






Brightening Lives

What adults with learning difficulties say about learning

Eating & Moving slow
what is good about going to college.

1) Learning 
meeting friends, making new friends
personal/achieving goals, NVQs
Qualification
learning new skills 


2) what could be better?
to get a job 
- work based learning
- more places at the college?
- No bullying.
- more choices of courses 
help

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promoting adult learning



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NIACE is the national voluntary organisation for adult learners and adult learning. It seeks to engage more and different adults in better quality learning of all kinds. For more information about NIACE, go to www.niace.org.uk

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This brochure is also available from the following webpage:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/brightening-lives.pdf>

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- Photosymbols
- CHANGE Picture Bank
- Penny Mendonca
- NIACE’s picture library



This report is about what adults with learning difficulties think about learning.

NIACE is an organisation that works on issues about adult learning. NIACE was asked by the Government to find out from people with learning difficulties what they think is important about learning. The Government wanted to know if money for learning is being spent on courses that people with learning difficulties want to do and think are important.



NIACE sent out questions by email and also met with some people with learning difficulties to talk about learning and courses.

Lots of people wanted to have their say. They were from colleges, adult education, employment services, day care centres, hospitals, Learning Disability Partnership Boards, residential homes and voluntary organisations. Some people just gave their home address.

What are you learning?

Most of you said you were learning:

- Art and craft – Jewellery making, Art from around the world, Ceramics, Water colour painting.
- English and maths – Fun with numbers, Count me in.
- Cookery – Survival cookery, Indian cookery, Cooking on a budget.
- Computers – Creative Computing, IT for beginners.
- Independent Living Skills – Towards Independence, Looking after yourself, Moving out, Personal grooming.
- WorkSkills – Careers on course, Preparing for work, Interview skills, What next?



Why you choose to do these course/classes

- Get a job – 'I want to be a chef and start my own business'.
- Read and write better – 'I want to get better at spelling'.
- Make new friends – 'I enjoy the social contact'.
- Feel more confident – 'I want the confidence to move out of my parents' house'.
- Occupy your mind – 'I like to keep my brain active'.

Some of you were in classes because you were sent. You did not have a choice.

'I was sent, I did not choose, happy to come'.
'No choice'.

For others there was not much on offer when it came to choosing courses.

'Not many courses available for learners with profound disabilities'.

At the learner meetings people with learning difficulties told us that having a choice is important.

What help do you need to learn?

A few of you said that you don't need help.

Lots of you told us you need 'support' to help you learn.

Most of you get the help you need. Some do not.



Support means different things to different people.

- Learning Support Assistants – ‘An LSA to make sure I understand’; ‘I am blind so I need reassurance’; ‘Someone to show me what to do and how to use the equipment’.
- Good teaching – ‘A teacher who understands how to help at my level’; ‘I am hearing impaired so I need a patient tutor who will talk slow and loud’.

Some of you needed support with resources and materials.

- ‘Worksheets made bigger and dotted writing’.
- ‘Adjustable table’.
- ‘Communication support because I sign’.

Some of you said how important the learning environment is:

- Having a good place to learn – ‘I like to learn in a quiet room, I do not like noise’.
- Transport – ‘I have seizures so I need someone with me when I travel’.



What is important about learning?

Many of you answered this question differently.

The most common thing you said was that learning was important because:

- Learning makes people happy – ‘It’s about being happy’, ‘I enjoy what I learn’, ‘It makes me feel like I am being included’, ‘Freedom’.
- It helps people become more independent – ‘It will mean that I can do more for myself in future’, ‘If I don’t learn I won’t know how to do something’.
- Learning keeps people active and occupies people’s minds. – ‘It keeps my brain active’, ‘It helps me pass the time’.
- It keeps you socialising with others – ‘I like to join in the community, getting out for a coffee’.
- It helps you get a job – ‘It’s important to learn because working in a shop you need to be able to count money’, ‘I want to work in a pub’.
- Learning gets you qualifications – ‘I get a certificate at the end’.

What learners at

The Big Partnership Board Meeting

said about learning



What could be better about learning?

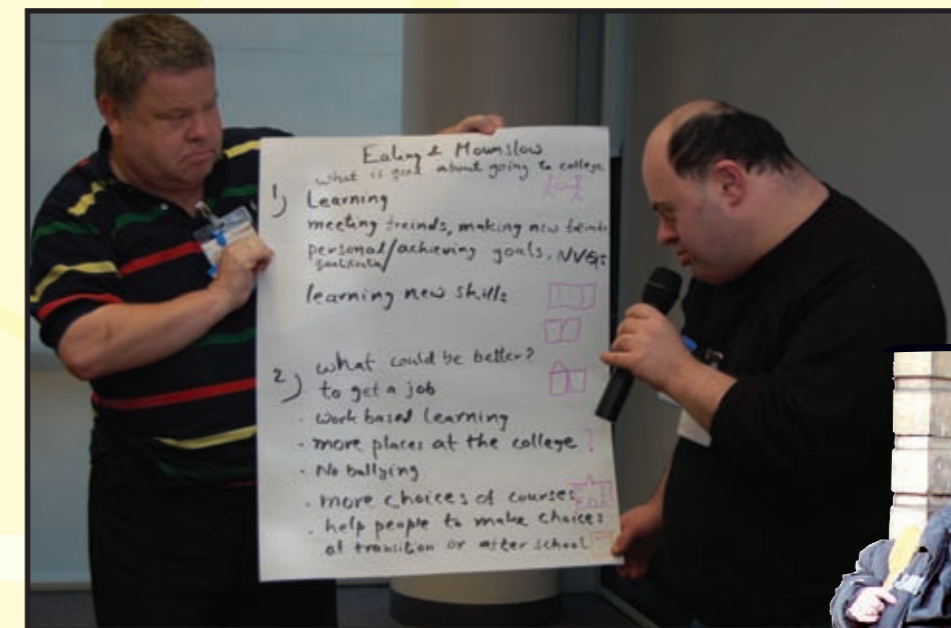
- Some of you said that you would like the chance to learn more, new and different skills – ‘I want to learn real life things; pay bills, use bank, understand letters’.
- Some of you said that you wanted classes that had been closed to be reopened – ‘I want to do music again; ‘Bring back music and dance’, ‘There is no IT class in the daytime’.
- A few said they would like better facilities – ‘Cheaper food prices’, ‘Bigger rooms’, ‘Carpets dull and disgusting, more posters and pictures on the walls’.

