



NIACE Dysgu Cymru: Evaluation and Impact Assessment

Final Report



Research

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NIACE Dysgu Cymru: Evaluation and Impact Assessment

Audience	All partners concerned with education, lifelong learning and skills.
Overview	This report presents the findings of an evaluation and impact study in respect of the work carried out by NIACE Dysgu Cymru on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. The study was carried out by Arad Consulting between February and June 2007.
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Related documents	The Learning Country – Vision into Action (October 2004) Making the Connections – Delivering Better Services in Wales (October 2004) The National Planning and Funding System (NPFS): A Guide

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
PART I: SETTING THE SCENE.....	8
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION	8
1.1 Purpose of the report	8
1.2 Overview.....	8
1.3 Aim, scope and objectives of the evaluation	9
1.4 Methodology	10
1.5 Definitions and terminology	11
1.6 Acknowledgements.....	11
2 NDC'S WORK FOR THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT.....	12
2.1 The organisation and its functions	12
2.2 Funding received for NDC services and activities undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government	13
PART II: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF EVALUATION FINDINGS	15
3 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND LIAISON	16
3.1 Overview of qualitative findings	16
3.2 Views of learning providers.....	17
3.3 Policy development and networking.....	20
4 BENEFITS OF NDC ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES.....	22
4.1 Views of learning providers.....	22
4.2 Overview of qualitative findings	25
5 ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING	28
5.1 Overview of qualitative findings	28
5.2 Views of learning providers.....	29
5.3 Assessing the impact of NDC's advocacy and lobbying.....	31
6 NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES	34
6.1 Information on the campaigns and initiatives.....	34
6.2 Background: key findings from secondary data and previous evaluation reports.....	35
6.3 Overview of interviewees' comments	37
6.4 Views of learning providers.....	38
6.5 Proposals for the future development of NDC's campaigns.....	40
7 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING	42
7.1 Overview of qualitative findings	42
7.2 Views of learning providers.....	43
8 NDC'S CONTRIBUTION TO QUALITY AND STANDARDS	46
8.1 Overview of qualitative findings	46
8.2 Survey findings.....	47
PART III: EVALUATION OUTCOMES.....	49
9 RECOMMENDATIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION.....	49
9.1 Future drivers of change	49
9.2 Overview of benefits of NDC activities and NDC-run campaigns.....	50
9.3 Comments on strategic priorities	53
9.4 Recommendations.....	55
ANNEX 1 Evaluation questionnaire	61
ANNEX 2 Notes from interview with Ellinor Haase, EAEA.....	66
ANNEX 3: Documents and references reviewed.....	68

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

- 1) This report presents the findings of an evaluation and impact study in respect of the work carried out by NIACE Dysgu Cymru (NDC) on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. The study was carried out by Arad Consulting between February and June 2007.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

- 2) The main aim of the study was defined as follows:
 - To undertake an impact evaluation of the work of NIACE Dysgu Cymru in Wales, that will help shape future direction, priorities and activities.

It was emphasised from the outset that the study should focus upon the work of NDC as defined in contracts held between the organisation and the Welsh Assembly Government. As such, the evaluation was not concerned with NDC's wider aims and objectives as a charitable organisation.

METHODOLOGY

- 3) Three methods of data and evidence collection were employed:
 - A review of relevant literature and documentation, including Welsh Assembly Government publications, NDC documentations including past evaluations for NDC campaigns and projects and literature on other models of supporting adult and community learning across Europe.
 - Secondly, interviews and focus groups with representatives of NIACE Dysgu Cymru, Welsh Assembly Government officials and other partner organisations.
 - Thirdly, a survey of providers of adult learning.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- 4) NDC has increased its profile and presence in terms of its contribution to policy development, particularly over the last 12-18 months. This is in part, although not exclusively, as a direct result of the Director of NDC's representation on key policy review groups.
- 5) NDC interacts effectively with key policy influencers, both within the Welsh Assembly Government and with partner organisations.
- 6) NDC's policy development work is highly valued by practitioners, who view the organisation as an authoritative source of information and advice on policy relating to adult learning and ACL. This was evidenced in the survey findings which revealed that 98 per cent of respondents consider that NDC is effective in promoting engagement among practitioners in policy debate relating to adult community learning (ACL).

BENEFITS OF NDC ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

- 7) NDC's activities and services are highly valued by learning providers, with conferences and events, and advocacy and lobbying reported as being beneficial to approximately 90 per cent of survey respondents.
- 8) Learning providers value the additional capacity that NDC offers the adult learning sector in terms of enabling information sharing and facilitating networking opportunities.
- 9) NDC's work relating to family and intergenerational learning and in support of older learners – although less well publicised and less well known– is also considered to be very beneficial to learning providers.
- 10) NDC's overall role and the services that it provides to its range of clients needs to be made more explicit to its members, key stakeholders, and funders.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

- 11) NDC contributes to building an evidence base in support of the benefits of adult learning that relates to a broad range of policy areas.

- 12) NDC is recognised as being an effective advocate of adult learning at a national level and provides effective lobbying on behalf of adult learners and adult learning providers across Wales.
- 13) Its contribution, in terms of advocacy and lobbying, is slightly less effective at a local level, according to the results of the survey conducted as part of this evaluation.
- 14) NDC's contribution to the promotion of adult learning and as a source of support and information to learning providers generally is significant and is widely appreciated. Measuring the impact of NDC's advocacy work in quantitative terms is inherently problematic.

NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

- 15) Adult Learners' Week stands out as NDC's most effective campaign. The total number of participants has increased fourfold in six years, with 16,743 taking part in 862 activities last year. 84 per cent of learning providers surveyed consider ALW to be an effective campaign.
- 16) In 2006 alone, the cost saving generated through media coverage achieved for ALW alone was £184,531, representing a considerable return in terms of added value.
- 17) Just under 30 per cent of respondents consider Taking Control to be ineffective. 24 per cent consider Sign Up Season to be ineffective. A review of the way in which these campaigns are structured and delivered should be undertaken to assess what opportunities exist to modify activities and broaden their appeal.
- 18) Learning Festivals are a positive development and are an indication of enthusiasm among practitioners and providers for year-round promotion of adult learning opportunities.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

- 19) NDC has established strong links with a range of partners at a national level. Building on existing partnerships, there is scope for NDC to become more actively involved with discussion and debate around issues of workforce skills and development.

20) In terms of the future development, there may be opportunities for NDC to become involved in other groups to further its influence in the area of workforce skills. NDC should explore such opportunities in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government.

NDC's CONTRIBUTION TO QUALITY AND STANDARDS

21) Through its project work, NDC is actively involved in developing tools and frameworks to help raise quality and standards in adult learning. This research should not be confined to the archives. There is more that could be done to ensure these tools are further developed, tested and applied in mainstream practice.

22) Effective practice in adult community learning identified in Estyn inspections could be disseminated – possibly through NDC.

FUTURE DRIVERS OF CHANGE

23) The Arad Consulting team used the opportunity afforded by this evaluation to collect views on the issues that are most likely to impact on NDC's work during the coming years. The most prevalent points and questions to emerge are listed below. NDC will need to ensure it is well-positioned to respond to these as it carries out its work on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. These drivers include:

- **Further Education Review**
- Changes to the **National Planning and Funding System**
- **The Leitch Review** and its outcomes
- **Promotion of informal / non-accredited learning**
- **Convergence Funding** and the opportunities afforded
- **Making the Connections**

RECOMMENDATIONS

24) The following recommendations have emerged from the study. See the full report for further details, including lead organisations for each recommendation.

- i. Recognising NDC's increasingly important contribution in this area, the Welsh Assembly Government should continue to support NIACE Dysgu Cymru in its activities related to policy and strategy development.
- ii. The annual review of activity should be used as an opportunity to review and define the specific activities and services to be delivered the following year by NDC under contract with the Welsh Assembly Government. This will ensure that the activities are in line with current policy. In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government should consider requiring specific reporting on the impact of NDC's network development work.
- iii. Drawing on the experience gained through the development of Learning at Work Day, and the evaluation of that event NDC should develop policy and funding options outlining how it can contribute further to policy and strategy development in the area of workforce skills development and work-based learning. The Welsh Assembly Government should consider any proposals within the context of other developments in support of work-based learning.
- iv. The Welsh Assembly Government should review the range of services funded through its contracts with NIACE Dysgu Cymru on an annual basis, in line with current policy developments and prioritising support for those activities which are considered to be most effective across the widest audience.
- v. NDC should seek to increase its project-based and research activity, with an emphasis on developing materials and tools that can be applied in mainstream adult learning practice. NDC is not, and should not be, reliant on the Welsh Assembly Government to fund its research and development activities however there may be opportunities for NDC to contribute its expertise to the Welsh Assembly Government's programme of research.
- vi. NDC should prioritise upgrading its website and improve the way in which presents and disseminates information on, and on behalf of, the adult learning sector.
- vii. The Welsh Assembly Government should continue to support NIACE Dysgu

Cymru to co-ordinate Adult Learners' Week, in recognition of the campaign's successes and the profile it achieves for adult learning. NDC should also explore possible opportunities to part-fund ALW through Convergence Funding.

- viii. NDC should examine the feasibility of leading longitudinal research to determine the longer term impact of its campaigns. This could be taken forward as part of Recommendation 5. NDC should examine whether existing databases could be used as a starting point to track the learning outcomes of a sample of individuals involved in the campaigns.
- ix. The Welsh Assembly Government should request that NDC undertakes a review of Sign Up Season and Taking Control, concentrating on the campaigns' structure and outcomes. The review should recommend ways in which these programmes can be revised and enhanced to broaden their appeal to learning providers and the broader public.
- x. NDC should develop a proposal that outlines its potential contribution in the area of skills and workforce development, and to advise of any other key partnerships related to the skills agenda where representation from NDC could be beneficial.
- xi. NIACE Dysgu Cymru should work with the Welsh Assembly Government to raise the profile of some of its less well-known networks, notably the RAMOD networks in support of learners from BME communities and the family and intergenerational learning network.
- xii. NDC should seek to coordinate and disseminate effective practice in adult and community learning, as identified in the local area inspections completed by Estyn to date.
- xiii. NIACE should consider what further opportunities exist to work in collaboration with DYSG / DELLS to help promote quality in adult learning. This could be taken forward in conjunction with Recommendations 5 and 8.

PART I: SETTING THE SCENE

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION

1.1 Purpose of the report

Arad Consulting was commissioned in February 2007 to carry out an evaluation and impact study of the work undertaken by NIACE Dysgu Cymru in respect of the contracts it holds with the Welsh Assembly Government.

This report presents the findings of the evaluation and includes conclusions and recommendations to help shape the future direction, priorities and activities of NIACE Dysgu Cymru in respect of work carried out on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government.

1.2 Overview

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is the national, independent organisation for adult learning in England and Wales. As a registered charity, founded in 1921, NIACE both represents and advances the interests of all adult learners and potential learners – especially those who have benefited least from education and training. NIACE aims to improve opportunities for adult learners across all sectors with a particular focus on those adults who have not had successful access to learning in their initial education.

NIACE Cymru was established in 1985 to promote its wider aims in Wales, including advising national and local government on issues affecting adult learners. Following devolution and the election of the first Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in May 1999, NIACE Cymru adopted a revised remit as NIACE Dysgu Cymru, underpinned by the same core values and guided by the NDC Management Group.

The scope of NIACE Dysgu Cymru's (NDC) work has increased considerably in recent years. The organisation is well-known for its role in organising and promoting a series of high-profile national campaigns, including Adult Learners'

Week (created by NIACE in 1992) and Sign Up Season. It facilitates a wide range of local and regional networks and partnerships, involving learners, practitioners and partner organisations responsible for the planning and delivery of adult learning. Finally, it plays an important role in monitoring, informing and influencing policy development at a national level.

The organisation receives grant aid from the Welsh Assembly Government under Section 14 of the Education Act 2002 to carry out a number of specific functions and activities. NDC also receives separate funding from the Welsh Assembly Government and from the European Social Fund in respect of its national campaigns work.

1.3 Aim, scope and objectives of the evaluation

The aim of this evaluation, as defined by the Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills, was to:

- To undertake an impact evaluation of the work of NIACE Dysgu Cymru in Wales, that will help shape future direction, priorities and activities.

