



#Adult Education 100

## The Ministry of Reconstruction's 1919 Report on Adult Education

The Commission on Adult Education

# Adult Education 100 - Making its Mark February 2019

The aim of this newsletter is to give you an update of recent events and also describe how you can contribute your expertise and ideas to both the campaign and the Centenary Commission. Disappointingly (though perhaps unsurprisingly in these troubled times) it has proved extremely difficult to secure even the most limited resources with which to deliver the campaign or indeed fully involve those who so generously and enthusiastically responded to our call. That was our plan and our intention. We continue to seek funding but are forced to do things on the proverbial shoestring, so any ideas on how to access financial support are most welcome!

Firstly, a reminder of how we got to this point. You will remember that there were two main strands to our plans for the Centenary of the Ministry of Reconstruction's Commission on Adult Education. The first was to kick-start a Campaign which would raise the profile of adult education as a critical factor in addressing the challenges facing our times - from automation to fragmented communities, deepening inequalities to a sharpening and dangerous demographic deficit. Its aims are:

- To raise the profile of adult education as part of a national conversation about the need for lifelong learning in a rapidly changing world;
- To explore the nature, purpose, and place of adult education for society's past, present and future;
- To encourage people and communities to value and participate in adult educational activities which develop lasting understandings, opinions and experiences;
- To develop policies and secure resources for transformative adult education.

The Campaign will have launch in Manchester on March 11<sup>th</sup> when a group of adult learners from the WEA and the Co-operative movement will work together to express their views on the value of adult education in community settings.

### Adult Education 100 Campaign Patrons

- *Baroness Joan Bakewell*, President of Birkbeck University of London
- *Dame Mary Beard*, Professor of Classics, University of Cambridge
- *Lalage Bown*, Prof. Emeritus, Adult & Continuing Education, University of Glasgow
- *Andy Haldane*, Chief Economist, Bank of England
- *Sir John Hayes, MP*
- *Mel Lenehan*, Principal and CEO, Fircroft College
- *John Sentamu*, Archbishop of York
- *Michael Sheen*, Actor
- *Ruby Wax*, Mental Health Campaigner

#AdultEducation100 - Steering Group: Co-operative College; Raymond Williams Foundation; University of Nottingham; University of Oxford; WEA: Adult Learning Within Reach.

#AdultEducation100

The second strand was to constitute a Centenary Commission with a remit the same as the original Commission of 1919, “To consider the provision for, and possibilities of, Adult Education in Great Britain, and to make recommendations”. The first meeting took place in Oxford in January; the second will take place in Manchester in March, the third in London in May and the final one in Oxford in July. You can find out more about the Centenary Commission here - <https://www.wea.org.uk/news-events/news/1919-centenary-commission-launches>

Wrapped around both of these strands is the ambition to develop a number of educational and heritage (including archival and curatorial) projects which might be as diverse as preserving adult education records to conducting oral history interviews. These projects are still in their early phases but a further commitment, to produce a piece of research which consults with adult education providers, supporters and students to ‘take the temperature’ of adult education, and to make a powerful contemporary case for it, is underway. Below we discuss how you can get involved in sharing your views and ideas with the researcher for the project, Dr Nick Mahony.

## What you can do

### 1. Volunteer

Many people have expressed willingness to get involved. By now we had hoped to have a website up-and running as well as regional events planned for the remainder of the year. This is where you can come in. We need volunteers to who can help us take some of these ideas forward. If you therefore have web design expertise you can offer so we can get a project website up and running do please get in touch. Do also get in touch if you have other skills you can offer and would like to volunteer.

### 2. Contribute to the Research

We are currently in the final stages of designing the Centenary Commission consultation. If you are involved with a adult education institution, work in semi-formal or informal adult learning or a community organization with links to adult learning and would like to respond to our consultation, please send your contact details (name and email address) to the Centenary Commission researcher Dr. Nick Mahony ([nick.mahony@gmail.com](mailto:nick.mahony@gmail.com)).

### 3. Run an Event

Finally, if you are part of a network of people or organisations involved in adult learning we would like to support the organization of local, regional or sectoral Centenary Commission focused events. The aim of such events would be to gather together people who are interested in thinking about how adult education and learning needs to be further developed to help successfully address the societal challenges we are facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Ideas, insights and proposals generated as a result of these meetings can feed in to the Commission process and will help shape its outcomes. If you’re interested in organizing a meeting, once again get in touch with the Centenary Commission researcher, Dr. Nick Mahony ([nick.mahony@gmail.com](mailto:nick.mahony@gmail.com)).

## Resources

### How you can take part?

You can - run events, coffee mornings and lectures that centre around adult education – past and present. This could include ‘coffee, cake and debate’ sessions; history courses focused on this moment in time with a debate added at the end; or events that include a mixture of activities.