Better Access



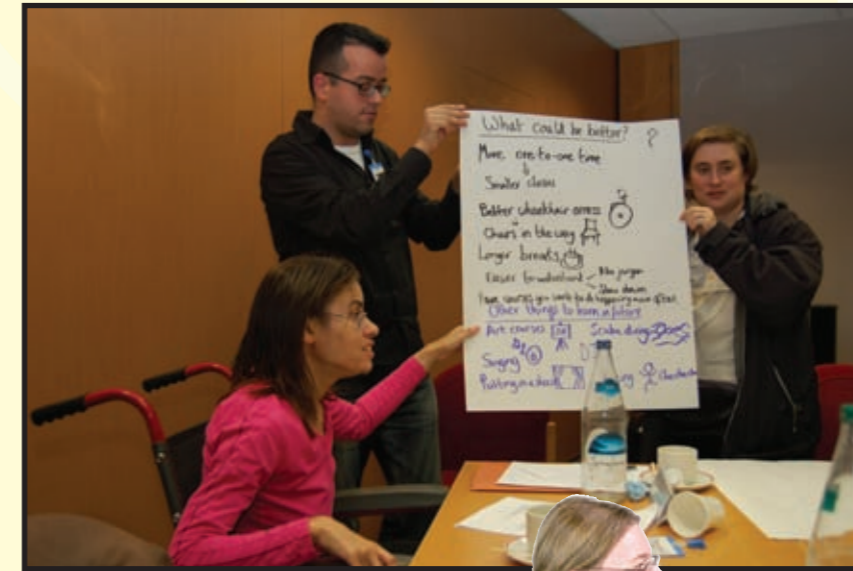
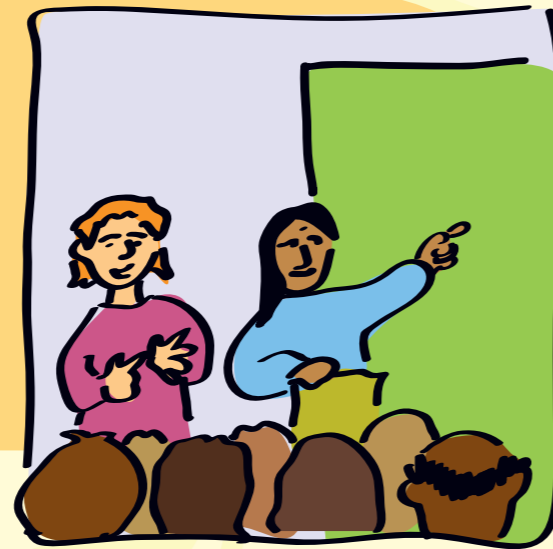
At the learner events learners said:

- They wanted to be on courses that would help them get jobs.
- Staff do not always listen.
- Mainstream education and job centres were not doing enough.
- Courses were too expensive and they needed help to pay.
- Some staff don't know how to work with people with learning disabilities – they need training.
- Transport should be reliable, accessible and affordable.
- They could help colleges to plan their courses.



Your ideas for making learning better

- Learn on the job
- More courses leading to work
- Help other students to be inclusive
- Make information accessible
- Provide training for staff
- Have courses with no exams



- Person-centred planning – to plan what's important to the person
- How to get to college and with whom
- Good transition planning with young people at school
- Planning with individuals not groups

We asked you to give us ideas about what you might like to learn in the future. You had some very exciting ideas. Here are some of them.

- How to speak Chinese
- How to be a DJ
- Football
- Zoologist
- Dance in a wheelchair
- More about history, WW2
- Course on mobile phones
- Ballroom dancing
- Forensic Science
- How to be a joiner
- How to use a DVD
- How to look after children
- Course on small animals
- Film study and location
- Recycling
- How to be a drama teacher
- Read papers
- Science
- Pre historic life
- Genetics
- Car Valeting
- Patchwork
- Accountancy



Ideas for using this report

- You can use a highlighter and highlight the bits you most agree with.
- You could use it in class to have a discussion about your learning and what you think about it.
- You can bring it along to your local Learning Disability Partnership Board and show it to them.
- You can send it to your student forum or give it to your student rep.
- You can bring it with you to your yearly review.
- If you attend a Day Care Centre you could bring it in and show it to others and get a discussion going about learning.
- You could put it in your college library so others get a chance to read it.
- You could pin it to the student notice board so others get a chance to read it.
- If you get a chance to attend any meetings about learning bring it with you.

Brightening Lives

What adults with learning difficulties say about learning

This booklet is for people with learning difficulties. It is the result of a learner survey carried out by NIACE on what people with learning difficulties say about learning.

We spoke to learners at workshops and we also asked learners to respond to a survey. We were amazed to get nearly 1,300 responses.

We called the booklet **Brightening Lives** because one learner told us that learning brightens her life.