It was emphasised from the outset that the study should focus upon the work of NDC as defined in contracts held between the organisation and the Welsh Assembly Government. As such, the evaluation was not concerned with NDC's wider aims and objectives as a charitable organisation.

While the evaluation concentrated predominantly on the work of NIACE in Wales, comparisons were drawn with the activities of NIACE in England and other similar bodies in a broader European context.

The objectives of the research were outlined as follows:

- To develop an approach to measure the impact and effectiveness of NDC in carrying out its work under contract with the Welsh Assembly Government;
- To review past organisational and campaign evaluations;
- To obtain the views of key stakeholders on NDC performance, role and impact;
- To obtain the views of NDC Management Group on NDC's performance, role and impact;

- To obtain the views of learners on the impact and effectiveness of the campaigns;
- To obtain the views of learning providers (FE, HE, work- based and community on the impact and effectiveness of NIACE's activities and campaigns; and
- To present options for the future strategic development of NDC insofar as such options would better enable it to assist the Welsh Assembly Government in achieving its objectives.

1.4 Methodology

The methodology employed during the evaluation consisted of three methods of data and evidence collection.

Firstly, the team reviewed a broad range of relevant literature and documentation. This included, but was not limited to, contracts held between NIACE Dysgu Cymru and the Welsh Assembly Government; evaluations of past NDC projects and campaigns; information and publications on the NDC website; press coverage of NDC's campaigns and activities and NDC's formal responses to WAG consultation documents / policy documents. The team also reviewed European literature on other models of supporting adult and community learning, using documentation published by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA).

Secondly, interviews were conducted with a list of key individuals including

- NIACE Dysgu Cymru staff
- Welsh Assembly Government officials with experience of working with NDC in different contexts;
- Representatives of other partner organisations.

The intention was to speak to a range of individuals, representing the full range of NIACE's activities and projects. A semi-structured interview guide, based on the evaluation's core themes, was agreed with the client and used to direct the interviews. In total, the evaluation team interviewed 15 individuals during March and April 2007 and carried out a focus group with members of Community Learning Wales.

Thirdly, the evaluation team conducted a survey of providers of adult learning. Using databases held by NIACE Dysgu Cymru, a distribution list of approximately 240 individuals was compiled. Bilingual questionnaires were distributed by email

and also posted on the Arad Consulting website to enable individuals to download an electronic copy of the questionnaire to complete. 51 completed questionnaires were received, which represents a reasonably favourable response, given the fact that the questionnaire requested a blend of qualitative and quantitative information. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Annex 1.

1.5 Definitions and terminology

Our approach to this evaluation has sought to distinguish between adult and community learning (ACL) and adult learning more generally. In this report references to adult learning should be taken to mean the broad field of adult learning, encompassing ACL and all other learning that is accessible by adults, in FE, HE and in all other contexts. Where issues are raised specifically in reference to learning in the community, we have used the term adult and community learning or the abbreviation ACL.

1.6 Acknowledgements

We would like to place on record our thanks to all those who contributed their time and effort to this evaluation. All contributions – both written submissions and during interviews with the evaluation team – were greatly appreciated and provided the team with a substantial body of evidence and information upon which to base this report.

2 NDC'S WORK FOR THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

2.1 The organisation and its functions

NIACE Dysgu Cymru comprises some 110 organisations including Local Authorities, colleges, universities, community and voluntary organisations and individual members throughout Wales. It is a part of NIACE (England and Wales) and guided by an elected Management Group, which is a formal committee of NIACE reporting to the NIACE Company Board. The Management Group, representing all sectors, and shortly to include two learner representatives, is bonded by a common purpose of focusing specifically on the needs of adult learners.¹

NDC's website further notes that it is funded by a combination of Welsh Assembly Government funding, through research and development projects, other funding sources (including the WLGA) and through the subscription fees of its members.

The organisation undertakes the following activities and services. It is important to note that this list denotes a wider range of activities than those funded by the Welsh Assembly Government.

- Advocates in particular on behalf of those adults who are least skilled, most disadvantaged and whose motivation, economic and social circumstances present barriers to engaging in learning.
- Promotes adult learning through organising Adult Learners' Week, Sign Up Season and Taking Control campaigns, to motivate adults to want to learn and supporting local education and training providers in engaging new and different learners.
- Facilitates the Wales Learners Network which enables Learners to contribute to and influence policy development and the provision of learning opportunities in Wales.
- Organises the annual Inspire Adult Learners and Adult Tutors Awards.
- Monitors the policy making processes of the National Assembly, and UK Parliament (where there is an impact on Wales – such as the Leitch Review of Skills) produces reports, responds to consultations and produces

¹ NIACE Dysgu Cymru website

briefing papers to inform and influence policy development as it affects adult learners.

- o Services the All Party Assembly Group on Adult Learning and engages learners, practitioners and policy-makers in debate on current issues in adult learning.
- o Acts as an agent of change through piloting innovative approaches to engaging adults in learning and conducting research and development work.
- o Supports practitioners through organising conferences and events to encourage the sharing of ideas and good practice in lifelong learning.
- o Encourages and supports collaboration between sectors for the benefit of adult learners.
- o Publishes the Learning Wales newsletter which is circulated three times a year to all members.
- o Maintains the NIACE Dysgu Cymru web-site www.niacedc.org.uk as a key source of up to date information on developments in adult learning.
- o Gives access through its links with NIACE to a vast range of definitive publications and expertise in the field of adult learning.

2.2 Funding received for NDC services and activities undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government

In 2006-07, NIACE Dysgu Cymru received £202,733 in grant funding from the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver a series of specific objectives.

Objective	Amount
Policy and strategy development and liaison	£78,539
Development of better quality and standards in ACL	£7,268
Provision of information, advice and web-based networking	£20,492
Development of family and intergenerational learning	£28,228
Development of provision for Older Learners	£28,065
Promotion and development of opportunities for Black and Minority Ethnic learners	£22,459
Fostering Wales' involvement in the development of adult education in Europe	£17,682
Total	£202,733

In addition, NIACE Dysgu Cymru receives funding for its national campaigns. The evaluation team received funding for the last three years, which is summarised in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Campaigns funding 2005-07

	Adult Learners' Week	Taking Control	Sign Up Season	Total
ESF Objective 1 2005	£159,569	£79,784	£79,784	£319,137
WAG / ELWa Obj 1 Match Funding 2005	£90,000		£55,800	£145,800
ESF Objective 3 2005	£73,041	£36,520	£36,520	£146,081
WAG / ELWa Obj 3 Match Funding 2005	75,000		£35,000	£110,000
ESF Objective 1 2006	£269,368	£100,817	£135,084	£505,269
WAG / ELWa Obj 1 Match Funding 2006		£55,800		£55,800
ESF Objective 3 2006	£51,738	£46,983	£27,069	£125,790
WAG / ELWa Obj 3 Match Funding 2006		£40,000		£40,000
WAG / ELWa Match Funding all areas 2006	£166,000		£81,400	£247,400
WAG / ELWa Match Funding all areas 2007		£143,143		£143,143
ESF Objective 1 2007		£107,441		£107,441
New WAG Funding (contracted but not yet delivered)	£254,287		£129,143	£383,430
Total	£1,139,003	£610,488	£579,800	£2,329,291
Total Funding for 2005	£397,610	£116,304	£207,104	£721,018
Total Funding for 2006	£487,106	£243,600	£243,553	£974,259
Total Funding for 2007 (to date)	254287	250584	129143	£634,014
				£2,329,291
Other income sources EQUAL	£138,845			

PART II: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

Part 2 of this report summarises the data and evidence collected through three modes of enquiry: desk research, a survey of providers of adult learning and face-to-face interviews with representatives of NDC's partner organisations.

In presenting this evidence, we have placed a higher priority on substantive comments and evidence that is validated by other sources. The breakdown of survey respondents is as follows:

DESCRIPTION	TOTAL	INCLUDES
Local authority adult learning provider / officer	11	Community Education Officers, Adult Education Officers, Project Coordinators
Local authority adult learning management	8	Heads of Community Education, Heads of Lifelong Learning / Cont. Ed., Senior Community Education Managers
TOTAL LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONDENTS	19	
FE adult learning providers / officers	5	Tutors / Lecturers, Adult Learning Development Officers
FE sector management	11	Head / Principal, Faculty / Departmental Heads Directors of Lifelong Learning, Manager of Community Learning
TOTAL FE SECTOR RESPONDENTS	16	
HE adult learning officers	4	Community Development Officers
HE sector management	4	Faculty / Departmental Heads Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
TOTAL HE SECTOR RESPONDENTS	8	
Other providers of adult learning	5	Community projects / organisations
OTHER ADULT LEARNING PROVIDERS	5	
VOLUNTARY SECTOR PROVIDERS	2	
PRIVATE SECTOR PROVIDERS	1	
TOTAL RESPONSES	51	

3 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND LIAISON

This section examines the contribution made by NIACE Dysgu Cymru towards policy development.

3.1 Overview of qualitative findings

Evidence received demonstrates that NDC has placed a considerably greater emphasis on strategic policy discussion and debate during the course of the last twelve to eighteen months. The outgoing Director of NDC has led a concerted effort to ensure that the organisation is in a position to help shape and influence policy development in the field of adult learning, as opposed to merely reacting to programmes of activity where NDC has had little impact.

A number of factors point to NDC's greater engagement with policy debate and discussion. In November 2005 the post of Policy Support Officer was created, with the specific aim of raising awareness within NDC of political and policy developments in the National Assembly. The appointment has provided benefits in terms of ensuring the organisation is better positioned to advocate on behalf of adult learning and contribute to national debate.

This move towards greater engagement in policy debate was supported by comments received by members of Community Learning Wales and other practitioners. They noted that information and advice about policy development at a national level is being fed down to learning providers, who in turn, provide feedback to NDC to help inform their advocacy at a national level.

The organisation has also been represented on a number of high profile policy review groups. These include the Rees Review Groups into student finance, the Graham Review of Part Time Higher Education Study and the ongoing Further Education Review. In addition, in late 2006 the Director of NDC was appointed to the Lifelong Learning and Skills sub-group of the Ministerial Advisory Group for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

Interviews with Welsh Assembly Government officials and other strategic partners revealed the unanimous view that NDC has achieved a higher degree of visibility as an organisation as a direct result of its representation on policy review groups and its closer engagement with policy development processes. There is

evidence that this has led to changes in perception about NDC. One interviewee noted that previously NDC was possibly seen as being an

earnest but 'non-influential' organisation. This is no longer the case and clearly now NDC seeks to influence earlier during the policy-making process.

Interviewees also readily acknowledged that NDC offers knowledge and expertise of the adult learning sector that contributes to policy debate, ensuring that specific issues are taken into account and not marginalised. The work done by NDC to address fees for part-time adult learners in higher education stands as one example where the needs of part-time adult learners may have been overlooked had it not been for the evidence and advocacy provided by NDC.

It was argued by one respondent that due to the current lack of a national strategy for adult community learning, developments and activities in ACL are not taking place within the context of a coherent programme with sufficiently clear national aims and objectives. As a result, NDC's policy development work is obliged to cover a very broad arena of policy issues.

NDC's role is to raise awareness of the particular issues facing adult learners and providers of adult learning and to ensure that policymakers take these issues into account when discussing and formulating policy. As such, it can be argued that positioning itself so as to be able to advise national government on issues affecting adult learners is, at one level, a successful outcome in itself for an organisation in NDC's position.

