



**Creating Learning Cultures:**  
*Next Steps in Achieving the Learning Age*

Second report of The National Advisory Group for  
Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning

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## **Creating Learning Cultures: Next Steps in Achieving the Learning Age**

*"Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability."* Francis Bacon, *Essays*, 1997 edition.

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This is the second report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning.<sup>1</sup> It comprises advice to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, who requested that the Group consider the following issues:
- the contribution of lifelong learning to community development and capacity building, including the role of the Adult and Community Learning Fund;
  - the identification and promotion of means by which we can open up access to learning for those adults currently least engaged with the education system;
  - measures to stimulate and broaden demand for learning from mature adults, particularly from under-represented groups; and
  - identifying and disseminating practical examples of effective partnerships for the effective planning and delivery of lifelong learning locally.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.2 The advice supplements the Group's initial response to *The Learning Age*,<sup>3</sup> the government's green paper on lifelong learning in England, which we forwarded to the Secretary of State in May 1998. That green paper elicited some three thousand submissions from individuals and organisations and our second report aims to complement the Government's own response to that consultation.
- 1.3 We tackled the four issues raised by the Secretary of State in small working groups drawn from the Group's membership. This resulted in the production of a number of working papers, which we have drawn upon in constructing our report. We are making copies of the working papers available, even though they do not themselves directly constitute our advice.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.4 Our report takes the following form. After this introduction, Section Two begins with a brief review of progress with the government's lifelong learning agenda since the publication of *The Learning Age*. We suggest ways in which initiatives and achievements to date can be signalled more clearly and consolidated. This is followed, in Section Three, by a brief consideration of the main dimensions of contemporary social and cultural change, indicating how the development of cultures of learning need to relate to such changes. Section Four centres on the demand for lifelong learning and how it might best be both increased and widened, a continuing and central challenge for the whole of the government's strategy. The next part of our report, Section Five, looks at some of the implications of the current operation of the benefits system for the development of lifelong learning. Section Six is concerned with family learning and Section Seven deals with citizenship and capacity building. In Section Eight, we explore the ways in which effective partnerships can support the expansion of lifelong learning and in Section Nine we make some suggestions for further work.
- 1.5 Overall, we make eight key recommendations (KRs) and twenty-three supplementary recommendations (SRs) in support of our main arguments. For ease of reference, key recommendations are in bold and supplementary recommendations are in italics.

<sup>1</sup> The Group's first report, *Learning for the Twenty-first Century*, was published by the DfEE in November 1997. See Appendix A for the terms of reference and membership of the Group.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B for the full text of the Secretary of State's request to the Group.

<sup>3</sup> Cm 3790, February 1998.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix C for a list of the working papers and how to obtain copies of them.

## **2 Progress and Accountability**

- 2.1 Much has already been achieved, or at least started, since the publication of *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* and *The Learning Age*. A list of some of the main initiatives is set out in the box opposite. By any measure, this is an excellent start and serves as a context to our report and advise.
- 2.2 We believe that this undoubted progress should be more clearly signalled and enhanced in the following ways:
- More people should be made aware of the full picture of what has already been achieved or what developments are in train. This would enable them to link their own contributions to those of others, building on achievements so far, and learning lessons from initiatives and good practice elsewhere. Where the intention is to create a powerful and self-sustaining momentum of commitment to lifelong learning, timely and clear information can constitute an influential stimulus.
  - The coherence of the approach and linkages between different initiatives should be clarified and demonstrated in practice. Without this, fragmentation can lead to inefficiency, ineffectiveness and unnecessary duplication, if not contradiction. This applies with particular force to a field as diverse as lifelong learning, where responsibility and scope for action is potentially so widely dispersed.
  - Persons holding positions of authority and responsibility in a wide range of organisations and walks of life should be targeted with clear and up-to-date information. The aim should be to secure informed and committed engagement with the lifelong learning challenge at senior and influential levels and an increasingly widely-shared responsibility for its realisation, as advocated in *The Learning Age*.
- 2.3 Greater understanding and more widespread involvement in lifelong learning will enable open discussion and assessment of the scale of success in meeting the challenge within a clear and well-understood framework of objectives, targets and timescales.
- 2.4 The field of lifelong learning is necessarily very broad. This is both its attraction and, simultaneously, a potential source of weakness. Lifelong learning ranges from the most highly formal and structured educational activities to the most informal and tentative explorations of understanding. Lifelong learning also quite properly encompasses many different levels, purposes, contents, outcomes and motives for learning. This provides scope for a great variety of learning styles and approaches and celebrates diversity. But precisely because of this, there is always an accompanying danger that the field will become so all-inclusive that it inhibits sharpness of focus. Strategy to promote lifelong learning may easily become so multi-stranded that it prevents the development of a clear sense of priority.

## **KEY INITIATIVES IN LIFELONG LEARNING**

- Establishment of Ufi Ltd, publication of the University for Industry 3-year Corporate Plan and appointment of the Ufi Board, chaired by Lord Dearing;
- FEFC/HEFCE mechanisms to fund and record institutions' development of wider participation in further and higher education;
- The various New Deal programmes offering help to get different groups of unemployed people back to work;
- Establishment of Learning Direct, the national lifelong learning helpline for initial advice and information - over 520,000 callers have been helped to the end of April 1999;
- Successful launch of the Union Learning Fund and the Adult & Community Learning Fund. In total, over 250 projects underway or under negotiation so far;
- The National Skills Task Force has been established and its first report, *Towards a National Skills Agenda*, sets out its primary findings on skill shortages, gaps and recruitment difficulties;
- Publication of *Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start*, the report of Sir Claus Moser's working group on adult basic skills. The Government and its partners are now developing a national strategy for adult basic skills;
- The £450m Sure Start programme to provide integrated support for young children (aged 0-4) and their families, covering health services, family support and early education;
- The £470m National Childcare Strategy, to ensure a range of childcare for children in every neighbourhood in England;
- The review of financial support for students in FE;
- The announcement of the waiving of fees for part-time learners on benefit;
- The announcement that some loan facilities will be opened up to part-time students on low income in HE;
- Publication of the final report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship, *Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools*, which includes recommendations covering post-16 educational provision;
- The Government's review of post-16 education and training, including workforce development and lifelong learning;
- The announcement of new National Targets for Education and Training;
- The review of the Investors in People Standard, which aims to make it more accessible, in particular to small organisations;
- The launch of *Bringing Britain Together*, the Social Exclusion Unit's national strategy for neighbourhood renewal, which established 18 special policy action teams to tackle local issues, including jobs, skills, community self-help and 'schools plus';
- Proposals for the New Opportunities Fund to help provide a step-change in community access to lifelong learning, linking up to the National Grid for Learning and providing support for local learning centres, under the auspices of the Ufi;
- £9m for Local Authority Lifelong Learning Plans to build LEA capacity to develop adult community education over the next three years;
- The establishment of local strategic Lifelong Learning Partnerships under a Remit developed by DfEE, LGA, FEFC, TEC National Council and CSNA;
- Individual learning accounts: Some accounts are now available, with a UK-wide system from April 2000. Announcement of a package of incentives for individuals and employers;
- The Government's consultation on adult information, advice and guidance. Some £50m announced for development of local services between 1999-2002;
- Development of the Investing in Young People strategy, including Modern Apprenticeships, National Traineeships, the new Time for Study or Training legislation, New Start, enhanced careers guidance and pilot Education Maintenance Allowances.

- 2.5 In the early stages of shaping new policy, breadth of vision and an inclusive perspective can be both essential and refreshing. They help to re-define and re-orient the very field itself. That was a chief purpose and main consequence of the publication of *The Learning Age*, the first phase of a markedly new approach to lifelong learning in this country. But, if the first stage called for imagination and creativity to redefine the agenda and signal a decisive shift in values, the second demands practicality, progress and real achievement.
- 2.6 This second phase will be longer and more uneven. Hence, a clear indication of priorities and progress is essential. This will increasingly require the development of a clear framework of well-understood targets, timetables, costings, monitoring arrangements and means of evaluation at various levels. Action plans and associated performance indicators, drawn up with appropriate partners, should be published at both national and other appropriate levels, especially locally, and in key sectors of the economy, and according to the issue in hand. This would give clarity and transparency to practical proposals and achievements on the one hand and provide a rallying point for energy and mobilisation on the other.
- KR1 The Secretary of State and other Ministers should use high profile opportunities to give an overview and assessment of the development of key national lifelong learning initiatives and achievements in this country. This should be accompanied by publication of these in a clear and accessible form. Such activity should also cover the lifelong learning implications of all major government policy initiatives, not just those specifically concerned with education and training;**

### **3 Changing Cultures and Cultural Change**

#### ***Risk Society***

3.1 The United Kingdom is currently going through a period of profound, widespread social change. This has been aptly defined as the emergence of 'risk society'.<sup>5</sup> Its defining characteristics powerfully set the context of both constraint and opportunity within which the development of lifelong learning must occur. They are:

- accelerating change in many dimensions of life, from work to the family, driven in part by powerful and often remote global forces;
- increasing diversity and fragmentation of experiences and institutions and a greater willingness to tolerate, even celebrate, such features of the modern world;
- changing identities, loyalties and aspirations;
- much greater emphasis upon consumption and its pleasures, including too some democratisation of inventiveness and creativity;
- more focus upon choice, lifestyle and individuality;
- the increasing variety and pluralism of popular culture;
- the pervasive and growing role of information and knowledge in many arenas of economic, social, political and working life;
- the growing importance of communications and information technology to many aspects of our lives;
- the development of new dimensions of political participation, in the realms of constitutional reform and active citizenship;
- the emergence of new agendas in politics, concerned with issues as diverse as race and gender equality, disability rights, the environment, food and transport;
- a widening of key social divisions, experienced in fields of income, employment, housing, health and education, including access to information;
- evidence of the growth of social exclusion, despair and even a sense of hopelessness, resulting from the impact of multiple deprivations.