It’s up to you! – Please share on social media using: **#AdultEducation100**

**#AdultEducation100 activity pack** – we’ve produced a few items to help you get started: posters; recipe cards; information details and debate cards. The debate cards include a supportive element to feed your answers back so that they can be collated to support further research. There are generic as well as WEA branded resources which can be downloaded from the WEA website [www.wea.org.uk/adulteducation100](http://www.wea.org.uk/adulteducation100) or accessed via the links below as well as link to a response survey.

- [Download full guide](#)
- [Download briefing note](#)
- [Download debate cards](#)

- [Download recipe card 1, recipe card 2, recipe card 3](#)
- [Download certificate](#)
- [Download event poster \(Word document\)](#)
- [Submit your debate response](#)

## Raymond Williams Foundation event

As part of the Campaign, a number of events are taking place led by partners from within the Steering Group. The Raymond Williams Foundation is holding its annual residential event/conference on the theme of Adult Education 100 at Wortley Hall, near Sheffield on **Friday May 24th to Sunday May 26th 2019**.

*Entitled **100 Years and Beyond: Re-framing Radical Adult Education for the Contemporary World***, the event features discussion groups and keynotes on a range of critical contemporary issues relating to adult education. We will explore emerging alternatives to the educational status quo, which has seen the mass destruction of radical and emancipatory adult education structures and approaches, such as co-operative education and social and political education.

Day one features an introduction to the Adult Education 100 campaign, led by Cilla Ross, Vice-Principal of the Co-operative College. Day two features keynotes from Colin Waugh from the Independent Working Class Education Movement on *Radical histories of adult education today*, Mel Lenehan, Principal of Fircroft College on *Contemporary adult education – the challenges and joys of leading a values-led College* and Sir Alan Tuckett, [Professor of Education at the University of Wolverhampton](#) and former Chief Executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) on *Stories, struggles and serendipity: making the case for adult learning*.

Day Three will take the form of discussions and a plenary based on the conversations from days one and 2. Booking for the event and costings are available on the Raymond Williams Foundation website, at:

<http://www.raymondwilliamsfoundation.org.uk/100%20years%20and%20Beyond%20Payment%20Page.html>

## #ADULTEDUCATION100 FORUM IN NORFOLK - Report

*An exciting development has been the local initiative in Norfolk, centred on the University of East Anglia (UEA). The following is a shortened version of the report of the Proceedings of the Forum on Adult Education 100 they convened, held at UEA on 11 December 2018:*

UEA AE100 is a project to explore the state of adult education in Norfolk in terms of mapping the current activities and identifying needs and opportunities for Adult Education provision. The findings of UEA AE100 will ultimately feed into the National Centenary Commission Report. Whilst it is clear that there is a complex kaleidoscope of adult education (AE) activities taking place in Norfolk, state funding and oversight of AE has largely ceased.

Although the present fragmentation of AE is of itself not a problem, a lack of strategic oversight of AE provision may inhibit its effective development. The UEA AE100 Forum was a first step to engaging with local providers in Norfolk to listen to their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for their individual organisations and to explore how these might be approached from a partnership perspective. The Forum was a very successful, interactive networking event.

Since the decline of the Responsible Bodies, there has been an explosion of fragmented adult education by employers and professional bodies, commercial providers, open and distance learning, other bodies such as health agencies, religious groups, art galleries and record offices), voluntary agencies such as the women's movement or ecological movement, 'kitchen AE' (reading circles and local history societies, and especially the University of the Third Age.

In addition, there has been a growth of self-directed learning with the digital revolution. It seems that two major

changes came about in AE with these changes – (i) a move from community-based AE (AE going out to local groups in towns and villages) to campus-based AE (separate students coming into AE centres); and (ii) from much (not all) collaborative learning to individualised, competitive learning for accreditation.

### **Community issues in Norfolk**

Providers identified a range of social exclusion issues affecting people of varying demographics and needs, e.g. older people face practical difficulties travelling as well as access to the internet. The latter represented a significant barrier to older groups accessing information about services including the services offered by the providers themselves. This was felt to be less of a problem for young people who may have access via mobile phones or who were sufficiently savvy as to know where they could find internet access. The younger generation were also more likely to be able to navigate online compared to people in the older generation.

The above issues of ‘access’ and ‘reach’ also presented a dilemma for provider organisations in deciding whether to deliver their services on a centre-based or outreach basis and how to allocate their limited resources accordingly. Some provider-delegates argued that there should be more collaboration with other Norfolk groups/organisations and recognition that in this way resources could be pooled and more effectively utilised.

Another issue related to access/social exclusion is the barrier of welfare benefits arrangements including the introduction of Universal Credit. The conditions for the receipt of benefits by individuals may cut across the ability of the student to access a provider service whilst e.g. satisfying conditions relating to ‘searching for work’.