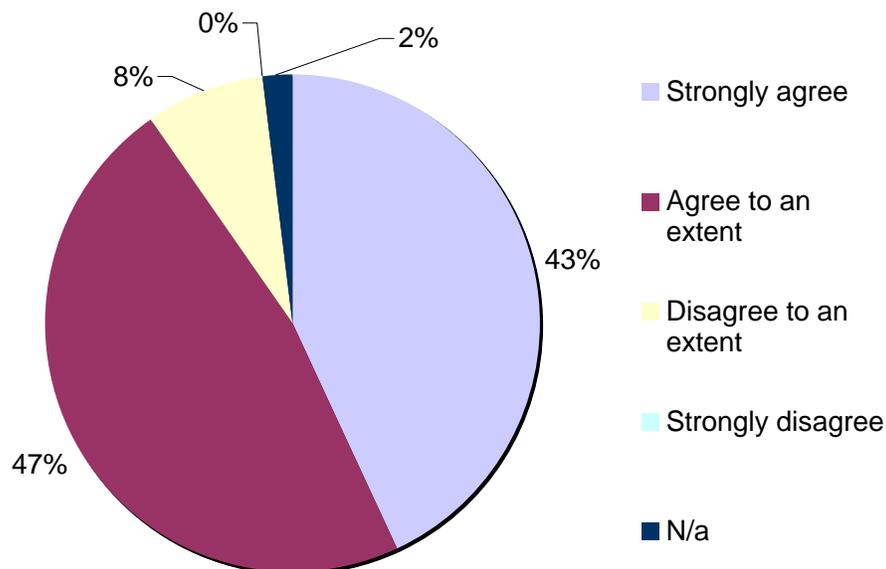
3.2 Views of learning providers

The key to this element of NDC's work is the organisation's ability to liaise effectively with learning providers and to ensure that it acts as an enabling organisation. The questionnaire was designed so as to gauge views on the effectiveness of NDC in promoting engagement among practitioners in policy debate. It also invited comments on the extent to which NDC had raised awareness of policy development and the implications for those involved in delivering adult learning.

HEADLINE SURVEY DATA: POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND LIAISON

- **98 per cent** of respondents consider that NIACE Dysgu Cymru (NDC) is effective in promoting engagement among practitioners in policy debate relating to adult community learning (ACL).
- **94 per cent** stated that NDC is effective in promoting engagement among practitioners in policy debate relating to adult learning more generally.
- **90 per cent** of respondents agree that NDC provides benefits to their organisation in terms of sharing information and ideas on good practice. (see Figure 1). **8 per cent** disagree with the above.
- **76 per cent** of respondents consider that NDC's contribution to policy development through formal reviews (e.g. Rees reviews, FE review) is beneficial. **20 per cent** were unaware of this aspect of NDC's work and **4 per cent** consider it to be of little or no benefit.

Figure 1: My institution / organisation has benefited from NDC's work in sharing ideas on good practice in adult community learning



Source: Arad Consulting Adult Learning Provider Survey

Survey results reveal very strong support for the work carried out by NDC. Respondents value NDC's role in facilitating meetings and networks that enable practitioners from different sectors to share ideas, discuss policies and receive updates on recent initiatives.

It is very useful to have a forum to share views across providers, and one which takes a lead on important issues affecting the sector, particularly in a time of limited funding.

Several respondents noted that NDC's independence is crucial in enabling them to disseminate information and involve a range of organisations in discussing policy. Another respondent noted:

They are in a strong position to act as a conduit between practitioners and policymakers at all levels, researching into and advocating for the interests of learners who are in many cases the 'Cinderellas' of learning.

NDC is considered by many of those who responded to the questionnaire to be the authoritative voice in advocating on behalf of adult learners and providers of adult learning, due to the experience and knowledge that exists within the organisation.

While NDC's conferences and seminars were cited as being of particular benefit by a number of individuals, the personal support and assistance received from individuals within NIACE Dysgu Cymru was also mentioned. It is clear from the evidence received in questionnaires that staff within the organisation have established good working relationships and trust across a range of providers and practitioners.

A small number of respondents raised questions about the focus of NDC's work on policy development and the processes employed when consulting practitioners. There was a desire on the part of some practitioners to be able to have a greater say in policy positions taken by NDC on certain issues. Related to this, another respondent noted the difficulty of ensuring that the interests of all sectors / organisations involved in adult community learning are represented:

In the field of community learning and development there's a good deal that goes on that is below NIACE's radar. It's not always clear to me whether there is a clear strategy to contact those who work with learners outside the more formal institutions.

Another expressed concern that not enough effort was being invested in policy development linking basic skills to community learning. While this is not an issue that NDC are heavily involved with at the moment, it is possible that further opportunities exist to build partnerships with other organisations involved with the promotion of basic skills.

3.3 Policy development and networking

NIACE Dysgu Cymru works with a range of organisations in order to maximise its influence in the area of policy and strategy development. Partnerships with *fforwm*, Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) Cymru and Lifelong Learning UK were cited during the course of our discussions. There are clearly very close links between NDC and senior figures across these organisations. Through these links NDC is able to forge strategic partnerships, forming what one respondent described as a collective 'body politic' which makes an important contribution to political and policy debate and issues surrounding adult learning.

In some instances, this networking extends to NDC and other organisations consulting one another on policy issues and formal responses in order to gain an understanding of the key priorities and concerns held by each. As a result of these partnerships NDC is therefore well-positioned to play an active role in policy development, while seeking to enhance its influence by means of strategic partnerships with a number of key associations and representative bodies.

The capacity of the organisation to network effectively also extends to NDC's Management Committee. One member of the committee sits on the Ministerial Advisory Group for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, thereby providing a means for issues related to adult learning to be flagged up at the most senior level.

The composition of NDC's Management Committee was, in fact, the subject of discussion during a number of interviews. The Management Committee now includes representation from across a broader range of organisations and sectors, including a sector skills council and from Jobcentre Plus. This reflects the fact that NDC as an organisation is keen to become more involved with the skills agenda and workforce development, where possible contributing positively to policy development in these areas which have important links to adult learning.

A further example of this re-positioning of NDC's work over the last eighteen months or so has been its efforts to stimulate debate in Wales on the Leitch Review of Skills.

CONCLUSIONS

- NDC has increased its profile and presence in terms of its contribution to policy development, particularly so over the last 12-18 months, in part, although not exclusively as a direct result of the Director of NDC's representation on key policy review groups.
- NDC interacts effectively with key policy influencers, both within the Welsh Assembly Government and with partner organisations.
- NDC's policy development work is highly valued by practitioners, who view the organisation as an authoritative source of information and advice on policy relating to adult learning and ACL.

4 BENEFITS OF NDC ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

For the most part, this section draws on evidence collected through the survey of learning providers. Comments received during interviews with relevant stakeholders are less relevant, given that those representatives did not consider themselves to be direct beneficiaries of NDC's activities and therefore did not feel well-placed to comment.

4.1 Views of learning providers

The questionnaire issued to providers requested their views on the extent to which they benefit from a number of the core services and activities carried out by NDC. Again, a clear majority of respondents answered positively, with a number elaborating on the specific benefits that their organisation enjoys.

HEADLINE SURVEY DATA: BENEFITS OF NDC ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

- **92 per cent** of respondents consider the conferences and events managed by NDC to be beneficial. The remaining **8 per cent** do not attend these events or are unaware of them.
- **86 per cent** of respondents state that NDC's advocacy and lobbying work is beneficial to their organisation. The remaining **14 per cent** are unaware of, or have not used, these services.
- **78 per cent** consider that regional practitioner networks are of benefit to their organisation. **12 per cent** answered that these networks are of little or no benefit.
- **67 per cent** of respondents report that family and intergenerational networks are beneficial to their organisation. **4 per cent** consider them to be 'of little or no benefit' and **29 per cent** have not been involved with these networks.

Table 2.

Respondents' views on how beneficial the following aspects of NDC's work are to their organisation. (Numbers denote % of all responses.)

	Conferences and events	Regional practitioners Networks	Advocacy and lobbying	Family & Inter-generational Networks	Work with older learners
Very beneficial	35	33	47	25	27
Beneficial at times	57	45	39	41	47
Of little or no benefit	0	12	0	4	6
N/a – am not aware of / do not use this	8	10	14	29	18

Source: Arad Consulting Adult Learning Provider Survey

Table 2, above, reveals that of those who have attended events arranged by NDC, 100 per cent consider them to be beneficial. The same is true of NDC's advocacy and lobbying work, where all respondents reported it as being 'very beneficial' or 'beneficial at times'.

NDC's role in organising conferences and events was the activity that was most widely appreciated among those who completed questionnaires with over 90 per cent of respondents noting that they consider such events to be beneficial. These conferences were seen as important for publicising information, disseminating research and highlighting key issues facing those involved in adult learning.

Practitioners don't always have the time or breadth of knowledge to highlight the issues which crop up across all sorts of areas; NIACE Dysgu Cymru's work enables us to feel reassured that someone is on the case and will alert us to common - and some uncommon - problems and issues.

These and other similar comments reveal that NDC provides additional capacity to learning providers, both in terms of information sharing and facilitating networking among organisations. Related to this point, a number of those

surveyed commented that NDC generates added value for the adult learning sector through the (human) resources it has at its disposal and investments in such activities outlined above.

There was also evidence that learning providers consider that NDC's campaigns provide further benefits by serving as catalysts for their own internal planning. One respondent revealed that:

We use the annual campaigns to help focus and plan our own provision and to aid our campaigning, working closely with other providers.

As noted in Table 2, above, an overwhelming majority of survey respondents also stated that NDC's facilitation of regional practitioner events was beneficial. There was particular appreciation from some quarters for the work carried out through the family and intergenerational networks, which was described as being 'innovative and of the highest calibre'.

The activity considered least beneficial to those who took part in the survey was the coordination of regional practitioners' networks. Even in this case, however, over three quarters of participants noted that their organisation had benefited from these networks. 12 per cent reported that regional practitioners' networks were of little or no benefit. It should be noted, however, that there was only limited detail to substantiate these views, with any objections referring to such events as being 'talking shops'. No suggestions were made as to how better use could be made of the networks.

Of all the activities NIACE DC undertakes, advocacy and lobbying was considered to be the most beneficial by respondents. This report will return to issues around advocacy and lobbying in greater detail in the following section. However, judging by the comments received, there is a widespread sense that NDC, through its events, campaigns and policy dissemination, serves the adult learning sector very effectively.

One particular example cited, was that of Community Learning Wales, which NDC supports and facilitates and is related to its work with regional networks.

NDC brings an independent, professional approach to the work of Community Learning Wales, and takes its collective views to a wide and relevant audience

Some of NDC's most targeted activities such as those relating to family and intergenerational learning and work with older learners (the Older and Bolder initiative) are understandably less well known to many providers who are not directly involved in this work. Nevertheless, this work is also highly valued among those who are familiar with the work.

The Intergenerational Learning Network provides a valuable opportunity to share ideas and information with a wide range of practitioners from a variety of organisations.

Additional comments were received in relation to the potential benefits that could be gained through greater engagement with Welsh for adults. One respondent observed that NDC's involvement with the Learner of the Year award at the National Eisteddfod has raised its profile in this area. It was suggested that this could be built upon by considering the introduction of additional awards during Adult Learners' Week related to Welsh for adults or learning Welsh as a family.

NDC can therefore be seen to have succeeded in raising awareness of the needs of practitioners, stakeholders, representatives and learners themselves. Given that this work is considered to be of value and benefit across the adult learning sector, there is a case for further promoting and disseminating NDC's work in this area – to both practitioners and at a political level.

4.2 Overview of qualitative findings

One issue that was raised by interviewees when asked about the benefits of NDC's activities and services was that of a slight ambiguity relating to who is, or who are, NDC's client(s). It was suggested during a number of interviews that there appears to be an inherent tension between NDC on the one hand receiving grant funding to deliver services on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, whilst also engaging in debate at the highest level to seek to influence and steer policy direction.

This is to a large extent unavoidable, perhaps, given the nature of Welsh civil society, where the relationship between the Welsh Assembly Government (and local government) and large parts of the voluntary sector is often a close one. There is a clear understanding of this close relationship between government

and NDC amongst NDC staff and members of its Management Group, even if it is not always clearly understood by all stakeholders and practitioners.

It appeared to some interviewees that the organisation has multiple clients: on one level, the Welsh Assembly Government is its client through NDC's provision of a number of core services under contracts. Equally, learning providers are a key client as they benefit from the advocacy and lobbying NDC carries out on their behalf. Thirdly, adult learners are, of course, ultimately NDC's most important beneficiaries.

