

NIACE Development and Research



Key Findings



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Adding Value: Adult Learning & Extended Services

Abstract

Adding Value: Adult Learning and Extended Services was a publication funded by the Local Government Association. It aimed to explore the value adult learning can bring to the extended services that schools are developing.

The publication was aimed, firstly, at managers and co-ordinators supporting the development of extended services and at managers and co-ordinators in adult learning and family learning services who wish to work in partnership with as well as local authority officers supporting the development of extended services in the community.

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) worked with the Director of Extended Services in The Extended Schools Support Service (TESSS) at ContinYou, the Extended Schools Team at the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) and the Skills for Life Strategy Unit at the DfES to ensure that the publication was part of a co-ordinated approach to supporting managers and co-ordinators in extended schools.

A number of in-depth examples of good practice were obtained through contacts at ContinYou and the DfES. They aimed to illustrate points such as working in partnership with other key stakeholders; consulting adults and the community; assuring the quality of adult learning in schools and sustaining adult learning. There are suggestions for where to look for further information and useful websites.

Research methodology:

Adding Value was primarily a product of desk research. A literature review was undertaken to establish the policy context for extended services and to map existing guidance in relation to extended schools. Working with ContinYou and the DfES potential examples of good practice were generated and contacted by the researcher on the project. Using a good example pro-forma schools and their partners were asked to complete a set of questions pertaining to particular issues such as partnership working, sustainability and consultation amongst others.

Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

Adult learning in extended services:

- ❖ Can have a positive effect on pupils' attendance, behaviour and levels of attainment;
- ❖ Includes family learning programmes which promote positive learning habits in families and enhance parental involvement in children's learning;

- ❖ Can make schools more accessible to the community and involve more people from the community in them;
- ❖ Can raise the skill levels of adults in the community so they can access employment opportunities and improve their life chances and those of their families;
- ❖ Can help parents prepare their children for school and for transferring into secondary school;
- ❖ Can help schools to develop links with the business community;
- ❖ Can help schools to build partnerships with other services and organisations in the community;
- ❖ Can provide additional funding for schools.

It is important that the offer is not limited by historical notions such as 'evening classes', by narrow interpretations of 'learning', or by assumptions about what the community might want. Adult learning in schools should build upon a wide range of opportunities in schools, ranging from informal to formal and from group to individual learning. The forms such adult learning could take are many and varied, for example:

- Drop-in facilities
- 'Taster' sessions
- Family literacy, language and numeracy
- Wider family learning programmes
- Parenting programmes
- Adults learning alongside pupils
- A regular programme
- Opportunities for volunteering
- Training for employment.

Schools should identify the key stakeholders in adult learning in their community and work closely with them in developing appropriate adult learning opportunities and the childcare provision that supports it. A key partner is the local authority adult learning service, which is experienced in consulting with the community, developing a varied and responsive offer and assuring the quality of adult learning in the community. Other partners, such as local colleges and organisations in the voluntary and community sector, have valuable expertise and resources that schools can share and a 'mixed economy' may sometimes provide the best service overall.

Recommendations

- ❖ A number of recommendations are made in relation to consultation with the community, sustaining adult learning provision, assuring the quality of adult learning and working in partnership. Please see the publication *Adding Value* for more information.

Output

Haggart, J. & R. Spacey, 2006. *Adding Value: Adult Learning and Extended Services*. Leicester: NIACE. Available electronically only at:
<http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/Family/Adding-Value.pdf>

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Project Manager: Jeanne Haggart /Rachel Spacey

Email: rachel.spacey@niace.org.uk

Requests for 'Key Findings' in other formats, such as large print, are welcome. We would be pleased to consider your request.

niace
 promoting adult learning

21 De Montfort Street
 Leicester LE1 7GE

Tel: +44 (0)116 204 4200/1
 Fax: +44 (0)116 2854514
 Website: www.niace.org.uk

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