3.2 Systematic lifelong learning can significantly help develop people's skills, orientations and confidence to navigate the many risks, uncertainties and ambiguities of contemporary life. It can constitute a key resource in enabling people to participate in the shaping society and to take advantage of social change, rather than being its possible victims. Unfortunately, many of those who could most benefit from lifelong learning in dealing with social change are currently excluded from or unaware of its pleasures and achievements, often lacking the self-confidence or opportunity to get involved.

3.3 A main task for policy-makers and providers of lifelong learning is to find ways to reach out to such people, enhancing their abilities to challenge the divisive and excluding tendencies of the contemporary world. At the same time, policy makers and providers need to devise strategies and policies which go with the grain of its positive and popular features so that people can make imaginative use of them. This includes learning from and working closely with those organisations and individuals who already know how to achieve success - through imaginative outreach, the engaging use of new information and communication technologies, and through creativity in the fields of popular culture, music, sport, communications and entertainment.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ulrich Beck, 1992, *Risk Society: towards a new modernity* and Anthony Giddens, 1997, 'Risk Society: the context of British politics', in J.Franklin (ed.), 1997, *The Politics of Risk Society*.

### *Cultural Change*

- 3.4 At the heart of our advice and underpinning all of our recommendations is a conviction that successful implementation of the government's strategy for lifelong learning will depend upon promoting widespread and systematic changes of culture in our society, creating opportunities for lifelong learning for all as we argued in our first report.<sup>6</sup> This is essential if the demand for learning throughout life is to be greatly increased, participation in learning is to be substantially widened and forms of provision are to be systematically diversified. We believe that this process of change will be greatly aided by the design and implementation of an imaginative, major national campaign to promote lifelong learning, in all of its aspects. This is fully in line with the thrust of *The Learning Age*, and builds on the advice we offered in our first report.
- 3.5 The idea of 'culture' is notoriously slippery and difficult to pin down.<sup>7</sup> Our own use of the concept concerns that bundle of signs, symbols, beliefs, traditions, myths, ways of thinking, speaking and doing which characterise the ways of life or behaviour of a given group of people. Cultures typically manifest themselves in the established routines and practices of people and what is taken for granted as 'normal' behaviour amongst them. Although cultures are rarely wholly fixed and unchanging, never the less it is characteristic of them, even as they evolve, to be deeply rooted in custom and constantly reinforced by habit and convention. Cultures are usually especially resistant to attempts to change them from outside or to impose unwanted modifications upon them.
- 3.6 In our country today, far too many people are still locked in a culture which regards lifelong learning as either unnecessary, unappealing, uninteresting or unavailable. Once schooling or immediate post-school education is over, they want nothing more of learning than it should largely leave them alone. They may not have enjoyed school at all, and had their-self esteem damaged by the experience. They may have felt, or been made to feel, that learning was not for them. Or they may simply think that learning is something that you get over and done with in the earlier stages of life, even if that includes post-school learning in further or higher education, before settling down to more 'adult' concerns and preoccupations.
- 3.7 It follows that proposals to change this culture will require action on many fronts, over an extended period, winning people to new ways of working, new priorities and a new sense of what is seen as normal and largely unremarkable. We want to see lifelong learning becoming part of everyday life, in all sorts of contexts, in a variety of circumstances and for everybody at all stages in their lives. Where learning is concerned, this means shifting from those situations where it is mostly a minority or special kind of activity to ones in which, increasingly and happily, everyone integrates elements of learning into their lives. It means recognising and cherishing those processes devoted to the generation and renewal of all forms of 'intellectual capital', and devising appropriate mechanisms to measure and evaluate it.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This section draws on working paper *Lifelong Learning: changing the culture and keeping up with cultural change*, NAGCELL working group convened by Leisha Fullick.

<sup>7</sup> "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language", Raymond Williams, 1976, *Keywords* p.76.

<sup>8</sup> Leading edge practitioners and theorists of contemporary management and accounting have increasingly emphasised the growing significance of intellectual capital, not only for business success but also in assessing the true market value of corporations. For an excellent example, see the account of the insurance company Skandia's approach in Leif Edvinsson & Michael S. Malone, *Intellectual Capital: the proven way to establish your company's real value*.

- 3.8 At first sight, aiming at cultural change may appear to be far removed from the practicality and focus on implementation now necessary to achieve *The Learning Age*. But, on the contrary, focusing on cultural change carries the most profoundly practical implications, as those organisations which have successfully pioneered such developments can readily testify. It can only be achieved, step by step, through changes in our current practices and approach. Without such changes in culture, we believe that many well-intentioned, and often well-resourced, initiatives risk failure and likely disappointment.

### ***A campaign to create Learning Cultures***

- 3.9 It is also important to recognise that, just as cultural change will need to proceed on many different fronts, so too a variety of different learning cultures will need to be created. There is no 'one best way' or universally applicable type of learning culture, irrespective of people's circumstances or the organisational or institutional settings they find themselves in. Learning cultures will work effectively when they properly reflect the circumstances and needs of the people involved and their various organisations and institutions, and suit their own practical priorities and desires.
- 3.10 The public interest manifested in *The Learning Age* and the wide acclaim for its vision have been most encouraging. As part of government's response to the numerous submissions made in relation to the green paper, we believe that mounting a major campaign to promote lifelong learning in this country is now essential and would be most timely. The aim should be systematically to move lifelong learning up the national agenda, in terms of general awareness, understanding and action. To this end, we believe that government should strengthen this process by producing its own brief and widely accessible guide to what it is meant by the notion of 'creating learning cultures' and promote it, across a wide range of government departments and at all levels of national life.
- 3.11 Examples of good practice in the development of learning cultures should be drawn from a wide range of business, community, educational and family settings, showing how learning cultures have contributed to practical success in a whole variety of endeavours. Broad and popular support for the development of effective learning cultures should systematically be built up, through a sustained and multi-faceted campaign. We have in mind a determined and, imaginative initiative to parallel those mounted in respect of educational standards and schools improvement or healthy living, including a possible eventual government 'summit' of principal stakeholders.
- 3.12 The choice of language and the effective communication of engaging ideas are both crucial. For many people, the very phrase 'lifelong learning' itself is still puzzling or, at best, rather vague. As yet, the expression has not fired the imagination of the population at large, especially those not yet engaged in learning beyond school - at work, in the community, in their homes and families and in their leisure and recreational lives. To some people, the notion of 'lifelong' learning sounds more like a penal sentence or endurance test than an invitation to pleasure, achievement and progress. In our working papers, we offer one contribution to developing a suitable and more inspiring definition of lifelong learning.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Finished work could build on the definition advanced by Jacques Delors, on behalf of UNESCO, which is based upon four 'pillars': learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. Jacques Delors *et al.*, 1996, *Learning: the Treasure Within*, Report to UNESCO of the international commission on education for the twenty-first century.

***Building the Campaign***

- 3.13 A campaign of the kind we imagine cannot and should not be all ‘top down’, reliant largely on efforts from the government or national media. Not only would that be extremely expensive, it might also fail to connect precisely with those individuals and groups who should be the primary targets in a project aimed chiefly at widening and deepening participation in lifelong learning. There remains much scope for crafting a positive role for lifelong learning in many areas of policy in this country. So far, this is still all rather underdeveloped, sometimes even in the field of education itself. Similar arguments can be advanced in the so far unrealised development of genuinely learning organisations at work, in the voluntary sector and in the community where increased coherence of approach would deliver enormous advantages.
- 3.14 We believe that government’s principal responsibility lies in giving strategic leadership, orchestrating the campaign, setting a clear framework of objectives and priorities, securing support from other potential major and influential players (including the media and industry) and mobilising widespread energy behind the campaign at several levels, especially locally. Cultural change needs leadership: from Government, at national level; from heads of educational institutions; from employers and trade unions, in companies; and from local strategic partnerships community activists and volunteers.
- 3.15 In all of this, clear and positive roles should be defined for national representative and campaigning bodies, such as the Campaign for Learning and NIACE, which have already led the way in widening the appeal and understanding of lifelong learning to many individuals and groups from under-represented sections of society. Roles and responsibilities in the broad-based campaign should also be found for National Training Organisations, the bodies such as Basic Skills Agency, TEC National Council, NACETT, Confederation of British Industry, Trades Union Congress, British Chamber of Commerce, Workers Education Association, Association of Colleges, Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, Local Government Association and all major national voluntary organisations and other charitable bodies. At local level the key responsibility should be given to the new strategic Lifelong Learning Partnerships. In other words, what we recommend is closer to something like the beginning of a ‘movement’, rather than a purely conventional marketing or publicity campaign.