There was a call from some interviewees for greater clarity on the issue of what NDC delivers – and for the benefit of whom – and possibly a restatement of its role in respect of the work it carries out as funded by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Questions were raised about the quality of NDC's website, with many of those contributing to the evaluation noting that there is room for improvement in the way information is presented. Senior management within the organisation recognise the need for the site to be improved and have recently appointed a new member of staff whose task is to develop the site in the near future so that it becomes a more useful resource for practitioners, senior managers and policy-makers in the adult learning field. This, in turn, will take place within the context of the wider and rapidly developing e-strategy of NIACE as a whole

CONCLUSIONS

- NDC's activities and services are highly valued by learning providers, with conferences and events, and advocacy and lobbying reported as being beneficial to approximately 90 per cent of survey respondents.
- Learning providers value the additional capacity that NDC offers the adult learning sector in terms of enabling information sharing and facilitating networking opportunities.
- NDC's work relating to family and intergenerational learning and in support of older learners – although less well publicised and less well known – is also considered to be very beneficial to learning providers.
- NDC's overall role and the services that it provides to its range of clients

needs to be made more explicit to its members, key stakeholders, and funders.

5 ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

5.1 Overview of qualitative findings

The evaluation team's initial work in appraising the effectiveness of NIACE Dysgu Cymru's work in advocacy and lobbying involved reviewing a sample of the organisation's written outputs, including responses to Welsh Assembly Government consultation documents. It is evident from the range of topics on which NDC has submitted evidence that the organisation recognises that the needs of adult learners are affected by a broad spectrum of issues, across different policy areas. This selected list of consultation responses illustrates the diverse areas of policy in which NDC advocates on behalf of adult learners and adult learning:

- Health Promotion Action for Older People
- Economic Contribution of Older People in Wales
- Consultation on Convergence Programmes 2007-2013
- Developing the Workforce: Learning in and for the Workplace
- W:AVE, Wales a Vibrant Economy
- The Learning County 2: Vision into Action

It is clear, therefore, that NDC takes a very broad view in relation to where it can promote adult learning and recognises that opportunities to harness the potential of adult learners should be recognised and understood in a range of policy contexts. NDC makes explicit that its first concern is for the needs of learners and argues for a range of provision and support frameworks that 'likewise put learners' needs foremost'.

Many of the recommendations and amendments that NDC propose in their submissions draw on academic research and expertise. This backs up the organisation's argument that it is helping to building a robust evidence base in support of adult learning. As highlighted in its response to *The Learning Country: Vision into Action* consultation document NDC aims to promote adult learning and lifelong learning for skills and economic prosperity; for citizenship and for personal and social wellbeing; for cultural and community development.

NDC's status as an organisation engaged in advocacy and lobbying has been further boosted recently by a number of high profile conferences it has

organised, one example being the 'Skills, Demography and the Welsh Economy' conference in January 2007. This conference focused on the outcomes of the Leitch Review of skills, and was the first such event organised in Wales following publication of the Leitch report. Whilst organised by NDC, it was co-sponsored by the SSC Lifelong Learning UK, and the Bevan Foundation, and was addressed by both Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and Andrew Davies AM, Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks.

5.2 Views of learning providers

Following on from the issues outlined, learning providers who contributed to the survey were strongly of the opinion that NDC is effective in advocating on behalf of adult learning. However, the questionnaire responses revealed that learning providers were less convinced of NDC's effectiveness at a local and community level.

HEADLINE SURVEY DATA: ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

- **94 per cent** of respondents agree that NDC is an effective advocate of adult learning at a national level. Significantly, **63 per cent** agree strongly, with a further **31 per cent** agreeing 'to an extent'.
- A lower proportion – **69 per cent** – agree with the statement that 'NDC is an effective advocate of adult learning at a local and community level'. **20 per cent** disagree with the above statement.

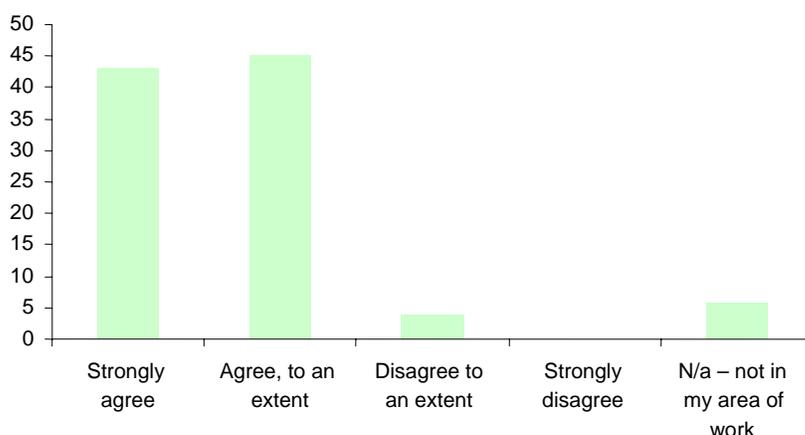
Responses to a survey question on lobbying also provided an overwhelming endorsement of NDC's work at a (Welsh) national level. (see Figure 2, below). There were differences of opinion, however, as to whether NDC succeeds in striking the right balance between its advocacy and lobbying at a national level and the effort it invests in supporting providers at a local level. A small number of respondents expressed concern that NDC could be doing more to connect directly with local learners.

While NDC does very good work at a national level through its engagement with the National Assembly, it is less effective on a local level. On some issues, there is little or no consultation with local providers.

Others, however, saw logic in NDC – a national organisation – focusing its attention on national issues.

NIACE Dysgu Cymru is more effective at a national level than it is locally. But [this] is how it should be – it is the role of local organisations and stakeholders to do this locally.

Figure 2: Responses to the following statement: 'NDC provides effective lobbying on behalf of adult learners and adult learning providers in Wales' (percentages).

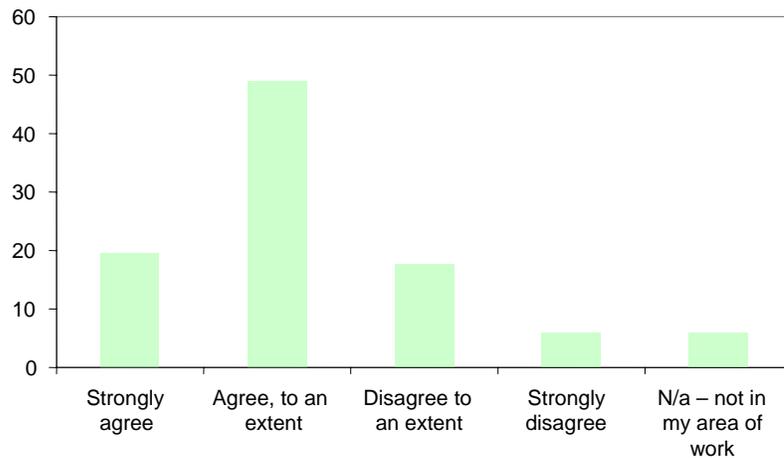


- **88 per cent** agree that NDC provides effective lobbying on behalf of adult learners and adult learning providers in Wales.

One of NIACE Dysgu Cymru's strategic objectives under its core contract with the Welsh Assembly Government is to provide information and advice to the adult learning sector. We therefore sought to use the questionnaire to gauge what contribution NDC has made to increasing knowledge and awareness about the needs of adult learners among learning providers. The responses received were somewhat mixed.

Although 69 per cent responded positively, almost a quarter disagreed that NDC has increased knowledge and awareness of the needs of adult learners. Those who disagreed included managers of adult learning provision (both in HE and FE), local authority community development officers and some voluntary sector respondents. Of course, this could be for a range of reasons and is based upon a relatively small sample size. Nevertheless, there may be a case for NDC to review the nature of the information it provides to learning providers, and this could form part of a general review of the content and presentation of its web-based documentation, which the newly appointed Web & Communications Assistant will be well placed to take forward.

Figure 3: Responses to the following statement: 'NDC has increased knowledge and awareness within your organisation regarding the needs of adult learners' (percentages).



- **69 per cent** agree that NDC has increased knowledge and awareness of the needs of adult learners.
- **Conversely, 24 per cent** disagree with the above, the majority of whom disagree only to an extent.

5.3 Assessing the impact of NDC's advocacy and lobbying

A number of clear and positive messages about NDC's advocacy work emerged from a cross-section of parties. The organisation has grown in stature in recent years, predominantly due to the creation of good links and working relationships with both partner organisations and, in some cases, Welsh Assembly Government officials. As well as a greater degree of visibility, the organisation has a stronger voice: its advocacy and lobbying is more focused and rigorous as a result. Opinion was divided however as to whether the organisation now has a more influential voice.

One representative from within the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills observed that NDC has traditionally been seen as a group that lobbies on behalf of one cohort of (often marginalised) learners. This interviewee observed that, although the organisation is known across a number of divisions within the department, they

'do not get very close to the individuals within that division who influence policy most directly, and hence in many cases have achieved only a limited impact'.

This view was countered by another interviewee who argued that NDC does achieve an impact through its connections at ministerial level. NDC is perceived as a 'critical friend' to government, an organisation that maintains its independence by scrutinising and, where necessary, challenging government policy.

To summarise, and in keeping with the conclusions noted in Section 3, NDC is an important contributor to debate at a national level, representing the views of very substantial cohort of learners and providers. It should be underlined that this in itself represents an important contribution which, as evidence reveals, is valued. The organisation has advocated on behalf of adult learners through its contribution to the Rees Reviews and Graham Review and, as the Chair of one of those reviews noted, has contributed valuable expertise to debate and discussion, from a perspective informed by the experiences of learners and practitioners.

As always, quantifying and appraising the impact of this contribution is problematic. It is perhaps best expressed in the following terms, as one contributor to the evaluation noted: that without NDC's contribution in terms of advocacy (and indeed policy development) the unique perspective of adult learners and practitioners may be lost in scrutinising policy proposals and the full implications and potential consequences of emerging issues on adult learners may not be given sufficient consideration.

CONCLUSIONS

- NDC contributes to building an evidence base in support of the benefits of adult learning that relates to a broad range of policy areas.
- NDC is recognised as being an effective advocate of adult learning at a national level and provides effective lobbying on behalf of adult learners and adult learning providers across Wales.
- Its contribution, in terms of advocacy and lobbying, is slightly less effective at a local level, according to survey respondents.
- NDC's contribution to the promotion of adult learning and as a source of

support and information to learning providers generally is significant and is widely appreciated. Measuring the impact of NDC's advocacy work is inherently difficult and problematic and arguably cannot be quantified.

6 NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

This section draws together the evidence collected in relation to the campaigns managed by NIACE Dysgu Cymru. It focuses on the three main campaigns, namely Adult Learners' Week (ALW), Sign Up Season and Taking Control. It also makes reference to specific initiatives or grants that NDC has led in recent years. NIACE Dysgu Cymru commissions annual external evaluations of each of the three major campaigns. The findings of these evaluations were reviewed as part of the initial desk research and are referenced within this chapter.

6.1 Information on the campaigns and initiatives

- o **Adult Learners' Week**

Adult Learners' Week is the UK's largest celebration of adult learning, co-ordinated by NIACE Dysgu Cymru and jointly funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Social Fund. It originated in 1992 as a collaboration between education and training providers, broadcasters and national and local government, co-ordinated by NIACE. By now a similar model is run in over 50 countries worldwide. It involves hundreds of local activities used to showcase learning provision, supported by national promotional and marketing events. It takes place in May each year across the UK.

- o **Sign Up Season**

Sign Up Season was rebranded in 2005 from its predecessor Sign Up Now (Sept), which had been in place since 2001. Sign Up Season forms part of a UK-wide promotion of adult learning. The aim of the campaign is to promote participation in learning among adults and to increase access to information, advice and guidance. The campaign takes place during August / September.

- o **Taking Control**

Taking Control was repositioned and re-branded in 2005 from the Sign Up Now (Jan) campaign, which had been in place since 2001. This campaign seeks to encourage individuals to take positive decisions about their lives through learning. The campaign takes place in January each year.

- o **Learning Promotion Grants**

This is a fund that is intended to stimulate a varied programme of learning events across Wales during the above campaigns. Funds are available to support promotional or marketing activities or to deliver short bite size taster sessions. Funds are targeted at organisations that are working with communities which are under-represented in terms of participation in learning. These were previously known as Innovation Grants (which began in 2001). It is worth noting that these grants have enabled taster sessions and courses to develop in areas which previously had no provision.

o **Learning Festivals**

Learning Festivals are a successful and growing initiative promoted by NDC. They run concurrently with each of the three campaigns, providing a means of discussion among partner organisations throughout the year. In some local authority areas they have served to provide a valuable forum for planning adult learning provision, taking on board some of the functions carried out previously by CCETs.

