following areas: their enjoyment of life; their self-confidence; how they felt about themselves; satisfaction with other areas of life; and their ability to cope.
- Furthermore it showed that 42 per cent of older learners reported an improvement in their ability to stand up and be heard and/or their willingness to take responsibility.
- 28 per cent reported an increased involvement in social, community and/or voluntary activities as a result of learning.
- Across the UK we spend on average just £60 per person per year on education for those aged 75 and above, yet the average cost of providing residential care for older people is around £465 per week. It is conservatively estimated that modest investment in learning opportunities for older people could save between £18.2m and £36.3m per annum across the UK, by delaying the need for residential care⁵.

4. Lifelong learning promotes social mobility, social justice and equity

- Research findings⁶ consistently identify a return from later-life investment in education through improvements in occupationally-based social status.
- A review of the available facts suggests that, for those who attempt to gain entry to the labour market from a situation of inactivity or unemployment, there is evidence of a monetary return attached to various levels and types of training and education.

⁴ Dench S and J Regan (2000) *Learning in Later Life: Motivation and Impact*, Research Report RR183, Department for Education and Employment.

⁵ Schuller T and Watson D (2009), *Learning Through Life*, NIACE

⁶ Blanden J et al (2009) *The Effect of Lifelong Learning on Intra-generational Social Mobility: Evidence from Longitudinal Data in the United Kingdom*, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills: London.

5. Lifelong learning promotes strong and healthy families

Because considerable inequality is already apparent when children reach school-age, families are one of the most powerful factors in determining children's life chances.

- Research⁷ found that parental involvement in school was more than four times as important in influencing performance of young people aged 16 than socio-economic class. Family learning is the most effective tool to involve the parents of disadvantaged children.
- After completing family learning courses, learners reported having gained new skills, greater levels of confidence and understanding, improved communications and changed relationships with their families and communities.
- In terms of vocabulary performance at the age of three, children of the least educated parents are up to one year behind their more advantaged peers⁸.

6. Lifelong learning develops active citizenship and empowered, cohesive communities

- Studies⁹ find that taking three to 10 leisure courses raises racial tolerance by almost 75 per cent.
- Whilst adult education does not appear to change the attitudes of those with extreme racist-authoritarian views, it does seem to prevent individuals from adopting such extremist attitudes.
- Taking part in adult education is associated with a greater likelihood of voting.
- Men with the poorest literacy and numeracy skills tend to lead a solitary life.
- Participation in each four types of adult learning (academically accredited, vocationally accredited, work-related and leisure) contributes separately to positive changes in social and political attitudes. Participation in three of the four course types (the exception being vocationally accredited courses) contributes to increases in civic and political participation.
- The effects on civic participation of taking leisure courses are particularly marked for those with qualifications below Level 2 at age 33.

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⁷ Nunn, A et al (2007) *Factors influencing social mobility*, Research Report No 450, Department for Work and Pensions: London.

⁸ Feinstein, L et al (2008) *The social and personal benefits of learning: A summary of key research findings*, Institute of Education: London.

⁹ Feinstein, L et al (2008) *The social and personal benefits of learning: A summary of key research findings*, Institute of Education: London.