***Coherence***

- 3.16 There is already a large number of policy initiatives and arenas of intervention which either include a specific lifelong learning dimension or in which there is much scope to fashion a contribution from lifelong learning. Recognising this potential and drawing the various strands together to ensure effectiveness, focus and coherence constitutes a major task. This is especially important at government level, both nationally and locally. Recent good examples of this are designing a role for lifelong learning in the promotion of health and clarifying the contribution of learning to the work of the policy action teams set up as part of the New Deal for Communities, following the Social Exclusion Unit’s study of poor neighbourhoods.<sup>10</sup> Securing coherence will be a key task for local strategic partnerships and it also lies at the very heart of the government’s vision of a ‘knowledge driven economy’.
- 3.17 As the influential OECD report on lifelong learning makes clear, the development of a coherent strategy requires that three key ‘framework conditions’ be met:

<sup>10</sup> *Bringing Britain Together*, Social Exclusion Unit, 1998.

- Lifelong learning cannot be imposed but, rather, must depend and thrive on a great variety of initiatives taken by many actors in many different spheres.
- Government's role is not to invent, manage and pay for the whole of a comprehensive 'system' of lifelong learning, but to monitor and steer developments and redistribute resources so that opportunities are equitable, systematic, flexible and efficient.
- The very diverse, pluralistic and lifetime duration of lifelong learning requires co-ordination among many policy sectors, involving both macroeconomic and structural policies.<sup>11</sup>

### **Securing Change**

3.18 Although the process of creating a rich diversity of cultures of learning throughout our society has already begun, and there are encouraging signs in some quarters<sup>12</sup>, in many respects there is so far only piecemeal and uneven progress. While this is understandable at the beginning of such a shift in cultures, it is not yet evident that there is full acceptance even at the heart of government of the value of including lifelong learning across a range of initiatives. Emphasis now needs to be given to each of the following potentially major influences upon the development of learning cultures, in every dimension of contemporary life. They should underpin policy making across the board and drive its implementation:

- A better understanding of the multiple and influential processes and features of social change which are already afoot in our society;
- Demonstrable and practical commitment to joined-up and coherent thinking and initiatives;
- More publicity for what is meant by the notion of 'learning cultures', as a focus for a major campaign;
- The need for changes in culture to be adopted equally by individuals, providers of learning, organisations and public authorities, including government itself;
- An understanding that lifelong learning needs to be characterised by genuinely shared ownership and development, it cannot be imposed.

3.19 The kind of fundamental shift in attitudes and behaviour we are seeking to achieve will require cultural changes at many levels, and this should be reflected in the design and focus of the campaign we advocate. First, the motivation and commitment of individuals to learn will need to be increased. Their involvement in lifelong learning should both come to reflect their interests and priorities and engage them in shaping and supporting their own learning throughout their lives.

3.20 This radical shift in orientations and values will take time. For the young, it should begin in school, or even earlier.<sup>13</sup> The school curriculum itself, and its methods of delivery, should be so designed as to stimulate a love of learning, develop children's skills of learning to learn and be aimed at securing a commitment to learning throughout life from everyone. For adults, as we argue later, the pleasures and uses of learning should be widely stimulated and imaginatively reinforced in their everyday lives and in the many environments in which they move - at home, in work, in their leisure pursuits and in the community.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Lifelong Learning for All*, OECD, 1996, p.96.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the green paper on health, *Our Healthier Nation*, Cm 3852, February 1998.

<sup>13</sup> "School should impart the desire for, and pleasure in, learning, the ability to learn how to learn, and intellectual curiosity. One might even imagine a society in which each individual would be in turn both teacher and learner." Jacques Delors, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> The TEC National Council suggests that the question is not so much "how to create positive attitudes to learning?" as "why aren't the attitudes of individuals and employers more evident in behaviour and hope we can change this?". TEC National Council, *A Lifetime of Learning, a Lifetime of Work: Developing a Learning Society*, May 1997.

- 3.21 All of those institutions which provide learning - schools, colleges, universities and private bodies - will need to review and change their cultures and current ways of working. Structures, procedures, language, curricula, learning environments, teaching methods and systems of support for learners will all need modifying. These cultural shifts should be accomplished through critical self-assessment and driven by funding mechanisms and inspection. Changes in culture should be reflected in institutions' declared objectives and targets and be subject to monitoring, review and report.
- 3.22 Employers need to understand the signal importance of investing in their employees' learning as a major component of staff's commitment to work. Learning cultures at work can underpin adaptability, creativity, flexibility and responsiveness. They can contribute to competitiveness, profitability and business success generally. Mutual commitment to workplace learning should increasingly figure as an element in the compact between employer and employee which breathes life into the legal formality of employment contracts.<sup>15</sup> Trade unions should increasingly both bargain for members' learning at and through work and provide it themselves, as part of the package of membership services and benefits they offer.
- 3.23 There should be further exploration of the range of possible incentives and rewards open to those companies which support learning at, for or through work, including fiscal changes, grant support and the creation of new awards. In advocating or designing learning opportunities and programmes for the business community, careful attention should always be given to the range of needs and diverse rhythms of different sectors and companies, with their varying sizes, market conditions and staff composition. Provision should be driven not by the needs and requirements of providers alone, but through genuine partnership with businesses and their staff and in response to their needs and priorities.
- 3.24 Public bodies of all kinds - local government, health authorities, funding councils, TECs and the new regional bodies - should all examine how best to stimulate and support lifelong learning by redirecting and re-balancing their resources and influence. They should promote lifelong learning within their organisations and stimulate it amongst those other bodies for which they have some responsibility or with which they are linked. They should share their plans and operations with key partners, give publicity to their lifelong learning initiatives and make their activities transparent and subject to public scrutiny. Government, and Ministers themselves, should lead by example. They should set out the broad strategy, requiring those other bodies over which they exercise some influence to demonstrate how they are striving to change their cultures.

### ***Ownership and Inclusion***

- 3.25 If policy is to contribute to effective cultural change and promote regeneration and social inclusion, in whatever sphere, then ownership of each of these developments needs to be shared, especially by those people and communities intended to be the primary beneficiaries of such initiatives. Exactly the same point can be made about learning, especially amongst adults. They need to be won to the habits and normality of lifelong learning through seeing its connection to their own lives and priorities, taking ownership of their own learning and its development through life.

<sup>15</sup> See the TEC National Council advocacy of developing employers as 'learners organisations' as a key aspect of cultural and attitudinal change at work. *Ibid.*, p.28.

- 3.26 Those people most closely involved with community initiatives will not always recognise the need for systematic learning. Nor, even if they do, will they necessarily be best placed to access or deliver learning of the quality required, at least not on their own. They need effective links with high quality professional provision. In turn, professionals should not seek to impose their own conceptions of learning needs on communities. Successful learning should relate closely to people's own developing sense of their needs, chime well with the rhythms and exigencies of their own circumstances, and be evidently fit for purpose and of a guaranteed high standard.
- 3.27 This stimulation of shared ownership and responsibility is especially important if regeneration, social inclusion and lifelong learning are to become self-sustaining and locally embedded. This central aim should increasingly inform the design of funding policies and regimes. All too often, funding initiatives have been short-lived, with too little support and time being given over to securing the continuing benefits of such interventions. Embedding change successfully and securing sustainability should also shape organisational arrangements for the delivery of learning, the setting of local targets, the mechanisms for evaluation of provision and the assessment of progress against agreed standards and outcomes.

**KR2 Government should instigate a major, multi-faceted campaign to promote lifelong learning and the development of learning cultures. It should be jointly led with the government's key partners, be based on published examples of the successful creation of learning cultures, and be designed to:**

- mobilise practical support for the campaign and its objectives from a range of agencies, especially locally, including the media;
- link closely with government's strategies to promote social inclusion;
- engage many more adults in the range of opportunities available to improve their educational achievements and levels of skill;
- link lifelong learning systematically to its crusade to raise standards in schools;
- make sure that educational provision in schools and the national curriculum secure a sound foundation in lifelong learning for all;
- require all providers and funders of learning to evaluate critically their own cultures and ways of working and to reform them with a view to more effective promotion of learning cultures;
- ensure widespread opportunities for access to modern communications and information technology to facilitate learning; and
- move towards a national lifelong learning 'summit', in preparation for the new millennium and next parliament.