6.2 Background: key findings from secondary data and previous evaluation reports

As noted above, there is a considerable amount of existing evaluation data and information relating to the campaigns which NDC co-ordinates. This section summarises the key findings from recent publications and sources.

NDC’s campaigns manager provided data which illustrates the growth seen in Adult Learners’ Week between 2001 and 2006. The total number of participants has increased fourfold in six years, with 16,743 individuals taking part in 862 activities last year.

Table 3: Adult Learners’ Week data 2001-2006

ADULT LEARNERS’ WEEK						
	May-01	May-02	May-03	May-04	May-05	May-06
Total Participants	3,982	9,584	10,500	13,333	13,923	16,743
Total Number of Events / Activities	172	264	400	518	861	862
Press Articles Generated	200	230	373	225	209	79

Source: NIACE Dysgu Cymru

There has also been an increase in the number of applications for Learning Promotion Grants, to support ALW events and activities.

Table 4: Adult Learners' Week: number and value of Learning Promotion Grants Awarded, 2001-2006

ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK						
	May-01	May-02	May-03	May-04	May-05	May-06
Number of Learning Promotion Grant Applications	Not Available	45	63	42	74	84
Learning Promotion Grants Awarded	15	23	29	34	50	55
Amounts Awarded	£7,896	21,067	£20,660	£18,976	£46,473	£50,000

Source: NIACE Dysgu Cymru

The evaluation of ALW 2006 also revealed that a broader range of venues is being used to host ALW activities, showing that learning is taking place in all parts of the community. This includes more traditional venues such as community centres, village halls and schools; and less traditional venues including shops, pubs and art galleries. This signals that ALW is making it easier for individuals to access learning opportunities, in venues that are most familiar to them, which is a key issue that is being promoted at a European policy level (see Annex 2, notes following interview with Ellinor Haase, EAEA).

Following ALW 2006, interviews with a sample of 350 participants revealed that 63 per cent had taken some form of positive action since the campaign, including 25 per cent having signed up for a course. IT and Art & Crafts were by far the two most popular types of course.²

The 2006 evaluation of Sign Up Season, also carried out by Strategic Marketing, concluded that promotion and marketing of this campaign was "not particularly strong". However, the same evaluation found that 29 per cent of those who attended an event as part of this campaign had subsequently signed up when the evaluation took place³, suggesting that the campaign is making a positive difference to a substantial cohort of adult learners.

² Evaluation of Adult Learners' Week 2006, Strategic Marketing (August 2006)

³ Evaluation of Sign Up Season 2006, Strategic Marketing (December 2006)

6.3 Overview of interviewees' comments

A key contributor to the campaigns' success, particularly Adult Learners' Week, has been the way in which NDC has established a recognisable brand. This has enabled campaign staff to lead a consistent and cohesive marketing approach. In general, interviewees considered the marketing strategy adopted to be highly effective. Combined the three main campaigns seek to convey a message of empowerment and positive decision making. The majority of interviewees consider that the marketing materials – particularly the use of case studies – produced by NIACE DC capture these messages extremely well.

It should be noted that in promoting Adult Learners' Week and the other two national campaigns, NDC does not promote itself. Rather, it is adult learning, coupled with the provider running the campaign locally, which are promoted.

Evidence also came to light regarding the added value that is achieved as a direct result of the publicity generated through Adult Learners' Week. National and local newspapers carry dedicated supplements to coincide with ALW, which are secured at discounted rates. The cost saving generated through NIACE Dysgu Cymru for media buying for ALW 2006 was **£184,531**, according to figures provided by NDC. Further added value is secured by coverage via TV advertisements and radio coverage. It was reported that these savings are repeated during the other campaigns, meaning that cumulatively, savings are generated to the tune of approximately £550,000 in terms of the value of publicity and marketing.

There was a small degree of scepticism among some interviewees about the longer term benefits of NDC's campaigns. This contrasts with some of the data included above relating to the positive actions taken by those involved with ALW activities. Some questioned how many participants actually progressed into, and completed, courses. Whilst the annual evaluations referenced above collect information on participants' experiences immediately following their participation on adult learning events, there was a call for a more longitudinal approach to measuring the impact of campaigns. It was suggested that the feasibility of undertaking any such longer term study should be explored.

6.4 Views of learning providers

Of the three major campaigns managed by NDC, respondents consider Adult Learners Week to be the most effective. Table 5, below provides further detail. It omits data relating to those who responded that the campaigns are not relevant to their area of work.

Table 5: Respondents' views on the effectiveness of NDC's main campaigns (percentages):

	Adult Learners Week	Sign Up Season	Taking Control
Highly effective	36	20	2
Reasonably effective	48	56	70
Relatively ineffective	16	24	24
Totally ineffective	0	0	5

Note: totals may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding

HEADLINE SURVEY DATA: NDC NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

- **84 per cent** consider ALW to be effective, with **36 per cent** answering 'highly effective'.
- Taking Control – the newest campaign – is considered by only a small percentage to be highly effective (**2 per cent**). However it is viewed as 'reasonably effective' by a clear majority (**70 per cent**) of respondents.
- Just under **30 per cent** of respondents consider Taking Control to be an ineffective campaign. 24 per cent consider Sign Up Season to be ineffective.

Respondents were asked to cite the most successful features of NDC's campaigns. A number referred to the way in which campaigns encourage providers to work collaboratively to ensure that learners' needs are met.

Adult Learners' Week engenders a partnership approach locally, while being rooted firmly within a national and regional framework of action and policy.

This includes presenting opportunities for statutory and voluntary organisations to work together towards a common goal and provides a clear focus for such collaboration for a time-specified period. Other providers referred to the extent of advertising and coverage achieved in the local and national press.

We know, from talking to learners, that they relate to the real life case studies that NIACE Dysgu Cymru helps to produce.

Others noted that, while there are obvious success stories to emerge from ALW, there are some doubts concerning the effectiveness of campaigns in directly engaging learners and moving them onto courses. The complexities of transforming taster courses into sustained engagement in learning were acknowledged by a number of respondents, however, who observed that there are often many social and practical barriers to overcome.

Learning providers expressed a range of views about the timing of NDC's campaigns. Some felt that ensuring that campaigns are spread out throughout the year enables learning providers to concentrate their marketing and promotional activities in a staggered and structured manner. Not all respondents subscribed to this view, however. NIACE Dysgu Cymru has consulted on the timing of campaigns in order to try and establish what would work best for the greatest number of partners. It was noted that it has not been possible to find a consensus and agree a time of year / month that pleases everybody. ALW is also timed to coincide with similar campaigns in England and Scotland.

Some felt that there is too much of a gap between Adult Learners' Week – described as NDC's flagship campaign – and typical course enrolment periods. However, during a discussion with representatives of Community Learning Wales, one member made the salient point that the continued growth of ALW and the increase in participation and events demonstrates that the timing is convenient for many providers and learners.

Learning Festivals have been established across a number of local authority areas. It appears that these have, in some instances, emerged organically and as a direct consequence of the partnerships formed during Adult Learners' Week in particular. Encouragingly, this suggests that there is an enthusiasm and an appetite to ensure year-round promotion of adult learning, with various providers and partners working collaboratively.

6.5 Proposals for the future development of NDC's campaigns

The questionnaire encouraged respondents to provide examples of how they considered the campaigns could be enhanced in the future. The suggestions, which are summarised below, include a combination of potential strategic developments and measures which could reduce the administrative burdens associated with applying for funding.

- **Local award ceremonies where providers of adult learning programmes can gather together to celebrate achievement the achievements.**

This could follow the successful format established at a national level and should ensure the involvement of a range of local partners (including private and voluntary sectors). Such events could create a healthy competitive atmosphere, providing additional motivation for providers and adult learners alike to engage. They would also provide an opportunity for local networking and the strengthening of partnership, and could build upon Learning Festivals that are being established in some local authority areas.

- **An annual grant to support local networks of learning providers that work together that could be used to fund activity across all three main campaigns.**

This could evolve from the current grant in support of local networks and would enable such partnerships to avoid having to draw up triplicate applications to cover activities as part of ALW, Sign Up Season and Taking Control. It has been noted that NDC are already exploring ways of implementing this.

- **A survey into learner motivation, to coincide with national campaigns.**

More research evidence could be collected into what drives individuals to access learning / training and what are the key barriers they face. This could possibly be undertaken in partnership with, for example, local Communities First coordinators.

CONCLUSIONS

- Adult Learners' Week stands out as NDC's most effective campaign. The total number of participants has increased fourfold in six years, with 16,743 taking part in 862 activities last year.
- 84 per cent of learning providers surveyed consider ALW to be an effective campaign.
- Last year, the cost saving generated through media coverage achieved for ALW alone was £184,531, representing a considerable return in terms of added value.
- Just under 30 per cent of respondents consider Taking Control to be ineffective. 24 per cent consider Sign Up Season to be ineffective. A review of the way in which these campaigns are structured and delivered should be undertaken to assess what opportunities exist to modify activities and broaden their appeal.
- Learning Festivals are a positive development and demonstrate enthusiasm for year-round promotion of adult learning opportunities.

7 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING

In much of the work it undertakes, NDC acts as a neutral broker that facilitates networking opportunities, encourages collaborative provision and enables organisations to share good practice. Under the terms of its contract with the Welsh Assembly Government, the organisation has a duty to undertake the following activities, each of which involves the development of partnerships and networks:

- Promoting opportunities for Older Learners, recognising the contribution of learning to successful;
- Promoting and developing Black and Ethnic Involvement and Learning;
- Developing Family and Intergenerational Learning.

This section presents the evidence collected in relation to the above activities and other partnership working with which NDC is engaged.

7.1 Overview of qualitative findings

As has been noted in earlier sections of this report, NIACE Dysgu Cymru works in partnership with a range of organisations through formal associations and in an informal networking capacity.

NDC's work with Community Learning Wales (CLW) enables it to maintain links with providers at local authority-level. Its partnerships with local authorities through CLW are inevitably established far more strongly in South Wales, given that there is far more LA provision of this kind in South Wales. A number of those who contributed evidence to the evaluation suggested that NIACE should look to strengthen its links with local authority adult learning representatives in North Wales. It is important to note, however, that this activity is funded by the Welsh Local Government Association, not the Welsh Assembly Government.

The development of Learning Festivals was cited as an example of the innovative use of funding to promote local partnerships, driven by NDC in close association with local authorities. Where they have been developed, these festivals have proven effective in increasing local ownership of adult and community learning activities; there was widespread agreement that efforts should continue to support their roll out in other areas of Wales.

Representatives from *fforwm* and LLUK with whom we spoke were keen to stress their appreciation of the good working relationships that have been developed with the Director of NDC. NIACE is very well positioned to play a greater role in the area of skills and workforce development. By strengthening its connections with LLUK and with Sector Skills Councils, it can access the latest labour market intelligence that is collected by SSCs. Through its existing links with the adult learning sector, it can ensure that learning providers are aware of issues being flagged up by employers and employer groups and help them to adapt to changing skills needs. Strengthening links with SSCs and the area of work-based learning has been a priority of NDC's work over the last eighteen months, and a SSC representative was recently co-opted onto the NDC Management Group.

NIACE Dysgu Cymru was also described as an 'important player' in the Welsh Assembly Government's work as part of EARLALL, the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning. EARLALL places an emphasis on exchanging ideas about lifelong learning and how good practice can be replicated at the practical / practitioner level. Representatives of NIACE Dysgu Cymru have visited other regions and local authorities and have arranged visits to adult learning initiatives here in Wales for delegations from EARLALL partners.

Adult learners themselves are arguably NDC's most important partners. Securing the support and trust of adult learners is a key measure of NDC's effectiveness as an organisation. There are mechanisms in place to ensure that the views of learners are heard and fed into the organisation. The Adult Learners Forum has approximately 200 members and provides a means of collecting views and recommending priority issues for NDC to take forward. Another possible avenue that was suggested by an interviewee would be to encourage student / learner representative groups, such as the NUS, to share the feedback it receives from adult learners. To improve this area of its work, NDC has recently invited the Adult Learners' Forum and the NUS to each nominate a representative to the NDC Management group.