A recurring theme was the perception of several provider-delegates that declining levels of mental health and low self-esteem was a growing problem in the Norfolk community. At a basic level this could mean that people, particularly a growing section of young people, lacked sufficient confidence to present themselves to provider organisations. Additionally, this problem of student engagement may also present itself at a later stage when the provider is trying to progress them. This problem was linked to the general one of the building of trust between the provider and the student, which was, of itself, time and resource consuming. These problems with the varying mental conditions and needs of the students themselves exacerbated the more normal issues of diverse abilities in basic numeracy and literacy.

### **Organisational issues**

- Some provider-delegates felt that effective partnerships with other providers were inhibited by market competitiveness. For example, charities were often competing for donations amongst the same community population segments.
- Provider-delegates felt that the fragmentation of providers ‘reduced voice’: effective co-ordination of their efforts was needed.
- Student progression was a perennial and significant problem in terms of both provider-provider progression but also in terms of provider-employers. Many provider-delegates felt robust connections with employers had not been established.
- The recruitment, retention and training of staff and volunteers was a perennial problem linked to the absence of adequate pathways for career progression, e.g. certification and validation.
- A repeated problem was the finding of suitable premises to deliver a centre-based service.
- Some limited government funding was available for specific vocational activities e.g. from the Skills Funding Agency but in the absence of state funding many charities relied on erratic donations and fund-raising campaigns.

Three approaches to tackling the problems outlined above emerged:

#### **1. Partnership development**

Considerable discussion was devoted to the possibilities offered by provider-partnership. Some charities have developed partnerships with separate organisations. Examples of existing collaboration were Norfolk Wild Life Trust and New Routes who offer different curricula opportunities to the same students; Norfolk Records Office (NRO) and Asperger East Anglia; Change Minds, NRO plus and the Restoration Trust who provided courses Mental Wellbeing). The National Association for the Teaching of English and Community Languages to Adults

(NATECLA) is already working as a hub for diverse language training across the regions including Norfolk.

Areas suggested for collaboration included: progression routes & referrals; shared resources and facilities; a network forum; regional bids for funding; shared Continuing Professional Development (CPD); signposting their organisation's courses to others; sharing information about changes to funding and to qualifications. One provider-delegate suggested that more collaboration could take place between providers whose core activities were markedly different such as in the case of Norfolk Wild Life Trust and New Routes in order to avoid the problem of perceived competition.

## **2. Collaborative Projects**

One provider-delegate suggested a joint campaign to highlight the problems arising from Universal Credit pertaining to barriers for claimants to attend provider courses and services

One provider-delegate suggested closer relationships between AE providers and Local Employers. The Princes Trust have already developed links with employers such as Marks & Spencer where regular work experiences are arranged. Links with employers need to be deepened to establish clear progression from provider services to employment for a wide range of students. A UEA100 Forum involving local employers might be a useful first step.

## **3. University of East Anglia (UEA) as a hub for Adult Education in Norfolk**

The fragmentation of providers meant that the voice of Adult Education was not being heard and there is no strategic oversight of the AE sector. Many problems inhibiting collaboration and partnership might be mitigated by a hub: to facilitate sharing of information and communications between providers as well as coordinating strategic oversight of AE in Norfolk. It was suggested that UEA could provide this function as it already had the personnel and expertise to deliver this – though there would be a question of how to mobilise external funding or resources to support such developments.

AE100 is already bringing providers together with a view to generating useful research data on the provision of AE in Norfolk which could provide the basis for large-scale funding proposals to fill the identified gaps in research in this area.

Practical possibilities mentioned in relation to UEA were:

- Possible delivery of accredited training and CPD
- Holding of further Forums and workshops for providers and employers
- Developing a dedicated UEA AE100 website to promote collaboration, partnership and the sharing of information.
- Developing funded research projects on AE in Norfolk and conducting comparative research studies into international approaches to AE.

A general point made by one of the participants: 'echoing the comment in the Ministry of Reconstruction's 1919 Report that AE is an "inseparable aspect of citizenship", I would like to think that in 2018 citizenship and AE are linked and that AE includes a person's well-being. AE therefore helps to promote a sense of self and to tap into latent or unacknowledged potential, thereby increasing the likelihood of enriching the individual and, through the individual's interactions in the community, enriching others directly and indirectly.'

In conclusion, participants felt this first AE100 Forum was an extremely productive experience. It successfully engaged with a significant and diverse group of AE providers. It highlighted both the challenges and the opportunities facing Adult Education in Norfolk. Its collective imagination pointed to the potential opportunities for partnership, collaboration and next steps for the UEA100 campaign.

## **Link to recent publications**

<https://www.alumniweb.ox.ac.uk/balliol/file/e-news/2019/January.html?erid=38318131&trid=25f5c84b-7408-45a9-b989-70e34d07171e&efndnum=57459891>