**SR1 *In support of government's New Deal for Communities action programme, we recommend that government should identify a pathfinder agency in one of the 17 priority areas chosen, to lead a programme of local regeneration with lifelong learning at its heart .***

**SR2 *Government should introduce specific initiatives to promote learning communities in large cities, towns and rural settings. This could be funded under the Single Regeneration Budget.***

**SR3 *Consideration should be given by government to the idea of bringing all of its various learning initiatives together under the broad umbrella of a single, clearly articulated 'Millennium Learning Programme'.***

## **4 Stimulating demand**

- 4.1 Too often policy development and implementation centre only on the supply sides of learning. A central objective of the campaign we advocate, and a defining feature of recognisable cultures of lifelong learning, must be marked growth in demand for lifelong learning, especially from those currently largely unrepresented or not involved in learning of one kind or another.<sup>16</sup> This will be key to the success of the University for Industry and should be at the heart of its corporate plans and implementation strategy. It is crucial to get people started by strengthening their self-confidence and self-esteem and giving an impetus to their involvement in Lifelong Learning.
- 4.2 Over the last decade, there has been a series of studies which have suggested that somewhere between a quarter and one third of all adults in this country take no part whatsoever in systematic or structured learning.<sup>17</sup> We would caution against adopting a too narrow or formal definition of learning - not least because if people do not recognise and identify themselves as 'learners' partly because of its limited definition, they will not make that essential gain in confidence and self-esteem which brings them to the 'starting line'. Nor will they be spurred on to reflect on the lessons of learning and build upon it further.
- 4.3 Learning can take many forms, both formal and informal. It can include developing a variety of skills, abilities, competences and problem-solving capacities. It quite properly includes acquiring new information and knowledge, as well as the pursuit of credits and qualifications through programmes of study more conventionally recognised as 'learning'. However, even amongst those currently involved in learning, engagement for many is still only marginal.<sup>18</sup>
- 4.4 There is nothing inevitable or unalterable about this. Events such as Adult Learners' Week show how an effective combination of media promotion, local initiatives and targeted activity can stimulate people to participate. Where they operate, Employee Development schemes and programmes such as UNISON's Return to Learn have begun to reverse the under-participation of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The BBC's 'Computers Don't Bite' and Family Literacy campaigns have also demonstrated that innovative forms of promotion linked to supply can increase demand for, and involvement in, learning activities. But, by their nature, initiatives such as these have only limited coverage or lifespan. What is needed is a more sustained campaign.
- 4.5 Part of the responsibility for changing culture and stimulating much greater demand rests with the main dispensers of public funds, as well as providers themselves. We welcome the initiatives already taken by the funding councils for further and higher education to reward those institutions successful in widening participation. They should now move to setting clear targets and associated performance indicators for reaching different groups of potential learners and require every institution they support do so for their own provision.
- 4.6 We welcome the recent decision to allocate £9 million to the Standards Fund next year and more thereafter for local authorities to create new opportunities for adults, based on plans and targets for widening participation and promoting quality in adult learning. We welcome too the establishment of Local Lifelong Learning Strategic Partnerships and the guidance that local authority plans should be fully articulated with those of other local providers, particularly further education institutions and integrated with TEC-led local Workforce Development Plans.

<sup>16</sup> This section draws on working paper *Opening up Access to Learning and Stimulating Demand: components of a strategy*, NAGCELL working group convened by Professor Tom Schuller.

<sup>17</sup> According to the *National Adult Learning Survey 1997*, DfEE Research Report 49, participation in systematic lifelong learning is related to social class: those from professional backgrounds are 50% more likely to be involved than manual workers. See table 2.9, p.42.

<sup>18</sup> More than a third of all completed 'learning episodes' in the last three years connected with a job lasted for less than ten hours. See *Ibid.*, table 4.5, p. 84.

- 4.7 The recent decision to extend loan facilities to some part-time students in higher education is also a welcome first step to achieving equity of support and opportunity for part-time learners. At the same time, we share the concern that has been expressed in many quarters about the evidence suggesting a down-turn in demand for full-time higher education from mature students. This apparent reduction in demand comes at a time of otherwise welcome renewed expansion, and is especially disturbing if it suggests the beginning of a trend.
- 4.8 The current down-turn in demand from mature students may have resulted from the changes in the overall financial support arrangements for students and the introduction of fees for higher education. Some of it may have resulted from a misunderstanding of the particular application of the new arrangements to mature students and this can be corrected by a sustained effort aimed at clarifying their position.
- 4.9 The decline may equally have arisen from other causes. There is the unwillingness of many mature students, especially those from poorer backgrounds or with family and home commitments, to take on the daunting prospect of substantial additional debt, albeit they will not be required to repay loans for higher education until they reach the designated income threshold. Other factors may also have been at work, including demographic shifts, altered labour market conditions, the growing range of openings for part-time and distance learning and changed opportunities for those with degree qualifications.
- 4.10 In our view, there is an urgent need for the whole issue of demand from mature students for full time higher education and for public policy in respect of it to be informed by rigorous and sophisticated research. This could include an exploration of different possible ways of providing support for mature learners such as through special bursaries, an older learners' loan scheme and funding to give access to advice and guidance.

### ***Beyond 'barriers'***

- 4.11 The general barriers to increasing participation in adult learning so far identified include people's preference to make other use of their free time, pressures on time at home and work, location, finance, domestic and caring responsibilities, lack of information and absence of opportunity, a belief amongst many that learning has little to offer them and unhappy memories of school. But, this simple catalogue of a range of familiar barriers only takes us so far.
- 4.12 Stimulating demand and developing learning cultures will require a multi-level, multi-stranded approach. Policy ought to be defined and implemented with the varying needs of different segments of the potential market for learning in mind. Some changes can be achieved in the short-term, but the sort of cultural shift we commend will require prolonged and sustained effort, as we have already argued. In this, individuals, organisations and the state will all need to be willing to raise the amount of time, money and other resources devoted to learning throughout life. Such a long-term change will require that learning for pleasure be valued as highly by policy-makers as it is by participants.
- 4.13 Access to new forms and sources of learning, including communications and information technology, should be universal and should increasingly become a routine part of the organisational, cultural and physical environment of our everyday lives. Even the architecture and design of public spaces should come to include access to lifelong learning opportunities for all, including the availability of information and communications technology.

- 4.14 Links need to be made out into the community and to peoples places of work and leisure through sensitive, trusted and sustained outreach. This means stimulating demand by building upon these activities which already interest and involve people or which express their own priorities and aspirations. It also entails targetted activity to raise expectations amongst children and adults, through schools, voluntary and community groups, work and trade unions.
- 4.15 While it is true that 'learning pays' for individuals, some kinds of learning clearly pays more than others, both materially and subjectively. Making use of the Campaign for Learning's typology of different potential learning *environments* draws attention to those which are either less obvious or even unexpected and yet in which access to learning could be facilitated and engagement increased. Finally, we know far too little about how exactly peer support as incentive and constraint works amongst adults in relation to learning. As we later recommend, recent successes with family learning indicate that the notion of 'peers' for adults may well be cross-generational.
- 4.16 Our approach also focuses upon changing patterns of consumption<sup>19</sup>, by getting people to *switch* to learning, by '*infiltrating*', incorporating, inserting or weaving opportunities for learning into other aspects of people's lives and by securing for them learning which is both *appropriate* and *well-timed*. In our working papers, we advocate a model aimed at promoting a variety of policy interventions and instruments based upon the core aim of building learning increasingly into people's everyday lives - in terms of motivation, institutions, space and time. The model proposes that demand generally can be widened and increased by taking action in three key interrelated spheres:
- Incentives, rewards and constraints;
  - Contexts and Environments:
  - Peer Support

**KR3 Government should work closely with representatives of each major provider and funder of lifelong learning, the Ufi, employers, trade unions, voluntary organisations, community groups and marketing experts to secure the development of a range of specially targeted initiatives designed to stimulate and widen demand for learning. Initiatives to increase demand should:**

- **combine approaches based on outreach, the use of incentives, changing contexts and environments, and working through peer support;**
- **be directed at creating a much wider range of 'learning-friendly' environments**
- **be tailored to the particular needs of different groups of learners and potential learners;**  
and
- **be clearly articulated with each other.**

**SR4 *Local authorities should be required to consult widely about their lifelong learning development plans and publish them.***

**SR5 *Government should identify funds and seek tenders for a detailed study of the changing demand, and potential demand, for learning from mature students, their various needs for support and alternative ways of providing for this.***

<sup>19</sup> For a consideration of adult education as consumption, see John Field, 'Open Learning and Consumer Culture' in P. Raggatt, R. Edwards and N. Smalls (Eds.), 1996, *The Learning Society: challenges and trends*.