7.2 Views of learning providers

88 per cent of the learning providers who took part in the evaluation survey consider that NDC has successfully developed partnership and networks in the field of adult learning at a national level. A smaller proportion of respondents –

albeit at 75 per cent still a very healthy proportion – consider NDC’s partnerships and networks at a local level to be effective. This follows a similar pattern to that described above in relation to advocacy and lobbying in Section 5.

HEADLINE SURVEY DATA: PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING

- **88 per cent** of respondents agree that NDC has successfully developed partnerships and networks in the field of adult learning at a national level.
- **75 per cent** consider that NDC has successfully developed partnerships and networks in the field of adult learning at a local or community level. 37.5 per cent ‘agree strongly’ and a further 37.5 per cent ‘agree to an extent.’
- A significant minority – **20 per cent** – disagree with this view, although all respondents disagreed ‘to an extent’ and none ‘disagreed strongly’. This cohort is composed of local authority adult learning officers, voluntary sector representatives and other adult learning providers
- **88 per cent** are of the view that NDC networks and partnerships have contributed to the sharing of good practice among practitioners and managers in adult learning
- There is a greater degree of ambivalence in relation to the whether NDC networks and partnerships have enabled organisations to target a wider range of adult learners: **27 per cent** strongly agree, **31 per cent** agree to an extent and a further **31 per cent** disagree.
- While **69 per cent** feel that NDC networks and partnerships have ensured a wider choice for adult learners, **24 per cent** oppose this view.
- **57 per cent** agree or strongly agree that NDC networks and partnerships have enabled more effective ways of engaging ‘hard to reach’ learners to be tested and developed. However **31 per cent** disagree with this.
- **25 per cent** of respondents are aware of the work being carried out by NDC with educators and mentors of adult learners from BME communities.

Only a quarter of respondents reported that they are aware of NIACE's work through the RAMOD networks, which support educators and mentors of adult learners from BME communities. Comments suggest that this work is beginning to have an impact, particularly in raising awareness of the educational and learning needs of refugees and asylum seekers. All of those who commented on this work underlined its importance and stressed the need for continued support for these networks.

While this work with BME communities is starting to make a difference, there is still a long way to go. However NIACE should be congratulated - it seems that nobody else is doing any significant work in this area and, as part of community cohesion, it is essential.

CONCLUSIONS

- NDC has established strong links with a range of partners at a national level.
- Building on existing partnerships, there is scope for NDC to become more actively involved with discussion and debate around issues of workforce skills and development.
- In terms of the future development, there may be opportunities for NDC to become involved in other groups to further its influence in the area of workforce skills. NDC could explore opportunities to contribute to the work of the Future Skills Wales Partnership, and the Ministerial Advisory group on Education Lifelong Learning & Skills, either by presenting evidence on key issues or by requesting representation on these bodies.

8 NDC'S CONTRIBUTION TO QUALITY AND STANDARDS

8.1 Overview of qualitative findings

NIACE Dysgu Cymru's contribution towards promoting quality and standards in adult learning comes through a number of different activities carried out on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. It promotes staff development for practitioners through a number of conferences and regional network meetings that it facilitates. Evidence suggests that these meetings do impact on quality in ACL by providing practitioners with fora to discuss experiences and good practice.

However, the most direct contribution made by NDC in relation to quality and standards comes through a number of dedicated research projects. NDC staff provided examples and documentation relating to a number of projects, including the project 'Improving quality and standards in Community Learning'. This involved developing a CPD programme for community learning staff (including NIACE DC, CLW, FE, WEA, OCN, UALL Cymru et al) that can be delivered nationally/regionally/locally within a framework of national occupational standards and recognised professional competence.

Another project that was mentioned repeatedly during the course of the evaluation was the development of a value added toolkit to support the Recording and Recognition of Progress and Achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited learning. NDC were funded by DELLS to devise a means of measuring the value added benefits of learning which falls beyond the scope of qualification or credit-based outcomes and which is not accredited by any specific learning awards body.

The individuals who contributed evidence to this evaluation – both learning providers and strategic-level representatives from partner organisations – consider this aspect of NDC's work provides high quality outputs and to offer potential for further development.

Leading research projects of this nature would seem to be a logical progression for an organisation in NIACE's position. It has the internal expertise and can draw on practitioners' knowledge and experience to develop an evidence base to inform policy development.

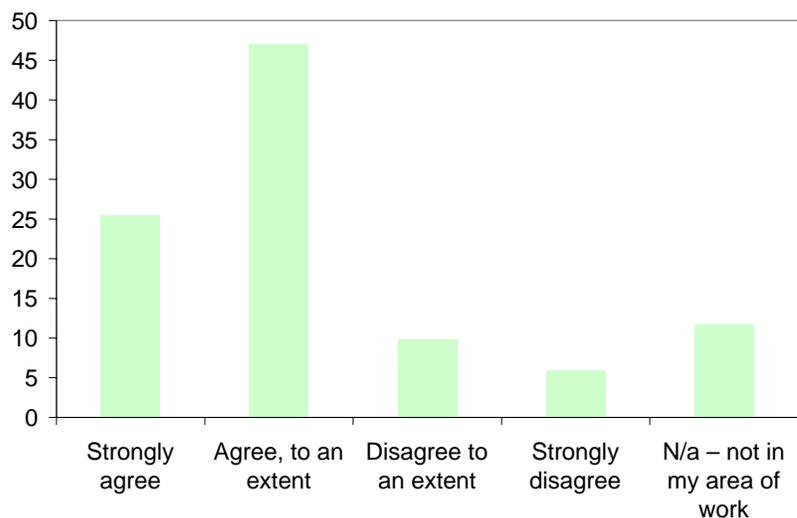
Senior staff within NDC pointed out that on occasion, insufficient resources are available at present to take forward the outcomes of its research projects as fully as might be hoped. There is no systemic means of valorising the tools developed by NDC through its research. It is crucial that project outcomes can be tested with practitioners and introduced into mainstream practice. Once again, through its strong links with learning providers, NDC is in an excellent position to facilitate such activities, and ensure that its research projects achieve a greater impact.

As part of its national programme of inspection, Estyn inspects adult community-based learning in local authorities in Wales. The evaluation team reviewed a small sample of the inspection reports published on the Estyn website and there is a great deal of valuable information relating to successful features of local provision, effective leadership and management, efficiency and the extent to which provision meets the needs of individual learners and the wider community. Although these reports are in the public domain, there would be clear merit in collating and disseminating the key findings from inspection reports on adult community-based learning completed to date.

8.2 Survey findings

The questionnaire asked learning providers whether they agree that NDC has made an important contribution to improvements in quality and standards in adult education and community learning. 73 per cent agreed, of whom 25 per cent agreed strongly.

Figure 4: Responses to the following statement: 'NDC has made an important contribution to improvements in quality and standards in adult education and community learning' (percentages).



As can be seen from Figure 4, above, 16 per cent disagree. One respondent noted that she didn't believe that NDC is necessarily well positioned to influence the quality of learning provision, although by seeking to influence policy at a national level, it can influence quality and standards indirectly.

Other respondents made the point that limited funding for the sector is impacting on the quality of adult learning by reducing the range of subjects on offer to adults.

I feel saddened that, because of limited funding, we can no longer offer education for all and certain valuable subjects such as the arts are now under funded and under threat.

CONCLUSIONS

- Through its project work, NDC is actively involved in developing tools and frameworks to help raise quality and standards in adult learning. This research should not be confined to the archives. There is more that could be done to ensure these tools are further developed, tested and applied in mainstream practice.
- Effective practice in adult community learning identified in Estyn inspections should be disseminated – possibly through NDC.

PART III: EVALUATION OUTCOMES

9 RECOMMENDATIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

9.1 Future drivers of change

The Arad Consulting team used the opportunity afforded by this evaluation to collect views on the issues that are most likely to impact on NDC's work during the coming years. The most prevalent points and questions to emerge are listed below. They represent the issues that those who contributed to this evaluation consider to be key to shaping the policy context within which NDC operates.

- **Further Education Review:** How will adult learning and ACL be affected by the outcomes of this work?
- **National Planning and Funding System:** What are the implications of introducing the NPFS for ACL? Could this lead, as some have suggested, to a reduction in provision? What work can NDC do to mitigate any such risks?
- **Leitch Review:** what role can / should NDC play in helping to increase skills levels among the working age population? What new partnerships should NDC form to facilitate its work in this area?
- **Promotion of informal / non-accredited learning:** Flagged up by numerous contributors, who suggested that NDC should prioritise this area by researching into, and promoting, the benefits of 'learning for learning's sake'. What evidence base can NDC help develop relating to the wider benefits of learning in the Welsh context?
- **General trends in funding:** How should NDC respond to the trend whereby education funding is being increasingly channelled away from older

learners to support high profile policy initiatives such as 14-19 Learning Pathways?

- o **Making the Connections:** what are the implications and opportunities presented by more integrated service delivery. Are there opportunities, for example, to facilitate more joint-planning and delivery of adult learning?
- o **Convergence Funding:** how can opportunities be maximised for adult learning and what actions can NDC lead on?

9.2 Overview of benefits of NDC activities and NDC-run campaigns

The activities undertaken by NIACE Dysgu Cymru under its contracts with the Welsh Assembly Government vary in terms of the range of beneficiaries and organisations they 'reach' and the perceived benefits of these activities. This section aims to group NDC's activities in order to inform and support future strategic decisions and priorities. This needs to be approached within the context of a very positive response to NDC's work revealed by the evaluation.

Using a variation on the Boston Matrix, it is possible to categorise NDC's activities and campaigns according to the two axes of 'perceived benefit' and the 'reach' of the various activities and campaigns. The classification is derived using the evidence submitted by learning providers during the survey exercise. It also draws upon the qualitative views expressed by other stakeholders during interviews. Given the high levels of support expressed by those who contributed to the evaluation; the margins between the groupings are, in some cases, very tight.

Figure 5, below, depicts four quadrants into which NDC's activities and campaigns have been placed. They represent activities which, based on the evidence submitted to the evaluation team fall into the following descriptions:

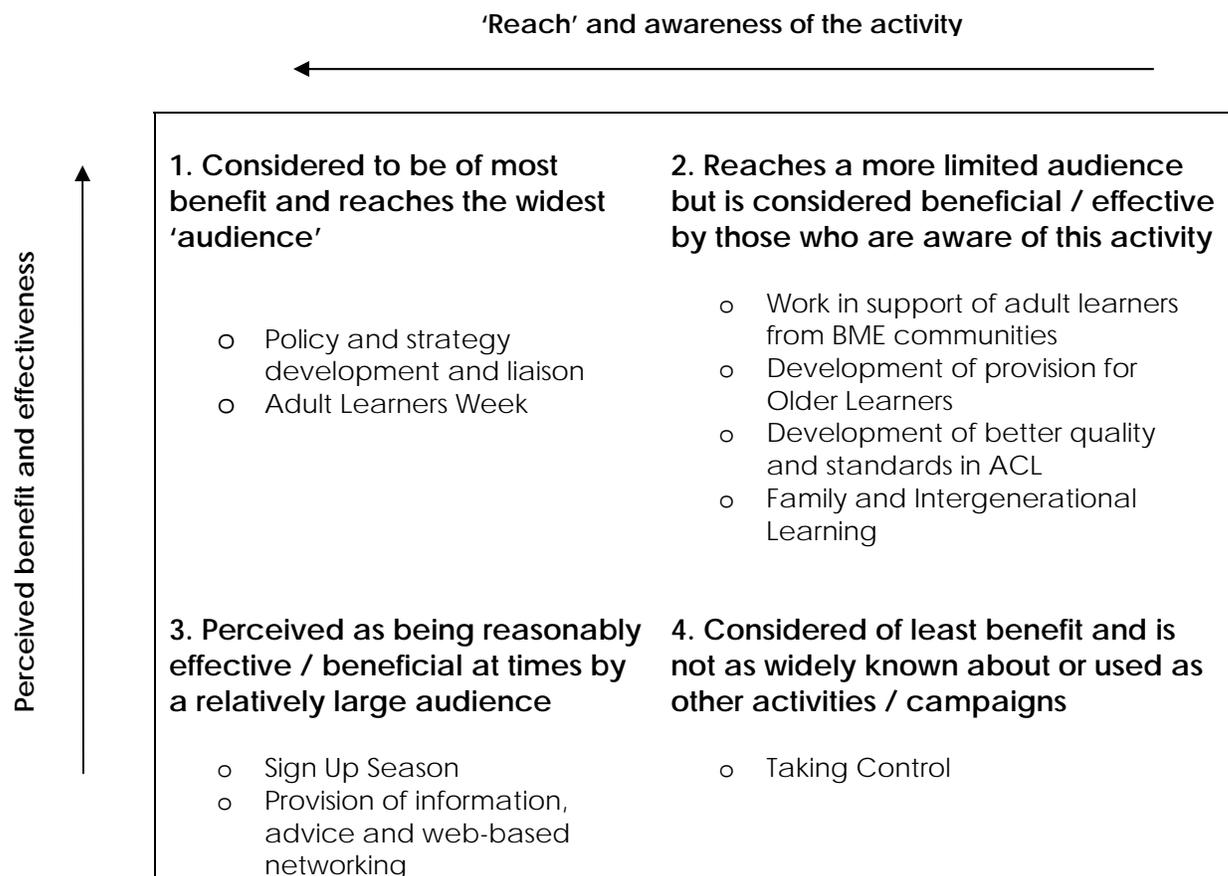
1. Are considered to be of most benefit and reaches the widest 'audience'
2. Reach a more limited audience but are considered beneficial / effective by those who are aware of this activity