**SR6** *All providers should develop and implement policies, with appropriate targets, aimed at changing the shape of student and institutional support to:*

- *systematically increase access to high quality, impartial and up-to-date information, advice and guidance; and*
- *give increased learning support to mature and part-time learners in further and higher education and to students in the early stages of programmes in order to boost retention and achievement.*

**SR7** *Learning-friendly environments should be promoted by means of:*

- *competitions and guidelines to encourage learning-friendly design for workplaces, public spaces, shopping centres and other buildings from architects and others; and*
- *developing planning regulations with incentives and requirements to include the creation of learning centres and access to communication and information technology.*

**SR8** *More potential consumers of learning should be reached by considering the use of:*

- *giving additional credits on Individual Learning Accounts through supermarket 'loyalty cards' and on the basis of train or bus miles; and*
- *instituting weekly lottery prizes to cover the fee and maintenance costs of learning programmes.*

**SR9** *Learning opportunities should be more effectively woven in with paid work through:*

- *implementing fiscal incentives for employers providing (access to) basic skills training and establishing workplace learning centres; or supporting Individual Learning Accounts;*
- *promoting the wider use of workplace learning agreements;*
- *considering the introduction of new ways for employers to account for and/or their investment in learning, as part of the development of corporate governances;*
- *using measures such as Investors in People as a standard in respect of rules for tendering and the award of contracts;*
- *strengthening the role of the Employment Service in the promotion of learning; and*
- *establishing of special teams to work closely with small and tiny enterprises to design support schemes of learning for them.*

**SR10** *Steps could be taken to modify the media and broadcasting environment by:*

- *including a requirement to promote learning as a condition of subsidies for major providers of TV and radio;*
- *considering legislation to make it a duty for all terrestrial broadcasting channels to educate as well as entertain and inform; and*
- *working with the BBC and independent broadcasters to explore further the potential of dedicated digital channels to support learning.*

## **5 Lifelong Learning and the Benefits System**

- 5.1 One source of potential increased demand, and an area for cultural change is for people currently on benefit. In our working papers, we have produced a first analysis of the impact of the operation of the current benefit system upon participation in learning.<sup>20</sup>
- 5.2 We welcome Government moves to reform the welfare system, facilitating peoples chances to take up or return to paid work. Part of that move may well entail gaining access to learning. Many people who are currently unemployed, or seeking to return to work, many lone parents and those on disability and other benefits also wish to take up programmes of learning or remain in them. They can be deterred from doing so by the current rules and procedures which govern the operation of the benefits system. This is despite the useful progress made by the implementation of schemes such as the 'Workskill' projects. Such potential learners' opportunities are restricted by:
- complex and confusing rules and regulations;
  - local variation in the interpretations and application of rules and procedures;
  - poor quality of advice and guidance by benefit officials and providers, or its complete absence;
  - a pre-occupation with short-term and often insecure job outcomes; and
  - the pace of major reforms in the benefit system.
- 5.3 As things stand, it tends to be the better qualified claimants who are able to use and navigate the benefits system to advantage to support their learning. Different rules apply to courses offered under the different funding regimes of the Funding Councils for further and higher education, European Social Fund, Single Regeneration Budget, TECs and the Employment Service. Too often, programmes of study for those on benefit are designed to fit the requirements of benefit systems rather than the needs of the students or to promote desirable educational or training outcomes.
- 5.4 Current funding rules and outcome targets also presuppose greater commitment than the benefit system allows. Some kinds of volunteering, which is itself a valuable pathway into learning or basis for its continuation, are also restricted by the current application of the benefits system. Moreover, many agencies concerned with benefits absorb valuable time and resources in updating information and tackling problems.

### **KR4 As part of the government's overall strategy to reform the Welfare system, the Secretaries of State for Education and Employment and Social Security should:**

- **establish a specialist group of officials and experts, who should advise on ways to:**
  - **facilitate access to programmes of learning for people on benefit;**
  - **ensure that benefit rules do not act as barriers to volunteering;**
  - **promote retention and completion rates for those learners who are on benefits;**
- **and**
- **seek ways to extend existing pilot schemes designed to open up learning and qualification pathways to those on benefit.**

<sup>20</sup> This section draws on working paper *Lifelong Learning and the Benefit System*, NAGCELL working group convened by Dr. Dan Finn.

**SR11** *In the meantime government should:*

- *extend the 'Workskill' rules to people unemployed for six months, enabling the Employment Service to give more recognition and support to learners, especially those undertaking vocationally relevant programmes of study; and*
- *consider amending the benefit rules to strengthen and extend the New Deals, especially for the young unemployed, so that learning can continue where people are unable to obtain jobs at the end of their options.*

## 6. Family Learning

- 6.1 A major contribution to, and signal of, cultural change in the field of lifelong learning can be made by widespread extension of schemes of family learning in the UK.<sup>21</sup> There is now growing recognition that successful family learning is a powerful tool for engendering positive attitudes to learning and stimulating educational commitment and achievement for children, parents and other family members. We believe that the widespread adoption of a range of family learning schemes will make a major contribution towards the development of learning cultures in this country.
- 6.2 Family learning can contribute to the reversal of an otherwise vicious downward spiral of underachievement, low grade employment, unemployment, poverty, low self-esteem, poor quality of life and social exclusion. It also provides a valuable context for inter-generational learning, including through shared access to, and pleasure in using, information and communications technology.
- 6.3 Family learning can take many different forms and can target a variety of primary beneficiaries. It can help both adult family members and children secure improvements in basic literacy and numeracy skills, support schools' own literacy and numeracy programmes, help parents and other adult family members to help children, boost the involvement of family members in the generality of their children's schooling, and encourage children to be both stimulus and catalyst in the learning activities of their parents and other family members. In our working papers, we have identified the following sorts of family learning, and mixtures of them, each with its own focus and range of typically associated activities:
- Learning concerned with *families themselves*, their development, internal roles and relationships, parenting, caring, support for children with special needs, bereavement etc;
  - Learning focused on the *personal learning and other needs* of different family members, often as a precursor or preparation for the previous type;
  - Learning which gives opportunities for *two or more family members to learn separately* about a common topic or theme, or with a common focus;
  - Learning which brings together *two or more family members to learn together* around a common topic, theme or focus;
  - Learning which is characterised by development, advancement or progression, often building explicitly on other forms of family learning and frequently focused on challenging issues or objectives. Excellent schemes of family learning have been promoted by the Pre-School Learning Alliance, Basic Skills Agency and the Community Education Development Centre and others.
- 6.4 Government has already signalled its support for family learning in the context of its schools' improvement strategy, set out in its key white paper for initial education, *Excellence in Schools*. Many parents and other adults in families already see the point of encouraging and supporting their children's educational progress and will do so, given the right framework of engagement and opportunity. Far fewer have yet had the chance to advance their own learning alongside that of the children. Providing that opportunity will entail more than adult learning constituting a useful but largely fortunate by-product of one dimension of the determination to raise standards at school. It will mean making more *explicit links* between the schools' improvement agenda and the government's unfolding lifelong learning strategy, recognising the key contribution in this of voluntary organisations and community groups.

<sup>21</sup> This section draws on working paper *Supporting Family Learning*, NAGCELL working group convened by Jacqui Bufton.

- 6.5 Amongst schoolchildren, fostering a love of learning, the skill of 'learning to learn' and a practical understanding of the ways in which educational achievement connects with their future lives will also help to instill a commitment to lifelong learning.<sup>22</sup> Amongst parents, other significant family members and adults, involvement with the child's pleasures and achievements in learning can rekindle (or spark for the first time) an interest in their own education, bolstering their self-confidence and ambition. Research also indicated that such contacts and networks are crucial to children's educational success. Schemes of family learning should make these connections explicit, as well as providing a basis for active citizenship, community development and local capacity building.
- 6.6 Family learning affords a practical opportunity to implement 'joined-up' policy and creating effective partnerships. These can with advantage span institutional and functional boundaries as well as playing their part in mobilising energy within the field of education itself. Through local partnerships, family learning should benefit from the creation of local learning centres, set up not only under the auspices of the University for Industry but also by companies, in libraries and museums and in schools themselves.
- 6.7 Local authorities now have a new opportunity to locate family learning at the heart of their local learning development plans and in their work through local strategic partnerships. Valuable contributions can also be made by voluntary organisations and community groups, local firms, trade unions, churches, sports and social clubs, youth services, TECs, colleges, pre-school groups and, of course, schools themselves. As we spell out further below, partnerships bring vital resources to collaborative initiatives in the form of people, premises, expertise and networks. However, to be effective, including in respect of family learning, they also need focus, clarity of purpose, transparency of process and coordination.
- 6.8 Making a success of family learning will first entail broadening understanding of its scope and extending the range of bodies which should work together and make it effective. This should include those concerned with pre-school activities, the Youth Services, Social Services, Health Authorities and many varieties of community group. It will also require that established teachers, those in teacher training and educational officials, as well as parents and representatives of other bodies, themselves learn new skills and develop additional competences. The various inspection frameworks operated by Ofsted, Social Services, the Further Education Funding Council, the Training Standards Inspectorate and higher education Quality Assurance Agency will all need to include explicit quality standards for family learning and appropriate inspection time will need to be devoted to this aspect of provision.
- 6.9 Research on family learning, including action research, case studies and independent reviews of provision should be commissioned from universities and other research centres. Its aim should be to contribute to the development of a body of practical knowledge, disseminate examples of good practice in family learning. Research and its effective dissemination should also underpin the growth of a cadre of 'reflective practitioners' in the field. Consideration could also be given to a special scheme of awards for family learning, given for outstanding provision and achievement.

<sup>22</sup> This element of a coherent lifelong learning strategy is stressed and developed in *Lifelong Learning for All, op. cit.*, Chapter 3, 'Establishing the foundations for lifelong learning'.