3. Perceived as being 'reasonably effective' or 'beneficial at times' by a relatively large audience
4. Are considered least beneficial and are not as widely known about or used as other activities / campaigns

A degree of caution is required when approaching this analysis. The classification / ranking of activities are relative and those activities listed under category 4 are not necessarily considered as being ineffective. Rather, on the overall scale of perceived benefit, these were seen as being the least beneficial by learning providers and by others who submitted evidence to the report. In addition, there are various reasons as to why some activities will have a broader 'reach' than others, mainly due to the fact that some are targeted at specific groups and cohorts.

Brief commentary on each activity follows below.

Figure 5. CATEGORISATION OF NDC ACTIVITIES BASED ON EVIDENCE SUBMITTED



|

Not included in the above matrix due to insufficient evidence:

- o Fostering Wales' involvement in the development of adult education in Europe.

Policy and strategy development and liaison

Considered beneficial by 90 per cent of respondents, with 45 per cent reporting this aspect of NDC's work as being 'very beneficial'. This is further supported by qualitative evidence which indicates that learning providers consider this to be a cornerstone of the organisation's work. Other stakeholders also value the contribution made by NDC in this area of work.

Development of better quality and standards in ACL

Specific projects, including the RARPA project, having been taken forward and well received by a number of learning providers. However, this aspect of NDC's work and the results of such projects are not widely disseminated. 72 per cent of respondents agree that NDC has made an important contribution to improvements in quality and standards in adult education and community learning. 16 per cent disagree.

Provision of information, advice and web-based networking

'Beneficial at times' was the majority verdict of respondents in relation to this activity. Qualitative evidence included some frustration with the layout of NDC's website although, as noted earlier in this report, plans are in place to redesign the site.

Development of family and intergenerational learning

According to survey responses this activity is ranked as the least beneficial of NDC's activities. However, it is still considered 'beneficial' by two-thirds of respondents. Around 30 per cent noted that they are not aware of, or have not been involved with, NDC's work to develop family and intergenerational learning.

Development of provision for older learners

Three quarters of those who responded consider this work to be beneficial, with 27 per cent recording it as being 'very beneficial'. Again this is targeted at a specific cohort and therefore it is not surprising that 20 per cent of respondents were not aware of this activity.

Promotion and development of opportunities for Black and Minority Ethnic learners

Only a quarter of those who completed questionnaires were familiar with NDC's work to promote opportunities among BME learners. Overall qualitative comments were favourable, although numerous contributors noted the difficulties in making a judgment about the effectiveness of the RAMOD networks.

Fostering Wales' involvement in the development of adult education in Europe

Learning providers were not asked to submit views in relation to this aspect of NDC's work. It has, therefore, not been included in the matrix – which is based exclusively on evidence submitted by providers.

National campaigns: i) Adult Learners' Week, ii) Sign Up Season, and iii) Taking Control

Table 5 on page 35 summarises the data relating to providers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the national campaigns. It reveals that Adult Learners' Week is seen as the most effective and impacts upon the greatest number of learners, which is supported by qualitative evidence. 36 per cent of respondents consider it to be highly effective. Conversely, only 2 per cent consider Taking Control to be highly effective, with just under 30 per cent reporting it as being ineffective. Taking Control also impacts upon a smaller number of learners.

9.3 Comments on strategic priorities

The analysis summarised in the matrix in Section 9.2 is intended to support the Welsh Assembly Government in its decisions regarding future funding priorities. The following key messages should be borne in mind:

Group 1

The activities considered to be most effective and which impact upon the greatest number of learners, learning providers and partner organisations. As such, they should be supported by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Group 2

A strategic decision is required in relation to activities which are designed to assist specific cohorts of learners (older learners, BME learners, family and intergenerational initiatives). These initiatives are at a relatively early stage of

development in some cases. Their impacts are not yet fully evident, although there is some evidence of increased engagement with targeted groups. As such the potential impact of not continuing to support them is difficult to establish categorically.

The Welsh Assembly Government needs to be able to measure – at some level – the return on its investment in these areas. And therefore a key question to be asked is how are the outcomes of these activities currently defined? NDC's internal evaluation reports and quarterly monitoring reports to the Welsh Assembly Government refer predominantly to the following types of outcomes in relation to its activities targeting Older Learners, BME learners and Family and Intergenerational Learning:

- o the establishment of networks and communities of practice
- o raising awareness of the opportunities for older learners / BME learners etc
- o provision of information on policy and practice
- o dissemination events

These would best be described as 'process outcomes' – which reflect NDC's mission and objectives and signal the territory where NDC operates: it exists to promote adult learning, to support and advise practitioners and policy makers and to facilitate collaboration. It provides a range of intermediary functions which facilitate but do not deliver final outcomes, such as increased levels of participation and skills levels among targeted groups.

In light of the above, the views of partner organisations are an important indicator of NDC's effectiveness and the value that it provides. This evaluation has found that stakeholders (learning providers and other partner organisations) consider NDC to play a pivotal role that aids their planning and delivery. In the view of the evaluation team, these activities should continue to be supported.

Group 3

There is clearly room for improvement in the way these activities are delivered. They reach a wide audience, but are not considered as effective as they could be. Ongoing improvements to the web-site should help improve the quality of information-sharing and web-based networking. Sign Up Season needs to be able to inform policy-makers as to what 'drives' individuals to access training and courses and what prevents them from doing so. Currently evaluations of Sign Up Season provides only limited insights into motivations and barriers.

Group 4

Taking Control was described during the course of the evaluation as a 'Problem Child'. Its effectiveness was questioned by a significant proportion of those who contributed and it has not yet succeeded in engaging providers and learners to the degree that might have been expected. This leads to the conclusion that this is a lower strategic priority.

9.4 Recommendations

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

NDC has increased its profile and presence in terms of its contribution to policy development, particularly so over the last 12-18 months. It interacts effectively with key policy influencers, both within the Welsh Assembly Government and with partner organisations. Its work in this area is also highly valued by practitioners, who view the organisation as an authoritative source of information and advice on policy relating to adult learning and ACL.

There are, however, some concerns regarding NDC's position as an organisation that receives Welsh Assembly Government funding to support, in part, its efforts to influence Welsh Assembly Government policy. Whilst the Welsh Assembly Government recognises (in its contract) the role of NDC as a 'critical friend', the nature of the relationship is considered to be unclear by many of those who submitted evidence to this evaluation. This may largely be due to the fact that NDC receives funding from sources other than the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake activities of this nature. Evaluating the activities undertaken by NDC funded by sources other than the Welsh Assembly Government is not within the remit of this study. However, it is necessary to recognise their existence and to note that it is not always clear to practitioners outside of NDC as to which activities fall under WAG funding and which do not. This should be resolved by a reaffirmation (by both NDC and the WAG) of the role of NDC as an independent organisation that delivers specific contracts and services on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Recommendation 1

Recognising NDC's increasingly important contribution in this area, the Welsh

Assembly Government should continue to support NIACE Dysgu Cymru in its activities related to policy and strategy development.

(This should be taken forward in conjunction with Recommendations 2 and 3 below)

Lead: Welsh Assembly Government

Recommendation 2

The annual review of activity should be used as an opportunity to review and define the specific activities and services to be delivered the following year by NDC under contract with the Welsh Assembly Government. This will ensure that the activities are in line with current policy. In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government should consider requiring specific reporting on the impact of NDC's network development work.

Lead: Welsh Assembly Government, supported by NIACE Dysgu Cymru

Recommendation 3

Drawing on the experience gained through the development of Learning at Work Day, and the evaluation of that event NDC should develop policy and funding options outlining how it can contribute further to policy and strategy development in the area of workforce skills development and work-based learning. The Welsh Assembly Government should consider any proposals within the context of other developments in support of work-based learning.

Lead: NIACE Dysgu Cymru, supported by the Welsh Assembly Government

SCOPE OF NDC SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The comments in Sections 9.2 and 9.3 above should support and inform the Welsh Assembly Government in its decisions regarding future funding priorities.

Learning providers value the additional capacity that NDC offers the adult learning sector in terms of enabling information sharing and facilitating networking opportunities. Some of NDC's work relating to family and

intergenerational learning and in support of older learners reaches a more limited audience, but is also considered to be beneficial and effective.

There is expertise within the organisation that could be more fully exploited. This relates, in particular, to the contribution that NDC can make to developing a more robust evidence base to support policy development in the field of adult learning. Whilst a number of research projects have been successfully delivered, this is an area where it would appear that NDC can potentially make a greater contribution.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Assembly Government should review the range of services funded through its contracts with NIACE Dysgu Cymru on an annual basis, in line with current policy developments and prioritising support for those activities which are considered to be most effective across the widest audience.

Lead: Welsh Assembly Government, supported by NIACE Dysgu Cymru

Recommendation 5

NDC should seek to increase its project-based and research activity, with an emphasis on developing materials and tools that can be applied in mainstream adult learning practice. NDC is not, and should not be, reliant on the Welsh Assembly Government to fund its research and development activities however there may be opportunities for NDC to contribute its expertise to the Welsh Assembly Government's programme of research.

Lead: Welsh Assembly Government and NIACE Dysgu Cymru.

Recommendation 6

NDC should prioritise upgrading its website and improve the way in which presents and disseminates information on, and on behalf of, the adult learning sector.

Lead: NIACE Dysgu Cymru

NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Adult Learners' Week stands out as NDC's most popular campaign and the event which achieves the greatest impact in terms of raising the profile of adult learning. The total number of participants has increased fourfold in six years and its successes should be built upon. It receives a great deal of publicity in local and national newspapers, much of which is procured at discounted rates and achieves substantial savings.

Nearly a quarter of respondents consider NDC's two other campaigns – Sign Up Season and Taking Control – to be ineffective. A review of the way in which these campaigns are structured and delivered should be undertaken to assess what opportunities exist to modify activities and broaden their appeal.

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Assembly Government should continue to support NIACE Dysgu Cymru to co-ordinate Adult Learners' Week, in recognition of the campaign's successes and the profile it achieves for adult learning. NDC should also explore possible opportunities to part-fund ALW through Convergence Funding.

Lead: Welsh Assembly Government and NIACE Dysgu Cymru

Recommendation 8

NDC should examine the feasibility of leading longitudinal research to determine the longer term impact of its campaigns. This could be taken forward as part of Recommendation 5. NDC should examine whether existing databases could be used as a starting point to track the learning outcomes of a sample of individuals involved in the campaigns.