- 6.10 There should be support for local innovation and experimentation in family learning, as a body of experience and good practice is progressively established. It would make sense to earmark funds to support such local endeavours, where proposals are based on rigorous preparation, are aimed at demonstrable added value and draw on the resources and commitment of well-constructed partnerships. Funding to support schemes of family learning should be identified from a range of sources: from the Standards Fund to help with the audit and mapping of existing provision, as well as with planning developments; from the Adult and Community Learning Fund and New Opportunities Fund to support the involvement of community groups and voluntary organisations; from TECs to support the local achievement of lifetime education and training targets, preparation for work and out-of-school clubs.
- 6.11 Encouraging new developments in family learning and the dissemination of good practice should also be encouraged through the circulation of checklists, guidelines and by publishing examples of excellence. They should be used to spell out the different (potential) contributions of the various partners, indicate how targets could be set and progress evaluated, suggest possible sources of funding and underpin the design of support and training arrangements to underpin initiatives. We have made a start on this in our working papers, with a suggested initial allocation of the different responsibilities and potential scope for action from government, local authorities, schools, further education institutions and the WEA, employers, trade unions, TECs, the Prison Service, voluntary organisations and broadcasters. It would be useful to share these ideas with people who are active, or planning to become active, in the field and to disseminate them following consultation and refinement.

**KR5 Government should provide a major boost to family learning by:**

- **adopting and disseminating a broad definition of family learning and of the key partners involved;**
- **continuing and extending the commitment of financial resources to support family learning through local authorities, the Basic Skills Agency, TECs and the funding councils for further and higher education;**
- **developing the scope and contribution of family learning in conjunction with representatives of the Local Government Association, Health Authorities and leading national voluntary organisations and charitable bodies;**
- **issuing practical guidelines and checklists of action to each of the key partners;**
- **commissioning a programme of action research, case studies and the dissemination of good practice;**
- **organising a series of consultation conferences through which to explore and share good practice;**
- **utilising its Sure Start programme, and others, to draw parents and young children into learning; and**
- **discussing with the Teacher Training Authority, and other interested parties, how best to develop skills to support family learning amongst teachers and other professionals.**

**SR12 Local Authorities should:**

- *review the contribution to family learning that can be made by each of their constituent departments;*
- *work closely with representatives of the voluntary sector to promote family learning;*
- *identify a specially designated team, to devise a local strategy and operational plan to promote family learning;*
- *make sure that communication and information technologies to support learning are made available for schemes of family learning; and*
- *include clear proposals and targets for family learning in their local development plans for lifelong learning.*

**SR13 Family Learning should be extended by:**

- *including family learning provision within programmes for local economic and social regeneration;*
- *recognising the potential contribution of family learning to initiatives aimed at promoting greater social inclusion; and by*
- *considering the creation of special awards in recognition of excellence in family learning.*

## 7 Citizenship and Community Capacity Building

- 7.1 The notion of an active civil society is deeply rooted in this country, manifesting itself in a profusion of voluntary, community and charitable organisations. In turn they have often been explicitly involved in initiatives aimed at widening opportunities for learning, demonstrating that positive tradition of creative self-help identified by the Secretary of State in *The Learning Age*.<sup>23</sup>
- 7.2 In the past, this was evident in such diverse instances as the remarkable achievements of generations of self-taught working people, in the popular movement to establish public and workers' libraries, and in the growth of study at workers' institutes. It was also central to the instigation of public lectures, correspondence courses and to the establishment of programmes of educational extension mounted by the universities, voluntary organisations, women's groups and, especially, the Workers' Education Association. The tradition of fostering active citizenship and self-organised initiative, both at work and in the community, has also long featured as one aspect of trade unions' determination to improve the lot and life chances of their members through learning.
- 7.3 Today, active citizenship is manifest in the contribution being made by local communities towards their own social and economic regeneration, often in circumstances of radical economic and social change.<sup>24</sup> Local engagement includes people defining their own needs and identifying their own priorities, providing community based access to learning and training, often in collaboration with educational providers. This is mostly accomplished by working through networks of voluntary groups and community-based organisations. Increasingly, these bodies are operating in partnership with statutory authorities, funders and the private sector.
- 7.4 Research and scholarship in this country and abroad has recently recognised the critical importance of intermediate networks of voluntary and community activity for the promotion of prosperity, well-being and educational success<sup>25</sup>. The development and maintenance of high trust relations and of 'spontaneous sociability' have been variously demonstrated as being essential for the establishment and renewal of *social capital*, crucial to people's capacity to adapt to social change and fundamental to the continued involvement of citizens in the civic and political life of communities, as well as their economic success.
- 7.5 This country is rich in its patterns of such sociability. For example, it is argued that almost as many people take part in some form of voluntary activity in this country every year as there are members of the workforce. They not only value their voluntary work highly, gaining some of their greatest satisfactions from it, but also thereby directly benefit the lives of others and local communities.<sup>26</sup> The DfEE's own National Adult Learning Survey underlined the demand for learning linked to community and voluntary activity, especially amongst those people over the age of forty.<sup>27</sup> Many who feel themselves otherwise disfranchised or excluded from the wider political sphere gain their first stake in political or civic engagement through involvement in a tenants group, by joining an ethnic association or through participation in a single-issue group or campaign.

<sup>23</sup> This section draws on working paper *Building Democracy: a community, citizenship and civil society*, NAGCELL working group convened by Professor John Field and Paul Nolan.

<sup>24</sup> "If citizenship entails membership in the community and membership implies forms of social participation, then citizenship is above all about the involvement of people in the community in which they live...", David Held, 'Between State and Civil Society: Citizenship' in Geoff Andrews (Ed.), 1991, *Citizenship*.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Alan Fox 1974, *Beyond Contract: work, power and trust relations*; Francis Fukayama 1994, *Trust: the social virtues and the creation of prosperity*.

<sup>26</sup> See John Field, "Globalization, Social Capital And Lifelong Learning"

<sup>27</sup> See *National Adult Learning Survey 1997, op.cit.*, Chapter 6.

- 7.6 Such activity connects with people's own priorities, builds up their confidence and self-esteem and gives them a very practical sense of achievement. In many instances, such self-evident benefits are further supported and reinforced through learning with a range of bodies including the WEA, community education, residential colleges, adult learning programmes and various outreach projects. They increasingly figure in the provision of responsive further education institutions. Such valuable learning does not always lead to recognisable academic awards; nor should it.
- 7.7 This is exactly the contribution to citizenship and social cohesion through learning which *The Learning Age* envisaged. The next steps in the development of the government's lifelong learning strategy should draw from and build upon democratic traditions of individual and collective self-help. It should support them through accessible funding regimes which can help to embed them, at the same time as avoiding the temptation to colonise activity and stifle enterprise. To some extent, this will require experiment and risk-taking. This should be reflected in the strategic use made of the Adult and Community Learning Fund and in the frameworks of evaluation established to assess its impact, not always measuring effectiveness by means of the usual output indicators alone. The Fund's currently limited resources could not begin to fund the range of learning already in train in voluntary and community organisations (even when eventually greatly reinforced by the resources allocated to the New Opportunities Fund), and so additional resources will also be required.
- 7.8 Some policy initiatives should be especially directed towards those who are less inclined to participate in voluntary and community groups, or less well-placed to take advantage of them by virtue of their personal circumstances or locality. There is evidence that, against a background of generally increasing participation, there are wide variations between different social groups, with engagement in civil society at its lowest amongst the long-term unemployed. Many older people, especially those living alone are afraid to leave their homes; many who are poor simply cannot afford the financial costs of joining in. Those in remote or rural areas and those unable or disinclined to leave their own homes because of illness or disability will need increasingly to be reached using learner-friendly communications and information technology.<sup>28</sup>
- 7.9 All of this not only restricts participation, it also denies such people a chance to be heard. Paradoxically, it also reduces such people's access to precisely some of the groups and opportunities which might be of most practical use to them. Without specially designed and sensitive schemes, the most disaffected, isolated and least 'clubbable' in our society will be at risk of continuing to figure centrally amongst the most excluded.
- 7.10 Much of this kind of work takes time to take root and become self-sustaining. Success depends upon establishing trust, creating self-confidence and a sense of self-esteem amongst individuals and communities and establishing a reputation for delivering tangible benefits. Learning can undoubtedly help greatly with those objectives, but it requires also that resource allocation be made on the basis of input as well as output measures. Funding processes here are about investment for the future, and need to encourage an identifiable element of experiment and local innovation. Some of it is inevitably and necessarily risky business. Those engaged professionally to support community development and capacity building should not so often be engaged on short-term contracts, be at the margins of the mainstream or be resourced only or largely through transient funding. Such an approach will neither embed the benefits nor represent an effective use of money.

<sup>28</sup> We dealt extensively with this and related points in an earlier working paper. See, *Changing Technologies: Changing Learners*, working group convened by Professor Naomi Sargent, 1998.

**KR6** We recommend that government regard initiatives to support long-term and self-sustaining capacity building and community development as main planks of its strategy to promote lifelong learning, combat social exclusion and strengthen democracy in this country. To reflect this, government should take steps to coordinate and promote such initiatives which would:

- recognise the contribution to the success of this strategy to be made from a number of different departments of state;
- identify other key partners critical to its success, especially locally;
- include provision for outreach, publicity, information and guidance; in such initiatives
- engage representatives of those people intended to be the principal beneficiaries in the planning, delivery and evaluation of initiatives;
- ensure that those sources of funding over which government and other key partners have some influence give priority to such initiatives;
- be a major priority for local strategic partnerships; and
- figure in the periodic overviews of progress in lifelong learning which we have recommended the Secretary of State should undertake and publish.

**SR14** *The distribution of public funding from the Adult and Community Learning Fund, New Opportunities Fund and other sources, intended to support community development and capacity building should be guided by four main principles:*

- *the objectives and targets of all projects seeking funding should demonstrate that they will make a difference to people's lives and how this will be achieved;*
- *funded projects should be designed to include a series of multiplier effects, stimulating other parallel and contributory efforts and should include the development of successful innovatory methods and approach, establish benchmarks for good practice and have wider application;*
- *the objectives and performance indicators attached to elements of funding, or to a selection of funded projects, should recognise the longer timescale necessary to achieve change and embed new practices; and*
- *funding allocations should recognise and celebrate the diversity and range of adult and community learning initiatives.*

**SR15** *In establishing priorities for the use of public funds, precedence should be given to:*

- *those individual learning schemes which are seeking to promote and model learning provision for volunteers and local community leaders;*
- *those schemes which provide group or 'unit' learning for voluntary and community organisations to develop the skills, procedures and capacities to handle their own affairs efficiently and with equity; and*
- *schemes which already manifest, or which have the ambition of successfully developing, partnership activity and, where practicable, partnership funding.*

*SR16 In the longer term, steps should be taken to:*

- *measure more effectively the range and impact of investment in adult and community learning, building on best practice;*
- *provide more detailed systematic information on lifelong learning and the level and nature of social capital and community activity in the UK;*
- *extend the stimulation of democratic, active and responsible citizenship to all communities, linking such a strategy to other devolution initiatives and to the commitment to embracing citizenship within the schools' curriculum;*
- *reward especially those initiatives, organisations and partnerships which demonstrate an ability to reach out to those currently less able or willing to participate in community activity or learning, by virtue of where they live, their personal and domestic circumstances or their attitudes; and*
- *ensure that access to and ability to use and benefit from the new technologies of communication and information are broadened in educational institutions, libraries, museums, shopping centres, places of work, community centres and public places. This should be a principal task for the University for Industry and a central purpose of the developing National Grid for Learning.*

## 8 Building Effective Partnerships

- 8.1 Effective partnerships will be crucial to the success of the University for Industry and in the operation of the national network of Local Lifelong Learning Strategic Partnerships. Guidance should be given to ensure these initiatives add value to local provision and are closely coordinated.
- 8.2 Partnerships have a particular contribution to the development of learning cultures. They can help to widen participation, increase demand for learning and link together measures designed to strengthen local capacity and democracy.<sup>29</sup> For these reasons we welcome the recent protocol on cooperation agreed between the Further Education Funding Council, Local Government Association and TEC National Council, and supported by others, to establish Local Lifelong Learning Strategic Partnerships. These Partnerships should be closely linked to the proposed UFI Learning 'hubs' and consortia. They could also benefit from experience gained in the operation of partnership agreements pioneered under the BBC 'Web Wise' initiative.
- 8.3 At their best, in bringing together like-minded organisations, effective partnerships are able to stimulate the pooling of resources and effort, encourage innovation and develop more flexible and varied provision for learners. At a minimum they can still constitute useful forms of accountability and structural and financial control. However, not all partnerships are effective, or can even become so, nor do all forms of successful collaboration require the creation of partnerships.
- 8.4 Many bodies which could make a marked difference to lifelong learning, by acting in concert, have spent the recent past developing their own individual strategies, often in response to an explicit policy drive of mutual competition and institutional single-mindedness. For them, learning the habits and good practices of collaboration will be part of the cultural changes we are advocating, including acting as bridges and connecting points in a society characterised by increasing fragmentation, isolation and individualisation.<sup>30</sup>
- 8.5 In this last regard, it has also to be said that the whole process of partnership and collaboration would be made easier if there were fewer rather than more bodies to consult and involve. Part of the secret of building effective partnerships entails making strategic, and sometimes quite difficult decisions, about who exactly should be drawn in to the immediate circle of partners and who might better serve the partnership, and be better served by it, by having other connections to it.
- 8.6 The role of government in partnerships is especially important in the implementation of its lifelong learning strategy. This entails not simply government's interest in securing closer collaboration between those agencies in the field with responsibilities for lifelong learning, as spelt out clearly in *The Learning Age*. It also entails Government's own unambiguous commitment to partnership both within government and between government and the other main players. From the discussions we have had, and tracing the development of policy so far in this field, we do not doubt the enormity of the challenge that this will present to government itself. Making progress here will be yet another element of the culture changes we are advocating, if the promise of the vision in *The Learning Age* is to be effectively carried through into practice. We do not presume to say precisely how best this should be accomplished. But, at the very least, it will require that effective liaison and coordination be systematically established within a number of departments of state, as well as between them.

<sup>29</sup> This section is based upon working paper *Effective Local Partnerships for Local and Regional Partnerships for Lifelong Learning*, NAGCELL working group convened by Professor Naomi Sargent.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Michael Richard 1998 *Better Government for older workers depends on effective partnerships*.

- 8.7 The responsibility for fostering and evaluating partnerships between government and other partners should also be clearly designated. Without national and local champions, determined and licensed to overcome the usual boundary problems, partnership for government risks being a rhetorical flourish or something which merely requires everyone else's commitment.
- 8.8 Across the board, it will be necessary for those involved with the delivery of effective partnerships to develop new skills and competences and a sense of focus. Above all, they will need to be clear about the *specific goals and purposes* of particular partnerships and to ensure that these are *expressed with clarity and are understood and shared* by the other partners involved. In our working papers, we have set out a range of different types of partnership, a checklist of the features of effective partnerships and some guidelines on determining the appropriate *level* and *membership* of partnership for particular purposes. Much will depend upon local circumstances: there is no one model applicable for all circumstances.
- 8.9 In our working papers, we have identified a limited number of 'big issues', which all partnerships and intending partners should consider. They are:
- It takes both time and commitment to build up successful partnerships and self-sustaining beneficial processes and outcomes. They mostly need an element of stable funding, constant membership and highly motivated champions to make them thrive productively. Too often timescales for the creation of effective partnerships are unrealistic.
  - Effective partnerships require an acceptance of diminished individual autonomy in the particular field of collaboration, or at least a sacrifice of one's own immediate priorities in favour of the common good. Powerful and well-resourced partners in particular need to declare what they bring to the partnership as much as what benefits they expect to derive from it and to be generous in their dealing with smaller and less well-resourced contributors.
  - The remit of some potentially valuable partners in lifelong learning limits their contribution to lifelong learning, including the form of their financial regulations and procedures, funding rules and arrangements, systems of governance and forms of accountability.
- 8.10 A particular challenge for partnership will be the involvement of learners and potential learners themselves. Although this will not always be possible, it should always be striven for or considered. In any case, the voices of providers should never be taken as a surrogate for those of the learners themselves whose point of view and expression of their own needs is too often missing.
- 8.11 If learners and potential learners are to make an effective contribution to partnership, they should be properly resourced to do so and their role and rationale for their involvement should be understood by all concerned. At a very minimum, a systematic review of their experiences should constitute a principal element of properly functioning quality assurance mechanisms. Still better if the learners themselves are involved in a dialogue with providers to clarify their needs, discuss the curriculum, consider appropriate methods of delivery and explore progression routes, including those with other partners.

**KR7** We recommend that government:

- ensures close coordination between initiatives to create local partnerships, particularly the Lifelong Learning Strategic Partnerships and the proposed UFI local learning 'hubs' and consortia;
- encourages all new post-16 partnerships to include all aspects of lifelong learning in their activities;
- give practical guidance on the role and responsibilities of partnerships in lifelong learning and how best to ensure their effectiveness;
- link elements of its funding strategies in support of learning to the demonstration of effective existing partnerships and to their construction where they do not yet exist; and
- include the review of partnerships' effectiveness in monitoring schemes, evaluation and inspection.