Lead: Welsh Assembly Government and NIACE Dysgu Cymru

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Assembly Government should request that NDC undertakes a

review of Sign Up Season and Taking Control, concentrating on the campaigns' structure and outcomes. The review should recommend ways in which these programmes can be revised and enhanced to broaden their appeal to learning providers and the broader public.

Lead: Welsh Assembly Government, supported by NIACE Dysgu Cymru

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION WORKING

NDC's operates within an extended network of contacts and partners. These networks vary in nature: some are used to share policy ideas at a strategic level, while others have more impact at a practitioner level and enable the sharing of information on good practice among practitioners and managers in adult learning.

Recommendation 10

NDC should develop a proposal that outlines its potential contribution in the area of skills and workforce development, and to advise of any other key partnerships related to the skills agenda where representation from NDC could be beneficial.

Lead: Welsh Assembly Government

Recommendation 11

NIACE Dysgu Cymru should work with the Welsh Assembly Government to raise the profile of some of its less well-known networks, notably the RAMOD networks in support of learners from BME communities and the family and intergenerational learning network. (This could be taken forward in conjunction with activities with Recommendations 5 and 6.)

Lead: NIACE Dysgu Cymru

NDC'S CONTRIBUTION TO QUALITY AND STANDARDS

Through its project work, NDC is actively involved in developing tools and frameworks to help raise quality and standards in adult learning. This research should not be confined to the archives. There is more that could be done to ensure these tools are further developed, tested and applied in mainstream practice.

Much valuable information and evidence has also been collected during the course of Estyn's inspections of ACL. This information should be used to inform provision for adult learners, with key lessons and successful practice identified and disseminated.

Recommendation 12

NDC should seek to coordinate and disseminate effective practice in adult and community learning, as identified in the local area inspections completed by Estyn to date.

Lead: NIACE Dysgu Cymru

Recommendation 13

NIACE should consider what further opportunities exist to work in collaboration with DYSG / DELLS to help promote quality in adult learning. This could be taken forward in conjunction with Recommendations 5 and 8.

Lead: WAG & NIACE Dysgu Cymru

ANNEX 1 Evaluation questionnaire

EVALUATION OF NIACE DYSGU CYMRU

Dear Colleague,

Arad Consulting has been appointed to carry out an evaluation and impact study of the work done by NIACE Dysgu Cymru (NDC) on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. As part of the study, we are seeking input from providers of adult and community learning, in order to gain your impressions of the activities and services provided by NDC. We would be very grateful if you could take the time to complete this questionnaire and return it (preferably by email) to NDCEvaluation@aradconsulting.com by **Wednesday 28 March**. Alternatively, you can return the questionnaire by post to Brett Duggan, Arad Consulting Ltd, Enterprise House 126-127 Bute Street, Cardiff CF10 5LE.

Please provide your details in the appropriate boxes below. We would like to assure you that Arad Consulting conducts all data collection in compliance with the Data Protection Act: your responses will be treated as confidential and no details will be forwarded to any third parties.

Name:

Organisation:

Position:

The views expressed are my own personal views

The views expressed below are those of the organisation I represent



POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Question 1a) To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree to an extent	Disagree to an extent	Strongly disagree	N/a
i) NIACE Dysgu Cymru (NDC) is effective in promoting engagement among practitioners in policy debate relating to adult and community learning (ACL).					
ii) NDC is effective in promoting engagement among practitioners in policy debate relating to adult learning more generally.					
iii) My institution / organisation has benefited from NDC's work in sharing ideas and good practice in ACL.					
iv) My institution / organisation has benefited from NDC's work in sharing ideas and good practice in adult					

learning more generally.

Question 1b) Please use the space below to provide any general comments you have in relation to NDC's work in support of policy development.

NDC ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

Question 2a) How beneficial do you consider the following aspects of NDC's work to be to you / your organisation?

	Very beneficial	Beneficial at times	Of little or no benefit	N/a – am not aware of this / do not use this
i) Conferences and events organised by NDC				
ii) Organising Regional Networks for adult learning practitioners				
iii) NDC's information services				
iv) Disseminating policy initiatives and outcomes				
v) Advocacy and lobbying				
vi) Contribution to policy development via formal reviews or other national bodies (eg Rees Review; FE Review)				
vii) Family and Intergenerational Learning Networks				
viii) Work with older learners				
ix) Others (please specify):				

Question 2b) Please use the space below to provide any general comments you have in relation to how you / your organisation benefits from NDC's activities and services, noting any additional activities you would like to see.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

Question 3a) To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree, to an extent	Disagree to an extent	Strongly disagree	N/a – not in my area of work
i) NDC is an effective advocate of adult learning at a national					

level

ii) NDC is an effective advocate of adult learning at a local and community level

iii) NDC provides effective lobbying on behalf of adult learners and learning providers in Wales

iv) NDC has increased knowledge and awareness within your organisation regarding the needs of adult learners

Question 3b) Please use the space below to briefly note any general comments you have in relation to NDC's work in advocacy and lobbying.

CAMPAIGNS

Question 4a) From your experience, how effective have the following campaigns been in promoting engagement in learning.

Highly effective	Reasonably effective	Relatively ineffective	Totally ineffective	N/a – not in my area of work
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i) Adult Learners' Week

ii) Sign Up Season

iii) Taking Control

Others (Please specify)

Question 4b) What, in your opinion, are the most successful features of the campaigns promoting adult learning run by NDC?

Question 4c) Would you like to see any additional activities undertaken as part of NDC's campaigns? If so, please provide examples in support of your answer.

ADULT LEARNERS FROM BME COMMUNITIES

Question 5a) Are you familiar with NDC's work with educators and mentors of adult learners from BME communities – notably through the RAMOD networks?

(Please tick appropriate box)

Yes

No

If 'No', go to Question 6a.

Question 5b) If so, what are your impressions of the impact |

that this work has had to date?



QUALITY AND STANDARDS

Question 6a) To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree, to an extent	Disagree to an extent	Strongly disagree	N/a – not in my area of work
i) NDC has made an important contribution to improvements in quality and standards in adult education and community learning					
ii) NDC has contributed to progress in developing and promoting enhanced quality assurance systems for non-accredited learning					

Question 6b) Please provide any general comments you have in relation to how NDC’s work relates to quality and standards in adult and community learning.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Question 7) To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree, to an extent	Disagree to an extent	Strongly disagree	N/a – not in my area of work
i) NDC has successfully developed partnerships and networks in the field of adult learning at a national level					
ii) NDC has successfully developed innovative partnerships and networks in the field of adult learning at a local or community level					
iii) NDC networks and partnerships have enabled your organisation to target a wider range of adult learners					
iv) NDC networks and					

partnerships have contributed to the sharing of good practice among practitioners and managers in adult learning

v) NDC networks and partnerships have ensured a wider choice for adult learners

vi) NDC networks and partnerships have enabled more effective ways of engaging 'hard to reach' learners to be tested and developed

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANISATION

Question 8a) What changes to the policy environment are most likely to impact on NDC in the coming years?

Question 8b) In your opinion, are there any changes that NDC should make in order to deliver upon its work for the Welsh Assembly Government more effectively?

ANNEX 2 Notes from interview with Ellinor Haase, EAEA

- 1. In broad terms, what different models of supporting adult learning exist across Europe?*

There are both examples of top down approaches to adult education that involve national and regional authorities developing policies and programmes that target adult learners as part of general educational strategies. There are also more bottom up approaches which are developed according to local educational and social needs and initiatives that are led by a variety of organisations such as the voluntary sector, businesses and migrant organisations.

- 2. In your view, which organisations / models have been most effective in promoting adult learning? (i.e. any examples of good practice among the 120 members of EAEA, in terms of the way they are organized?)*

Initiatives such as Learning Cities/Regions and Communities have been successful in a number of regions, particularly the UK (and South Korea) and have made a big difference in targeting those with particular learning difficulties. The Study Circles developed in the Nordic countries are also an effective programme for delivering courses to adult learners based upon their particular needs and at their own pace, giving them the opportunity to stop and start their learning when they wish. Slovenia has adopted this approach with some success and Italy is also experimenting with it, particularly relating to SMEs.

In addition there have been a number of innovative initiatives carried out by AE institutions in different member states such as France and the UK which look to bring learning to the learners and make it accessible without using traditional learning environments such as schools and colleges which some adult learners are suspicious of. This has led to the use of new learning surroundings such as museums, libraries and even people's homes.

In the Nordic Countries there is a more recognised right to adult education and this is reflected in the higher profile and respect given to this aspect of lifelong learning. As well as the education sector there are initiatives in the professional sector such as one gives employees the right to training and education when they want it rather than their employer, while they are away from their job, their place is taken by an unemployed person.

- 3. NIACE Dysgu Cymru receives funding from central government (Welsh Assembly Government) to deliver key initiatives and campaigns in Wales. NIACE Dysgu Cymru is also heavily involved in lobbying and advocacy to try and influence policy. Are there any organisations in similar situations – i.e. that are agents of delivery and also advocates for change?*

There are similarities to this situation at local levels in Germany where Folk High Schools are financed by LEAs to undertake adult education but which are also major lobbyists to receive more money for AE. There is less lobbying in Nordic countries because of the high recognition of the importance of AE and the higher priority given to it by national governments – Finland is the only member state that has recently increased its budget for AE.

- 4. What are the main trends in terms of adult learning at a European level that are likely to impact on the work of NIACE Dysgu Cymru over the coming years?*

Much of what will be the major trends detailed in the EC's Communication on Adult Learning from 2006, an Action Plan is due to be delivered by the EC at the end of the year. EAEA fears that AE could get lost within the wider lifelong learning agenda, particularly due to the focus on under 25 year olds and the fact that only 4% of the EC's education budget will go on GRUNTVIG. It is also as high on the agenda in areas such as employment and social affairs as it should be.

The recognition of informal education offers threats and opportunities for the AE sector, too much could be focused on vocational aspects of this although it will allow adult learners to highlight some of the skills. Similarly plans for the European Qualifications Framework could focus on the employment field leaving recognition of Adult Education course at the bottom of the pile. There is the challenge of defining AE for the 21st century and making it more comprehensible to business, government and learners as well as the general public. There is still a need and obligation to raise the reputation and recognition of adult education and highlight its positive role in society for social inclusion, employment, civil society, individual and community development etc. In addition it can also have a vital role in integrating migrants within society and also boosting employment in terms of the EU's demographic situation with a lack of young workers.

ANNEX 3: Documents and references reviewed

ELWa: Defining Common Issues Across Europe for Adult Education (2003) NFER on behalf of National Council – ELWa

The Graham Review: Independent Review into Part Time Higher Education Study in Wales (June 2006)

Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills (December 2006)

NIACE Dysgu Cymru:

Evaluation of Adult Learners' Week 2005 (Aug 2005)

Evaluation of Adult Learners' Week 2006 (Aug 2006)

Evaluation of Sign Up Season 2005 (December 2005)

Evaluation of 'SUS it Out' 2006 (December 2006)

Evaluation of 'Taking Control' 2006 (April 2006)

LearnDirect Helpline Evaluation – (Sept 2005)

Monitoring Report for the period April 1st – June 30th 2006

Monitoring Report for the period July 1st – Sept 30th 2006

Monitoring Report for the period Oct 1st – Dec31st 2006

Report of the QIF project: Improving Quality and Standards in Adult Community-based Learning (June 2006)

A selection of NDC responses to Welsh Assembly Government consultation documents.

Promotional and marketing materials relating to NDC campaigns.

The Rees Review: Fair and Flexible Funding: A Welsh Model to Promote Quality and Access in Higher Education (May 2005)

Welsh Assembly Government:

The Learning Country – Vision into Action (October 2006)

Making the Connections – Delivering Better Services in Wales (October 2004)

The National Planning and Funding System (NPF5): A Guide

Offer of funding letter to NIACE Dysgu Cymru (March 2006)

WEBSITES REVIEWED AND CONSULTED:

www.eaea.org – European Association for the Education of Adults

www.europa.eu – the European Commission

www.niace.org.uk – NIACE (UK)

www.niace.rcthosting.com/en - NIACE Dysgu Cymru

www.rarpatoolkit.com - NDC's RARPA project website
www.wales.gov.uk - Welsh Assembly Government
www.fforwm.ac.uk - fforwm
www.uall-cymru.org - UALL Cymru