**SR17** *The Secretary of State could arrange for:*

- *an analysis of partnership initiatives orchestrated by other government departments and the lessons learned from them;*
- *a review of the overlapping functions and partnership funding arrangements of those bodies which can contribute to lifelong learning; and*
- *the preparation and dissemination of a detailed literature review and description of good practice in relation to partnership.*

**SR18** *As part of a wider dissemination strategy and as a contribution to the campaign we propose, a series of consultation conferences on partnership should be held, making use of the materials which we have already assembled and drawing upon good practice.*

## 9 Further Work

### *Workplace Learning*

- 9.1 Much good work is already being done or is under construction to encourage learning at, for or through employment. However, provision of learning opportunities at work remains very patchy and still skewed largely towards those who are already learners, have achieved through learning or have qualifications to their names.<sup>31</sup> This is especially true for those working in small and tiny businesses, including those who are owner-managers and entrepreneurs. Their needs are diverse yet much provision is not yet aimed at meeting them nor is it geared to the different rhythms and exigencies of their businesses.
- 9.2 We regard this whole question of developing practical ways of stimulating workplace learning, especially in small and tiny enterprises, as a key element of the lifelong learning agenda. Urgent and imaginative action is required to help those working in small firms get into the learning age. It would be useful for the University for Industry to support a range of pilot 'demonstration projects', designed to explore ways in which small businesses could collaborate amongst themselves and with providers in securing access to learning for their proprietors and staff. This should include ways of stimulating their better use of communications and information technology to support learning.<sup>32</sup>
- 9.3 The involvement and commitment of employers - of all shapes and sizes and in all sectors - is essential to the successful development of a culture of lifelong learning. More work should be undertaken, in conjunction with representatives from business and unions, the National Training Organisations and TECs on the development of existing mechanisms for change, including modifications to the Investors in People standard, and the use of grants, incentives and rewards to promote learning at work. Consideration should also be given to the development of a jointly agreed Code of Good Practice to support workplace learning.

### *Support for Part-time Study*

- 9.4 We have already welcomed the Government's positive decisions to extend loan facilities to certain part-time students in higher education. This is a valuable step forward. However, as patterns of study increasingly change and modes of attendance vary, the clear distinction between 'full-time' and 'part-time' learners is bound to become progressively blurred. Very few students on full-time programmes of study make no contribution to the costs of their learning from their own earnings. Many already engage in learning through a mixture of modes. Even with the recent welcome changes in policy, there is still systematically less support for those studying part-time than for those on full-time programmes. This is especially true of access to loans and, for those in work, threshold income levels at which fees have to be paid.
- 9.5 We have already welcomed recent policy changes to enable fees to be waived for certain students on benefit. We also recognise that questions of cost and equity need to be given the fullest consideration. Forward thinking needs now to consider the next steps in supporting all learners as part of the campaign to create learning cultures, how to move towards equitable arrangements and make use of exciting new initiatives such as Individual Learning Accounts in that process.

<sup>31</sup> On this whole topic, see our earlier task group report on workplace learning.

<sup>32</sup> See also *Changing Technologies: Changing Learners. op.cit.*

***Non-accredited Learning***

- 9.6 We welcome the clarification of the Further Education Funding Council's role in being able to support non-credit bearing programmes of study and so-called 'non-schedule 2' educational activity. We are also pleased to note moves to audit local authority provision and to provide more funding for such work. Developments under each of those headings should be closely monitored and reviewed.
- 9.7 At the same time, we are concerned at evidence which suggests that there has been some decline in the provision of liberal adult education, including at university level. There needs to be a better understanding of its potential contribution to the development of learning cultures, building confidence and self-esteem, including opening up pathways to more formal kinds of learning, including qualification. There also needs to be a greater understanding of the ways in which learning can contribute effectively to people's leisure, recreation, identity, independence and patterns of consumption.
- 9.8 More light needs to be cast on the ways in which non-accredited pathways can lead on to qualification routes and how best to fund and provide these. Moreover, there is still insufficient systematic evidence and inadequate frameworks of evaluation to assess the wider contribution of local authority supported programmes, of non-accredited learning generally and of liberal adult education towards the achievement of the government's wider priorities. There is a need also to measure the various returns offered by different sorts of learning. All of this requires attention and the design of appropriate and rigorous action research to develop sensitive models and to disseminate good practice.

***Libraries and Museums***

- 9.9 The potential contribution of libraries and museums to lifelong learning has already been acknowledged in the government's green paper. They can help to change cultures and become increasingly important partners in both opening up access and diversifying delivery. We believe that government should now invite representatives from these bodies to join with experts on lifelong learning to develop their own detailed strategic and operational proposals for lifelong learning. These should include, *inter alia*, questions of improved access, support, staff training, the use of new communications and information technology and involvement in strategic partnerships.

***An Adult Credit-based Qualifications Framework***

- 9.10 We acknowledge the difficulties of moving quickly towards comprehensive and credit-based qualifications for all post-school learning and welcome work which has already begun in this area. As a contribution to the longer-term development of a single framework and as a transitional measure, we believe it would be useful for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, working closely with the Ufl and other agencies, to consider the construction of a simple, adult credit-based qualifications framework, including for basic skills. Such work should draw on the experience of Open Colleges, the Basic Skills Agency and the views of employers, professional bodies, unions and voluntary organisations which have been involved in developing NVQs, GNVQs and other qualifications and measuring competences for adults.

**KR8** We recommend that further work, resulting in implementation proposals should be undertaken in the following areas:

- workplace learning, especially for small and tiny businesses;
- support for part-time learners;
- the benefits of non-accredited learning, including liberal adult education, and how best to support it;
- the role and contribution of libraries and museums in lifelong learning; and
- the development of a credit-based qualifications framework for adults.

**SR19** *Attention should be given to:*

- *mapping the pattern of workplace learning, especially in small and tiny enterprises;*
- *assessing the needs and priorities of those working in small and tiny enterprises;*
- *raising the expectations and aspirations to learning of the owners and staff of small and tiny businesses;*
- *stimulating collaboration amongst small and tiny enterprises to secure access to suitable learning opportunities for them, including their use of communications and information technology to support learning; and*
- *exploring how best to gear learning provision to the rhythms and exigencies of those enterprises.*

**SR20** *There should be an examination of the merits of a range of funding schemes to support different modes of learning, different sorts of learner (full-time, part-time and mixed mode) and changing patterns of learning.*

**SR21** *Further work should be conducted on the pattern, role and contribution of non-accredited learning and liberal adult education to the achievement of the government's objectives and of the best way to provide and fund such learning.*

**SR22** *Government should invite representatives from libraries and museums to join with experts on lifelong learning to develop their own detailed strategic and operational proposals for lifelong learning. These should include, inter alia, questions of improved access, learner support, staff training, the use of the new communications and information technology and promoting their involvement in strategic partnerships.*

**SR23** *The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority should be asked to consider and devise an adult credit-based qualifications framework, as a transitional step towards the construction of a national framework of qualifications for all post-school learning.*



APPENDIX B

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



SANCTUARY BUILDINGS GREAT SMITH STREET  
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TELEPHONE 0171 925 5000

The Rt Hon DAVID BLUNKETT MP

14 April 1998

Professor R H Fryer  
Principal  
Northern College for Residential Adult Education  
Wentworth Castle  
Stainborough  
Barnsley S75 3ET

Dear Professor Fryer

FUTURE WORK OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

I am writing to set out my priorities for your work over the next six months or so.

First may I place on record my thanks for the contribution made by the National Advisory Group in preparation of the Lifelong Learning Green Paper "The Learning Age". I do hope that Group members can discern the clear impact of their work upon the document.

Over the consultation period, that is by end July, I would like the Group to let me have further advice, in the form of short working papers, on practical ways of taking forward the issues raised in the Green Paper relating to:

- the contribution of lifelong learning to community development and capacity building, including the role of the Adult and Community Learning Fund;
- the identification and promotion of means by which we can open up access to learning for those adults currently least engaged with the education system;
- measures to stimulate and broaden demand for learning from mature adults, particularly from under represented groups;

identifying and disseminating practical examples of effective partnerships for planning and delivery of lifelong learning locally.

I welcome the willingness of members of the Group to work with us to stimulate and to participate in "The Learning Age". Such debate will be very important in helping to generate a wide range of views and ideas about moving the agenda forward.

It would be helpful to have the Advisory Group's views of the priorities for practical action, taking account of likely competing pressures on resources nationally and locally whatever the outcome of our comprehensive review of spending. Ideas about ways of building on and disseminating effective models and practice in community education would be especially valuable.

I would also be grateful if you would provide me with a detailed list of the proposed work schedule.

In taking forward this work I know you and members of the Group will keep in touch as appropriate with the work of other advisory groups we have established, and with the social exclusion unit, so that your advice complements other strands of development.

Felicity Everiss and her team will work closely with the Group and will keep you informed about responses to "The Learning Age" and emerging issues and ideas.

Best wishes



DAVID BLUNKETT



**APPENDIX C**

**NAGCELL WORKING GROUPS ESTABLISHED IN PREPARATION OF SECOND REPORT**

Changing Cultures and Cultural Change (Convenor, Leisha Fullick)

Stimulating Demand for Lifelong Learning (Convenor, Professor Tom Schuller)

Reviewing Lifelong Learning and the Benefits System (Convenor, Dr. Dan Finn)

Supporting Family Learning (Convenor, Jacqui Bufton)

Building Community, Citizenship and Civil Society (Convenors, Professor John Field and Paul Nolan)

Creating Effective Local and Regional Partnerships (Convenor, Professor Naomi Sargant)

**Copies of these working papers and further copies of the report can be obtained from UK Library Group Website or from DfEE Website <http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk> or by ringing Prolog 0845 6022260.**

**Postal address, Individual Learning Division, DfEE, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ.**







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